

Early Christian Liturgics

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This Samizdat edition
is dedicated to
Igor Myalkovsky,
famous Ukrainian theologian and translator,
who gave me the text of this book.

History and Development.

Liturgics refers to those things having to do with a liturgy, and the obvious point of departure in gaining an understanding of liturgics is to understand the word itself. This is particularly relevant in terms of liturgical music, because the terms religious music or sacred music, while describing the type of music, do not do much to explain the origins or practice.

The word liturgy is from the Greek word *leitourgia*, and the most common translation is “the work of the people.” It is that common act of God’s people together offering praise to Him in the manner which He revealed that they should. This is the type of worship which took place in the Jewish temple and synagogue, and which came into the early Christian Church.

Note that the emphasis is on “work,” “praise” and “revealed.” The original Greek term includes the term work, and conveys something much more vigorous than a congregation being entertained by a performer — rather, the people working together. Praise is that which is offered to God in thanksgiving for what He has done for us. Revealed makes clear that it is not a collection of actions of our own choice or convenience, but based on direction given to us by God. It is the collective work that assembled believers do together in offering praise and worship to God. Liturgical music is the music developed and either chanted, sung and/or played during this time, while liturgical ritual describes the action that takes place.

For non-Orthodox Christians liturgical worship may be a foreign concept. The question asked is often “why does liturgical worship follow such a set structure or order?” The question reflects an underlying assumption for many Christians that in the New Testament period worship was spontaneous, or reflects lack of knowledge about the origins of liturgical worship within the Judeo-Christian traditions. The fact is, this “order” has its very roots in the Bible, and much of Judaism and Christianity have been worshipping this way — more or less unchanged — for almost over 2000 years.

The core of liturgics is not just beautiful music or awe-inspiring ritual, rather it is a commitment to origins. Two concepts need to be kept in mind as one considers the “why” of liturgical worship and practice: origin and changelessness. Remember, first and foremost, that the Apostles and the first Christian disciples were Jews. That is, they were Jews who recognized and accepted Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. From their heritage with its history of liturgical interaction with God, came the Jewish form of biblical worship, the basic structure, the “origin” of Christian worship. For this reason, we see in Church history a highly developed Christian liturgical order in use even by the end of the first century — that is, within sixty years of Christ’s resurrection.

The second concept is “changelessness.” Perhaps one of the most striking and unique things about much Christian liturgical worship, especially that of the Eastern Orthodox Church in this age of rapid change, and even change for its own sake, is its permanence and changelessness. For example, it has been said that one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Eastern Orthodox Church is “its determination to remain loyal to the past, its sense of living continuity with the church of ancient times.” [1] This commitment to protecting the Gospel and keeping its message and praise to God the same stems from the conviction that the faith which we have is that which our Lord Jesus Christ delivered to us, and to which we will add nothing nor take anything away. If Christians desire to be “apostolic,” then they have to agree to belong to the same Church that Christ founded. That church began in the first century, and “there is a sense in which all Christians must become Christ’s contemporaries...” as a recent Orthodox Christian scholar points out. He goes on to remind us that “the twentieth century is not an absolute norm, the apostolic age is.” [2, 3]

Over the course of the last millennia there has been change in liturgical worship. However, it is change that has taken place carefully, within this context of “changelessness.” Within the traditional liturgical churches, the change has not been a change in the real nature or substance of the faith and practice. Never change for change’s sake, only change in order to remain the same. The underlying commitment has been the exhortation of St. Paul to Timothy to “*guard the deposit of the faith*” (I Timothy 6:20). But, at the same time, there has been a willingness to enhance the practice of worship in order to make it more heavenly, more spiritual, and more edifying.

The early Christian Church came into being as a liturgical church because Jews worshipped liturgically. The New Testament records numerous instances of liturgical worship, which range from pure Jewish practices (such as Peter and John going to the Temple because it was the hour of prayer) to Christian liturgical worship (which confirms that the early Christians met and worshipped following Jewish liturgical practices, and added to them the rite of the Eucharist).

Many present-day Christians do not understand why the worship services of the “liturgical churches” are so different and so structured. A common assumption is that in the New Testament, worship was spontaneous. However, worship in the early Christian Church, like Judaism, followed a specific order or form. This “order” has its very roots in the Scriptures. In fact, all of Christianity worshipped this way for 1500 years; the Eastern Orthodox Church has been worshipping this way — more or less unchanged — for nearly 2000 years.

Two words need to be kept in mind when one first experiences liturgical worship: origin and changelessness.

Origin.

Early Christian worship had an origin: Jewish worship form and practice. The early disciples did not create new worship practices any more than did Jesus Christ. They all prayed as Jews and worshipped as Jews. The earliest Christians were Jews who recognized and accepted Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, and the worship that they practiced was liturgical because Jewish worship was liturgical. For this reason we see in the New Testament that the early Christians continued their Jewish worship practices, even while they added some uniquely Christian components. The most central new content was the sacrament of the Eucharist (or Communion) as instituted by Christ at the Last Supper. However, in the early Church this was celebrated as a separate service for many years.

This living continuity of worship from Temple to Synagogue and into the early Christian Church is why there is a highly developed Christian liturgical order in use by the end of the first century, within sixty years of Christ’s resurrection.

Changelessness.

Perhaps one of the most striking and unique things about liturgical Christianity, and especially in this age of rapid change and even change for its own sake, is its permanence and changelessness. This is especially true for the Eastern Orthodox Church to this day. (This was also true of the Western Roman Church until the past century when the reforms of Vatican II significantly altered the liturgical form of the Roman mass). It has been said that one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Orthodox Church is “its determination to remain loyal to the past, its sense of living continuity with the church of ancient times “[1]. This commitment to protecting the Gospel and keeping its message and praise to God the same stems from the conviction that the faith was delivered to Christians by Jesus Christ. If Christians are going to be “apostolic,” then they must belong to the same Church that Christ founded. That Church began in the first century.

The musical forms of early Christian worship were initially Jewish, such as the chanting of Psalms. As the Gentile missions began, Christians began incorporating Greek music forms. The language of worship became almost universally Greek, which was the common language of the Roman Empire, and more and more Greek music forms and theory came into use in the Church. Within twenty to forty years, the Christian worship service was a composite of Jewish and Greek liturgical music forms, following the basic shape of Jewish Synagogue and Temple worship. Within a hundred years, as the Church spread across the Roman Empire and most of its members were Gentiles who spoke Greek and lived in a Greek culture, most of the musical style and theory had become Greek. It still retained some Jewish form and content such as chanting. After the legalization of Christianity in the early 4th century, this music form and style developed into Byzantine music, the Church’s first formal music form. Byzantine music was very broadly and consistently used throughout the Church through the seventh and eighth centuries.

Although Greek music was predominant, it was not the only form in use. In Egypt, there was a decidedly different form, as was the case in other parts of the Empire. However, most of the Empire used Greek as its common language, and the Byzantine music became almost universal throughout the Church. The two earliest Christian hymns, “O Gladsome Light” (referred to by St. Justin in about 150 A.D.) and a “Hymn to the Holy Trinity” (from Oxyrrhyncus, Egypt, probably mid-4th century), are decidedly Greek in musical form.

The term “early Christianity” generally refers to the time prior to the legalization of the faith by the Emperor Constantine. Theological development occurred during this time, as well. As the Christian Church worked through the implications of what had occurred in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and as they grew in their knowledge and understanding under the leadership of the Apostles such as James, John and Paul, their worship began to incorporate these new understandings. For instance, the earliest church had two Sabbath services: a “Synagogue-type” service and a separate communion service. Over time these were combined. Another page in this section describes Worship in the Early Church, documenting the processes and influences by which Christian worship became formalized, and how the various rites in use locally became standardized throughout the Roman and Byzantine Empire. A further page details later developments in Christian worship as theology and doctrine became defined, and external cultural influences were exerted on the Christian Church.

Credits: Parts of this page are excerpted from: Williams, B. and Anstall, H.; *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple and the Early Church*; Light and Life Publishing, Minneapolis, 1990.

Development of Christian worship.

Where did liturgical worship and especially the Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox Church or the Mass of the Roman Church come from? What were its origins? How much change has there been over time from the beginnings of Christian worship in the first century Jerusalem Church? One should begin by answering the most basic question: what is liturgy? The best translation is “the work of the people.” That is the collective work which assembled believers do together in offering praise and worship to God.

Early History of Jewish Worship.

Editor’s Note: Stefan C. Reif, Director of the Genizah Research Unit of the University of Cambridge, England, compares what is known of the worship practices of early Judaism with the liturgical evidence of ninth/tenth-century geonic Babylonia, contrasting the fluidity of the early period with the liturgical fixity of the latter. The evidence suggests a radical reconsideration of early rabbinic liturgy, according to which we must imagine a great deal more flexibility and creativity than has traditionally been assumed. He sums up what we know of the many strands of Jewish liturgy from their inception in the first few centuries of rabbinic culture and takes us briefly to the period in which liturgical traditions were consolidated into prayer books and rites that have proved lasting ever since. Of particular significance, he shows how the discoveries from the Cairo Genizah can illuminate our understanding of the process by which prayer books and rites evolved out of liturgical traditions.

The function of this contribution to our discussion of the liturgical traditions of Christianity and Judaism is to explain how a formal, authoritative liturgy emerged in the history of rabbinic Judaism; when and where this process took place; and what factors dictated the adoption of such an office among the religious commitments of the Jewish community at large. In order to achieve an adequate explanation of such developments it will obviously be necessary to take as our starting point that period of Jewish religious history when a recognizable form of rabbinic liturgy may be identified and to describe in general terms the various characteristics of that form as contemporary research has identified them.

A leap of some centuries will then be made to bring us to a situation when a Jewish liturgical codex was given a position of some respect among the literary sources of the religious tradition and therefore to a time when it may no longer be doubted that there existed a written guide for regular communal worship sanctioned by a leading figure, or a number of such guides emanating from various such authorities.

A comparison, or rather a contrast, will then be drawn between the primitive form and the subtle shape that it later acquired, and it will be possible to pinpoint the differences that had emerged in the intervening centuries. Reference will be made to the attempts of various generations of Jewish liturgical scholars to account for any differences that may be detected between the earlier and later sources and to demonstrate, by and large, that these were differences of degree rather than of essence. By way of contrast and as a result of recent research in the fragmentary manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah, it will be suggested that what may be traced here are pivotal developments in the history of Jewish liturgy that have only recently gained the attention of scholars and that indeed characterize a period of Jewish history that has yet to give up all its secrets to the researcher. It will then be possible to set such developments in a larger context and thereby to achieve the aims set for this essay.

Jewish Liturgy in the Fourth Century.

By the fourth century of the common era it is fairly certain that there existed (1) an authoritative body of tannaitic traditions relating to biblical interpretation and the application of Jewish law, and (2) at least the early, dialectic responses, both supportive and disputatious, of the amoraim to these traditions. The process of developing these responses, or Talmud, as it came to be called, was under way in both Jewish Palestine and the major Diaspora community of Babylon; and the Jewish religious reaction to the loss of its temple, its holy city, and its independent state had had time to mature over a period of three centuries.^[1]

What is more, whatever the length of the period during which the Jews and the early Christians, or Jewish Christians, enjoyed close religious and social contact, they had by that time gone their separate ways. The situation had been much more fluid in the first Christian century than is often claimed. At that early age, neither the founders of Christianity nor the precursors of talmudic tradition had a definitive theory or practice with regard to worship outside the Jerusalem Temple, and various competing forces had been seeking to dominate the liturgical scene. Whatever mutual influences were at work on the earliest, recognizable forms of rabbinic and Christian liturgy, these are more likely to date from the second and third Centuries, when the two communities were still operating in the same, or closely connected contexts.

Be that as it may, the schism was completed by the fourth century, and later effects, positive and negative, whether the result of emulation or reaction, were those of one religion on another and not of a single relig-

ion's internal affairs. For all these reasons, it may be assumed that by the fourth century the foundations had been laid of what ultimately became talmudic Judaism and that the liturgical customs in vogue by then may fairly be identified as the early form of what later evolved into the rabbinic prayer book. [2]

It is beyond dispute that the wide variety of prayers and blessings that are attested in the talmudic literature were recited from memory and transmitted orally, and that there was a distinct disapproval of committing them to an authoritative, written text. While there is no doubt in the talmudic sources about the existence of such pieces of liturgy, there are no unanimous views recorded there about its degree of importance in Jewish practice, its essential character, and its detailed application. Not without controversy was it sometimes given a theological centrality equal to that accorded to Torah study and charitable behavior and directly linked with the cultic obligations that had once been met in the Jerusalem Temple.

Where, when, towards which site, how often, in which language, with whom, and for how long observant Jews — certainly men, but possibly women as well — should conduct their prayers, were questions that elicited a host of responses from the Babylonian and Palestinian rabbis. By the same token, the formalization of the reading and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible was already a feature of synagogal activity, but the precise content and structure of the lectionary was clearly open to debate and variant usage. [3]

As far as the synagogue itself was concerned, it was only gradually being transformed from a center of social and intellectual activity, particularly in the Diaspora, to the successor of the Temple as a central but not the central, focus of Jewish liturgical activity. The Synagogue was attracting to itself more and more of the disparate elements of earlier Jewish expressions of worship and their symbols, but arguments could still be made for alternative sites, such as the home and the academy, perhaps even for alternative cultic sites in the form of Jewish temples, and a distinction could still be drawn between prayer as the expression of individual piety and supplication and liturgy as the religious commitment of the community, whatever form that might have to take now that there was no Jerusalem Temple.

The architecture and function of the synagogue were by no means standard, but the trend was moving away from the simple towards the complex and from the functional to the symbolic. Although there were honorific titles and functions for leading members of the synagogue, the service could be led by any male congregant, no special mediator, professional or theological, being required. [4]

In the matter of prayer, as in so many other detailed elements of their daily religious activities, the rabbis of the Talmud, perhaps even more than those of the Mishnah, adopted a fairly pluralistic approach. This, of course, assumes that what they have to say is to be regarded as a reflection of reality rather than a collection of theoretical reflections of relevance only to their intellectual system of argumentation. Some stressed the mystical and the poetic while others opted for a more prosaic order and guidance. The student of liturgical issues in the oldest talmudic sources soon becomes aware of what I have, in a different context, called “the tensions, controversies, stresses and strains that accompanied early rabbinic Judaism's attempt to define the place of prayer in the framework of its religious ideology.”

This is not to say that there were no halakhic requirements and that it was left entirely to individuals to treat prayer as they pleased. Some traditions had existed long enough among the ordinary folk to have acquired a popular status, others were clearly attached to special occasions of one sort or another, and there were, no doubt, those that were treated as authoritative because of their origin in the Jerusalem Temple. In the detailed recitation, however, as well as in the degree of standardization of all the customs and the theological assessment of their importance, there lay the substantial pluralism just noted. Although many specific items of prayer and prayer custom are referred to, they often appear only as a title or as a few initial words, disembodied liturgy as it were, or they are offered in a variety of different forms. Types of prayer are mentioned, and numbers of words are sometimes specified; but to the critical observer it is not obvious where the theory ends and the practice begins.[5]

Before an attempt is made to summarize what constituted the corpus of Jewish prayer in about the fourth century, two further points need to be stressed. It should not be taken for granted at any stage of Jewish religious history that what the rabbis said and legislated was already the communal norm. There were certainly periods and areas in which rabbinic authority and centralization were dominant, but these were at least as often the exception as they were the rule. Talmudic statements may consequently reflect a rabbinic struggle to impose certain ideas and practices and need not necessarily record the contemporary, communal reality. Conversely, it is possible that what the rabbis record as accepted custom may to an extensive degree include items that had their origin among the common folk rather than the intelligentsia. But until we have fuller liturgical texts dating from that period, if we ever do, we can only speculate on the relative proportions of liturgical theory and practical applications.[6]

The second point to be made is that two major Jewish communities existed during the talmudic period, one in the Holy Land and the other in Babylon. There was considerable intercourse between the two, and influence was exercised in both directions. Some evidence suggests that in Eretz Yisrael, to put it in Heinemann's words, "a certain amount of freedom and variety remained," and it may therefore be the case that the pluralism of the talmudic sources with regard to prayer will ultimately turn out to be a division between the popular, aesthetic, and liberal trends of one community against the elitist, standardized, and authoritative preferences of the other. [7]

A further complication is the existence of Jewish communities in the Greek-speaking Diaspora who might have been more open to external influences than those in Babylon and Eretz Yisrael. Some inscriptions point in such a direction, but the major sources are still the Palestinian Talmud and midrashim. Again, the necessary analysis remains to be undertaken, and it is not certain that such research can successfully be completed on the basis of the literary sources alone, as these have obviously passed through the hands of various editors and redactors since they were first compiled.[8]

Which Jewish prayers, then, were already in existence and use by the middle of the talmudic period? It seems clear that at least two paragraphs of the Shema were recited, morning and evening, and that a formal invitation to communal prayer, as well as benedictions concerning the natural order of the day and the unique role of Israel, preceded it. The Tefillah (or Amidah) was also to be recited in the morning and afternoon, but some doubts were voiced about its obligatory nature in the evening. Efforts were being made to ensure a continuity between the Shema and the Tefillah by the adoption of passages, with suitable benedictions, expressing faith in God's special relationship with Israel, as demonstrated in the past, and confidence in God's response to its more immediate needs. The daily Tefillah recorded these needs, but it is doubtful whether each of its benedictions had yet obtained a definite structure. Perhaps the first three and last two or three were less fluid than the remainder.

These were also recited on Sabbaths, festivals, and fasts together with one or more appropriate central benedictions relating in some way, also yet to be categorically defined, to the particular nature of the occasion. Elements of what had originally been individual prayer and benediction were becoming absorbed into communal or synagogal worship, and remnants of the public ritual once carried out on Mount Zion were being adopted and adapted for more personal use. It was not, however, universally assumed that the formal patterns suitable for the liturgy of the community were necessarily applicable to private devotions. Such devotions, generally pietistic or penitential, were associated with the names of individual rabbis and couched in the first person, although there were also poetic supplications that may have originated in the Jerusalem Temple.[9]

The other function of the synagogue — perhaps indeed its major and earlier function — was as a center of Bible reading and instruction. Pentateuchal scrolls were publicly read and expounded on Sabbaths, festivals, fasts, and on the market days of Monday and Thursday, and, while it was becoming customary to associate particular passages with related occasions, it is still anachronistic to refer to a fixed lectionary at this time. There was controversy about the place of the Decalogue and a tendency to make a theological point by abandoning its daily recitation in spite of its long and respectable pedigree. Translations from the Hebrew into Aramaic and interpretations of the text were a central part of what amounted to this system of regular religious education for the community.

Parts of the prophetic and hagiographical books also played a part in such public readings, but the process had yet to be liturgically formalized. The earliest manifestation of a custom to include a formal recitation of a set of psalms in the communal liturgy was the use of Psalms 113-118 as the hallel, but the wider liturgical use in a communal context of what has often been viewed as the hymn book of the second Jerusalem Temple was still a development of the future.[10]

As previously implied, liturgy for the talmudic Jew was not restricted to prayer but was expressed in the observance of mitzvot, the study of Torah, and in domestic customs. It therefore occasions no surprise to find the academy and the home as the normal settings for the remainder of talmudic prayer. Declarations of God's sanctity, with the use of the trishagion, and pious aspirations for the establishment of God's ultimate dominion were components of the praises that came to be associated with sessions of Torah study. At home, the commencement and conclusion of Sabbaths and festivals were marked by formulas that declared the sanctity of God and of the special day and that distinguished between various examples of the holy and the profane. Some prayers were couched in Aramaic, others in Hebrew, and there was even no objection in principle to the use of Greek in certain contexts.

Among the oldest Jewish liturgical forms are the Passover Haggadah and the Grace after Meals, and it should not be forgotten that benedictions were used to acknowledge God's bounty in providing for human sus-

tenance. Even the contract of marriage had, by talmudic times, developed its own set of benedictions on the themes of the creation of humankind, marital joy, and the return to Zion; the setting here, however, was not the synagogue but the independent entity of wedding ceremony and feast. The benediction, like the oath and the vow, had evolved from its popular origins into a more formal structure and, as has been argued by Heinemann, was gradually being applied as such to various liturgical contexts. [11]

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[1] Schmu'el Safray, ed., *The Literature of the Sages*. Part One: *Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates* (Assen/Maastricht and Philadelphia, 1987); D. Weiss-Halivni, *Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara* (Cambridge, MA, 1986); Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*, 5 vols. (Leiden, 1965-1970); G. Alon, *The Jews in Their Land in the Talmudic Age 70-650 C.E.* (Jerusalem, 1980-1984).

[2] Stefan C. Reif, "The Early Liturgy of the Synagogue," in W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein, eds., *The Cambridge History of Judaism III* (forthcoming); M. Meyers and J. F. Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity* (London, 1981); Paul F. Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer in the Early Church* (London, 1981/New York, 1982).

[3] B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Uppsala, 1961); Stefan C. Reif, "Some Liturgical Issues in the Talmudic Sources," SL 15 (1982-1983): 188-206; Joseph Heinemann and Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Literature of the Synagogue* (New York, 1975); Jakob J. Petuchowski, ed., *Contributions to the Scientific Study of Jewish Liturgy* (New York, 1970), pp. xvii-xxi.

[4] Joseph Gutmann, ed., *Ancient Synagogues: The State of Research*, Brown Judaic Studies (Decatur, GA, 1981); Lee I. Levine, ed., *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem, 1981); idem, ed., *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1987); Baruch M. Bokser, *The Origins of the Seder* (Berkeley, 1984); J. Schwartz, "Jubilees, Bethel, and the Temple of Jacob," HUCA 56 (1985): 63-85; Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud* (Berlin, 1976); Bernadette J. Broton, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues*, Brown Judaic Studies (Decatur, GA, 1982); B. Meg. 10a, A. Z. 52b, Men. 109b.

[5] Reif, "Some Liturgical Issues," especially p. 191. Ezra Fleischer (*Eretz-Israel Prayer and Prayer Rituals as Portrayed in the Geniza Documents* [Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1988]) takes a less skeptical view than Heinemann (*Prayer in the Talmud*) about the degree of formality already in existence in talmudic prayer. See also Joseph Heinemann, *Studies in Jewish Liturgy*, ed. A. Shanan (Jerusalem, 1981); Ismar Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Frankfurt, 1931; updated Hebrew edition, Tel-Aviv, 1972).

[6] Robert Goldenberg neatly sums up the problem of using talmudic sources for historical reconstruction in his essay in Barry W. Holtz, ed., *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts* (New York, 1984), pp. 129-75.

[7] Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews B* (New York, 1952); Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, pp. 285-87.

[8] Broton, *Women Leaders*; L. Roth-Gerson, *The Greek Inscriptions from the Synagogues in Eretz-Israel* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1987).

[9] E. g., M. Ber. I-5, Taan. 2:2-3, Yoma 7.1, Tamid 5.1; T. Ber. 1-3; B. Ber. 4b, 27b-29b. See L. Ginzberg, *A Commentary on the Palestinian Talmud* (Hebrew; New York, 1941), I, pp. 215-16, II, p. 359. See also Stefan C. Reif, "Liturgical Difficulties and Geniza Manuscripts," in S. Morag, I. Ben-Ami, N. A. Stillman, eds., *Studies in Judaism and Islam Presented to S. D. Goitein* (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 99-122; Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, pp. 137-92, 218-50, and the various relevant essays in the collection edited by Shanan, *Studies in Jewish Liturgy*; Tzvee Zahavy, *The Mishnaic Law of Blessings and Prayers: Tractate Berakhot*, Brown Judaic Studies (Decatur, GA, 1988).

[10] Philo, B Som. XV 3.127 and *De Opificio Mundi* 43.128; Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.17.175; Luke 4:16-21, Acts 13:15, 15:21; M. Meg. 3-4; B. Meg. 21a-32a; Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst*, pp. 155-84 (Hebrew edition, pp. 117-38); Petuchowski, *Jewish Liturgy*; Heinemann, *Studies in Jewish Liturgy*; G. Vennes, "The Decalogue and the Minim," *Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 103 (1968): 232-40 = idem, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (Leiden, 1975), pp. 169-77; Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament, An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*, 4th ed. (London, 1980), pp. 75-79; B. Fles. 117b, Arakhin 10b, Ber. 56a.

[11] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, pp. 27-29, 218, 256-75; M. Ber. 7, 8.1, 5, Pes. 10; B. Ber. 20b, Pes. 53a-54a, 106b, Keth. 7a-8b; R. Posner, U. Kaploun, and S. Cohen, *Jewish Liturgy: Prayer and Synagogue Service through the Ages* (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 35-38; Reif, "Early Liturgy," paragraph on liturgical language.

The Old Testament Basis for Christian Worship.

Jews at the time of Jesus Christ had already had a history of worship almost 1500 years long. Their history was full of interaction with God Who called them to be His people, and Who had revealed to them specific instructions as to the offerings and sacrifices which were part of the way in which He was to be worshiped. The Bible is clear that God revealed to Israel how to worship, and it was patterned after things in heaven. [1] These specific forms or liturgies of worship were first seen in the Tabernacle of the early Israelites, and were consummated in the Temple worship which took place later in Jerusalem. The worship of God in the Temple in Jerusalem was the first and most prominent focus of Jewish worship, which included the form and frequency of prayer and sacrifice.

For Judaism there had always been a constant cycle of prayers, blessings and meals: daily, weekly, monthly and annually. These constituted the second focus of worship for the Jews. In its most regular form it included practices in the daily hours of prayers and the annual High Feast Days. The High Feast Days included the sacrificial offerings of the Temple and contained Jewish messianic expectation. These meals included the "breaking of bread" and the "blessing of the cup," and contained parallels with both the temple sacrifice and the messianic feast.

As Fr. Louis Bouyer points out, "The synagogal worship, already before Christ, had its necessary complement in the ritual of the meals: the family meal, and better still at least at the time of Christ, the meals of those communities of the faithful brought together by a common messianic expectation..." [2]

There was a "meal liturgy" for the prayers of the meals, and in principle they were required for every meal. However, it took on the greatest importance in family meals and especially the meals of the Holy Days. The entire structure of the Last Supper as recorded by St. Luke mirrors the meal liturgy as practiced within Judaism at the time. [3] These meal prayers and their structure contributed directly in the formation of the early Christian celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The third and later focus of worship was that of the synagogue. For the average Israelite, the Temple was a place of worship only on certain days of the year, and it was most specifically a place of sacrifice. During the Babylonian captivity, worship in the Temple was impossible. A new form of worship came into being, a form focused patterned on temple worship, but without the sacrificial element which took place only in the Temple, and with a strong didactic element of teaching and remembering. These two elements of Jewish worship — synagogue and temple — together formed the very basic components of the form or order of the liturgy for the early Christian Church.

Besides the structure or order of worship that came from Judaism into Christianity, one can also find the cycles of liturgy — the daily, weekly and yearly cycles of worship-coming from the Old Testament as well. Acts 2:46 says that "day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart." On a daily basis the Apostles continued their Jewish worship practices in the temple, and on a daily basis broke the bread of communion. This regularity of time is further confirmed in Acts 3:1 where Peter and John were going to the temple because it was the hour of prayer. Not only did they continue in Jewish worship practice, but they kept the liturgical cycle of daily prayers at set hours of the day as well as the major feast days.

Christian worship, then, was a Christ-centered pattern that continued and preserved the traditional structure of synagogue worship and the meaning of temple worship that the Lord had established in Israel. This basic structure included the Old and New Testament practices of liturgy, baptism, and Paschal feast that became the Eucharist, and certain of the feast days.

The Shape of Temple Worship.

The continuity of temple and synagogue worship practices characterized the Church in its earliest days, and the synagogue form became the basic order of worship for the Christian Church. This structure was set very early during the New Testament era while the Church was still seen as essentially a Jewish sect, a messianic sect believing in Jesus Christ. The setting of this order or form of worship took place even prior to the admission of Gentiles into the Church, and before the spread of the Gospel outside of Judea. Therefore, by the time the Gentile missions began in about 38 A.D. (and later enhanced by Paul's missionary activity), this order was established and accepted as the form of Christian worship. Into the basic synagogue form were blended other elements from the temple as well as some uniquely Christian elements.

Regarding the Temple, it is important to realize two things about its worship. First, the primary type of activity was sacrifice. The cadence in the spiritual lives of most Old Testament Jews was the celebration of the Holy Feast days — and their corresponding offerings. And what determined the manner in which these sacrifices would take place? God had given the instructions in Exodus and Leviticus which describe in detail the manner in which worship is to be offered to God. Secondly, worship in the temple — and in fact all Christian worship — was and is to reflect worship in Heaven.

The Scriptures provide glimpses of heavenly worship. There are reports of it in Isaiah 6, Daniel 7, and Revelations 4 and 5. It was upon this heavenly worship that the worship of God on earth was patterned. Exodus 25 through 27 provides detailed information about the nature of temple worship, including the physical structure of the temple and its dimensions, instructions for the Ark to be built, the internal décor of the Tabernacle, details of the priests' vestments, the use of incense, the presence of an altar, the daily offerings, the use of anointing oil, and the use of images.

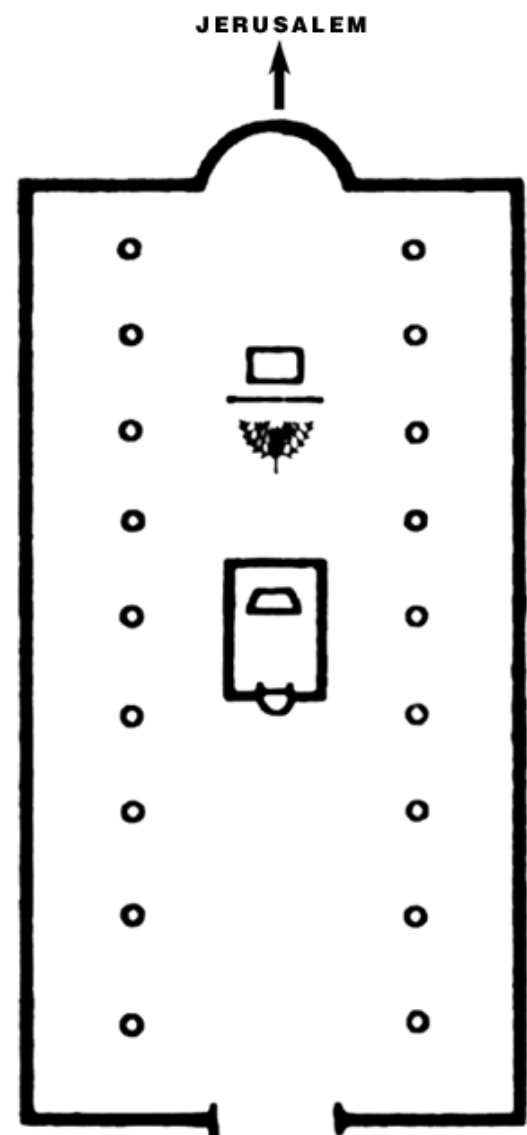
Exodus 25:17 begins the command of God regarding the making of the Ark of the Covenant. It includes the command to make two cherubim of gold, between which God said that He would “meet with thee and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim.” The mercy seat, or Ark of the Covenant, was understood as “the empty throne where nothing was to be seen; on this throne God was present — the sole object of worship in Israel... God spoke from between the cherubim — invisibly present on His throne — to Moses, Aaron, Samuel ... to His people. Here the blood of atonement had been sprinkled each year.” [4]

The original Ark, which disappeared in the exile, had held the Tablets of the Law. It was understood both as the place of sacrifice and the place from which God spoke — the place of communion. This is one reason that in Eastern Orthodox Churches there are representations of two cherubim behind the altar on which the bread and wine are consecrated to become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ who was sacrificed for mankind. And between and before them is the altar at which the communion takes place in the Eucharist.

Jewish components of Christian Woeship.

Most scholars agree that the structure of Christian worship came almost directly from the Synagogue form of Jewish worship. [1] The importance of the synagogue to the Jews was due to a historical experience, the Babylonian exile. With no Temple in which to worship and sacrifice, faithful Jews were forced to gather around their elders to listen to the Word of God, for teaching, and to worship. This form was retained and matured after the return from the exile, and became a normal part of Jewish religious life. It was patterned on Temple worship, and was held at the same times as services in the Temple.

A brief description of the architecture of the average synagogue in the time of Christ can help explain these factors. There were several very distinct features. The first was the seat of Moses, which was represented by seats in the synagogue occupied by the rabbis. These seats were located on a raised platform called a bema, which had a central location in the synagogue building. Each synagogue had an Ark, which was protected by a veil and before which burned a seven-branched candlestick — the Menorah. “The Ark in the synagogue contained the Scriptures and spiritually pointed to the Ark of the Temple, as the physical alignment of the synagogue pointed toward Jerusalem. The ultimate focus of synagogue worship was the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem, just as the focus of worship in the Temple was likewise the Holy of Holies.” [2] Note that the synagogue was oriented toward Jerusalem, as can be seen in the diagram below.



Luke tells us Jesus went to the synagogue as was His custom and was asked to read the prophet Isaiah (Luke 4:16-30). Alfred Edersheim in his book about the life of Jesus cites the typical order which Jesus Himself experienced the day he began his ministry in Nazareth. “On his entrance into the Synagogue, or perhaps

before that, the chief ruler would request Jesus to act for that Sabbath as the Sheliach Tsibbur (the representative of the people). For, according to the Mishnah, the person who read in the synagogue the portion from the Prophets, was also expected to conduct the devotions... Then Jesus would ascend the Bema and, standing at the lectern, begin the service by two prayers:

“Blessed be Thou, O Lord, King of the world, Who formest the light and createst the darkness, Who makest peace, and createst everything; Who, in mercy, givest light to the earth, and to those who dwell upon it, and in Thy goodness, day by day, and every day, renewest the works of creation. Blessed be the Lord our God for the glory of His handiworks, and for the light-giving lights which He has made for His praise. Blessed be the Lord our God, Who has formed the lights.

“With great love has Thou loved us, O Lord our God, and with much overflowing pity has Thou pitied us, our Father and our King. For the sake of our fathers who trusted in Thee, and Thou taughtest them the statutes of life, have mercy upon us, and teach us. Enlighten our eyes in Thy Law; cause our hearts to cleave to Thy commandments; unite our hearts to love and fear Thy Name, and we shall not be put to shame, world without end. For Thou art a God Who preparest salvation, and hast in truth brought us hear to Thy great Name that we may lovingly praise Thee and Thy Unity. Blessed be the Lord, Who in love chose His people Israel.

“After this followed what may be designated as the Jewish Creed, called the Shema, consisting of three passages from the Pentateuch. This prayer finished, he who officiated took his place before the Ark, and there repeated what formed the? eulogies or Benedictions. After this, such prayers were inserted as were suited to the day. The liturgical part being thus completed... the (chief ruler) approached the Ark and brought out a roll of the Law. On the Sabbath, at least seven persons were called upon successively to read portions from the Law, none of them consisting of less than three verses. Upon the Law followed a section from the Prophets? the reading of which was in olden times immediately followed by an address, discourse or sermon.”

From Edersheim’s description we can see the six basic components in synagogue worship, and with minor differences most scholars agree with his observation.

The Litany. The first and opening part of the synagogue service was a series of prayers, a litany, blessing God for His love toward mankind. In its present form, the Orthodox liturgy begins with the Great Litany. The celebrant says, “In peace let us pray to the Lord,” and the people respond, as they do to each of the following petitions, “Lord, have mercy.”

The Confession. The Litany was immediately followed by a confession of God’s faithfulness and of mankind’s sin. In the Orthodox Liturgy, these may be found in the prayer between the Great Litany and the Scripture reading.

Intercessory Prayer. The third part was the Eulogy, the prayers of intercession. Likewise these intercessory prayers complement the confessions in preparation for the Scripture readings.

Scripture Readings. This was followed by the Reading from the Law and the Prophets. In today’s Orthodox Church, as with any church using lectionary readings, these include Old Testament readings as well as Epistle and Gospel readings.

Preaching. The reading was followed by a discourse or sermon which expanded upon the reading and clarified its application to daily life. This is the homily or sermon in modern services.

Benediction. The service concluded with a Benediction, which means “good word.”

On the Sabbath, the assembly gathered around the Ark with the rabbi to hear his teaching and to meditate on the Law and the Prophets, at a time in conjunction with worship in the Temple. Although the synagogue service centered on the reading of the work of God, it was not exclusively so; it was also communion with God in prayer and praise. It was also one of the forms of worship which Jesus practiced. Upon entering the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus was asked by the ruler of the synagogue to be the liturgist; He participated in the antiphonal litanies which blessed God and began that synagogue service. He joined His neighbors in confessing the faithfulness of God. The intercessory prayers were His prayers also. Then after the reading of the Law, He was asked to read the Prophets. This He did, and then to the amazement of those gathered, He did more — He interpreted them! It is unlikely that He heard the benediction, however, given the reaction He received that day.

The most common translation of leitourgia is “the work of the people.” It is that common act of God’s people together offering praise to Him in the manner which He revealed that they should. This was the type of worship which took place in the synagogue, and which came into the early Church. Edersheim goes so far as to say that “the synagogue became the cradle of the Church.” [3] And as if that weren’t enough, the components of Jewish worship which came into Christianity did so in the same order. This is evident in that the basic six-point structure of synagogue worship previously described still constitutes the core of Christian worship, and

more or less has for two thousand years. This “dependency of order” verifies the historical and theological truth of the worship practices of the Christian Church as the fulfillment of that which God began in Israel.

As previously described, early Christian Churches used a design very similar to Jewish synagogues. A natural development occurred as the new Christian Church formulated its own theology and understanding, but the core connection to Judaic form was never lost. This can be seen in the oldest Syrian churches that have been excavated: “...the chair of Moses has become the Episcopal seat, and the semi-circular bench that surrounds it the seat of the Christian ‘presbyters.’ But as in the synagogue they remain in the midst of the congregation. The bema is also there, not far from the Ark of the Scriptures which is still in its ancient place, not at the far end, but some distance from the apse. It is still veiled with its curtain and the candlestick is still beside it. The apse, however, is no longer turned toward Jerusalem but to the East, a symbol of the expectation of Christ’s coming in His parousia?in the Syrian church this eastward apse now contains the altar before which hangs a second curtain, as if to signify that from now it is the only ‘holy of holies’ in the expectation of the parousia.” [4]

The Passover.

Passover is perhaps the ultimate example of how Jesus Christ transformed a Jewish worship practice into something new and different. One of the three major holy days of Israel, Passover celebrated their deliverance by God from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. It included the sacrifice of a lamb in the forecourt of the Temple, and the partaking of the seder or Passover supper including part of the sacrificed lamb. This lamb called to mind the lambs slain in Egypt; their blood brushed on the doorposts and lintels to stay the destroying angel. More than just symbolic, this sacrificed lamb accomplished the deliverance of the people of God for yet another year, while the seder, the Passover supper, established the reality of communion between God and mankind. That is why every Jew made it a point to be in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover at least once in their life; only in Jerusalem was it possible to celebrate the Passover completely.

Jesus had entered the city of Jerusalem prior to Passover, desirous of sharing this final supper with His disciples. They asked Him what they must do to prepare for the Passover (Jn. 13:1 and Mt. 26:17), and He instructed them about preparing the upper room. The disciples undoubtedly expected to celebrate the actual Passover meal with their Lord, for they were in Jerusalem. What they were not expecting was that which took place: Jesus Christ in the context of a supper, offering Himself as the Lamb of the world. Jesus undoubtedly gathered them for a supper, for all the Gospels record it.

But the supper which Jesus and His disciples celebrated together was not the seder supper of Passover. It certainly was a supper in the context of Passover, and the types of the Passover festival were present, including the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup, but it was not the actual Passover seder because it took place on Thursday evening. The Passover seder would have had to be celebrated on Friday evening, at the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath, and in this case the beginning of the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Because the supper took place on Thursday night, the day before Passover, there was no slaughtered lamb from the Temple to partake of; and without the sacrificed lamb from the Temple, the meal would not be a seder. According to St. John, the death of Christ took place the next day, Friday, while the lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple (18:28). Thus, the Last Supper is an anticipation of the sacrifice of Golgotha, rather than an actual Passover meal. Jesus was crucified on Golgotha the following day, on Friday, in order that the Jewish authorities could complete His death before the Sabbath and the beginning of Passover on Friday evening.

Luke tells us that Jesus told the disciples at the table that he “desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; but I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15-16). Jesus himself said that He would not eat another Passover until it had been fulfilled in the Kingdom; therefore, what was eaten by Him and the disciples must not have been a Passover meal. Our Lord gathered His disciples for a ritual meal, which was the same as the prayer of sacrificial representation?in the Temple. Jesus did not intend to eat Passover with His disciples in Jerusalem, for He knew that He was the lamb to be sacrificed on Friday!

The lambs being slaughtered in the Temple are of the Old Covenant; the Lamb being sacrificed on the cross is the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Jesus Christ, in the offering of His Body and His Blood, is the sacrificial Lamb. Rather than sharing lamb from the Temple to accomplish their deliverance for yet another year, Jesus was offering Himself in whom they and all the world would be delivered from sin and death. Our Lord himself took a specific Jewish worship practice, one that had been revealed by God, filled it with the new meaning of the New Covenant, and transformed it into Christian communion. He had become The Passover Lamb, ready to be sacrificed for the deliverance of God’s creation. And while the Eucharist was instituted for the Twelve within the context of the Passover Feast, it was not insti-

tuted at a Passover meal. In this Jesus actualized the Church and brought it into being. It is no wonder that the early Christians thought of the Eucharist as delivering them from death (bestowing life) and establishing communion with God (unity in Christ). Deliverance and communion were the focus of the Passover, which had now been refocused in Christ Himself.

The problem with understanding the Last Supper as the Passover seder and by extension of understanding the Eucharist as a re-presentation of the Last Supper is that it results in the observance becoming a dramatic memorial. The Last Supper was a historical event that occurred once. In contrast, the Eucharist is the actual experience of the Lamb who was eternally offered on the cross. True, the crucifixion occurred once in time and need not occur again, as the New Testament clearly states. But, the crucifixion of Christ is an event with eternal consequences. Through this event all humankind before and after the cross, in fact all creation, may be saved; and in this sense it is an eternal sacrifice. Not that Christ is eternally re-sacrificed, but that the scope of the crucifixion is eternal — reaching out to each communicant in the Eucharist.

That is why in the Orthodox prayer before Communion, the priest says: “remembering... the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the sitting at the right hand and the second and glorious coming...” What do Christians remember? Those actions of Jesus Christ which are eternal (past, present and future), which transcend time and space and in which Christians are saved to eternal life. The Eucharist is the actualization of the Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection and the Second Coming.

The Jewish Berakoth.

Some scholars make a connection to the Jewish tradition of *berakoth* prayers. This Jewish word has been translated into Greek and English as thanksgiving, but is best translated in its Jewish usage as “blessings.” Unlike the contemporary English usage of thanksgiving as meaning gratitude, *berakoth*, like the Greek word *eucharistia* is primarily a proclamation of the miraculous work of God, and is not limited to the gift received or the human response that it may prompt.

There are two principal types of *berakoth* in the Jewish tradition: “One type is a brief formula that became very soon stereotyped and is composed merely of a praise-thanksgiving, a ‘blessing’ in the narrowest sense. The other is a more developed formula in which the prayer of supplication has its place, although always in a ‘blessing’ context. The first is destined to accompany every action of the pious Jew from his awakening in the morning to the moment that sleep overtakes him in the evening. The second has its place either in the Synagogue service (in the morning, at noon and at night) or in the meal prayers, particularly those accompanying the final cup shared by all the participants.” [5]

Of specific interest for understanding the development of the Eucharistic component of early Christian worship is the meal *berakoth*. In principle it was required for every Jewish meal, and included the expectation of the messianic banquet by the remnant of Israel, and so became a unique sacrifice of its own. The meal was preceded by an obligatory hand-washing, followed by the drinking of a first cup of wine by each person who repeated the following blessing:

“Blessed be thou, Yahweh, our God, King of the universe, who givest us this fruit of the vine.”

The meal then began, with the father of the family or presiding member of the community breaking the bread which was to be given to all present, with the following blessing:

“Blessed be thou, Yahweh, our God, King of the universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth.”

Following the meal, the father or presiding member, with a cup of wine mixed with water, invited those present to join with his act of thanksgiving, saying:

“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.”

And those present responded:

“Blessed be he whose generosity has given us food and whose kindness has given us life.”

Then the father or presiding member chanted a series of *berakoth* (typically three), the first of which went back to Moses and was a blessing for nourishment. The second went back to Joshua and was a blessing for the promised land. The third went back to David and Solomon and was a supplication that the creative and redemptive action of God in olden times be continued and renewed today, and find its ultimate fulfillment in the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

The Passover meal followed this pattern, but was “distinguished by special foods, bitter herbs, and the lamb, which were used together with the special corresponding prayers and the dialogued recitation of the *haggadah* (a kind of traditional homily on the origin and the ever fresh sense of the feast). But the Last Supper was not a Passover meal, because it preceded Passover, and Jesus did not connect the Eucharistic institution to any of the details that are proper to the Passover meal alone. In every case, however, the essential ritual act came at the end of the meal.” [6] A lamp was brought in and blessed by the father or presiding member of the commu-

nity, with a blessing that recalled the creation of the luminaries to light up the night. After this, incense was burned with a proper blessing, and then a second general hand-washing took place; the one who presided received the water from a servant or the youngest person at the table.

If we consider the elements of the berakoth and compare them to the New Testament accounts of the Last Supper, we see a very high degree of similarity. The first cup that followed the first hand-washing is mentioned by St. Luke as the fruit of the vine which he would no longer drink with his disciples before they met again in the Kingdom. The breaking of the bread correlates directly with the bread which Jesus Christ blessed and broke. The second ritual hand-washing was changed by Jesus, in that rather than washing hands, He took the water brought by St. John, the youngest disciple, and washed the feet of his disciples, beginning with Peter.

The origins of the form of Christian worship come from and combine the praise and teaching elements of the Synagogue service with the sacrificial elements of Temple worship. At the very core of Christian worship is the Eucharist. Its form and structure is also Jewish, given new content and meaning by Jesus Christ. Fr. Bouyer provides this summary:

“From this point on we can understand that we must place what we call today the ‘words of institution’ of the eucharist back into their own context which is that of the ritual berakoth of the Jewish meal, so that we may perceive the sense and the whole import of their expression. The words announcing everything that was to follow in the Last Supper, as preserved for us by St. Luke, are connected with the preparatory berakoth over the first cup. The blessing over the body (or the flesh) of Christ is connected with the initial berakoth of the breaking of bread, and that over the blood of the new covenant with the second and the third final berakoth. Finally, the sentence about the ‘memorial’ corresponds to the feastday interpolations in the third berakoth.

“We must go further. These words of Christ which were to give rise to the Christian eucharist arise from a whole structure underlying the Gospels, the Jewish liturgy in which they were inserted. If we separate them from it, we misunderstand the whole movement which inspired them. Reciprocally, their exact meaning risks being lost once we no longer perceive all that they accomplish and complete. Early Christianity was preserved from ever committing such an error by the fact that Christian prayer continued to develop within the forms of the Jewish berakoth and the tefillah, i.e. the prayer of petition which evolves without ever becoming actually detached from it. The first formulas of the Christian eucharist, in imitation of what Christ himself had done, are but Jewish formulas applied by means of a few added words to a new context, which, however, was already prepared for them.” [7]

Credits: Parts of this page are excerpted from: Williams, B. and Anstall, H.; *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple and the Early Church*; Light and Life Publishing, Minneapolis, 1990.

[1] Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*; St. Vladimir’s Press, New York, 1973

[2] Louis Bouyer, *Liturgy and Architecture*; Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, p. 13

[3] Edersheim, op cit, p. 55

[4] Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist*; Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1968, p. 26

[5] Bouyer, op cit, p. 50

[6] Bouyer, op cit, p. 80

[7] Bouyer, op cit, p. 106

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Worship in the Early Church.

The early believers in Christ continued in the traditions of their Jewish forefathers, worshiping as they had in both the Temple and the Synagogue. To this worship practice they added the distinctly Christian components which were, in fact, transformed Jewish worship practices. These included Baptism, the Eucharist, the Agape meal, and others. Baptism was also present in Jewish religious practice as a personal repentance for sin. Baptism, like the Lord’s Supper, was transformed in both meaning and content by our Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism became not only a repentance for one’s sins, but being baptized in the name of the Trinity now also assured forgiveness and incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church. Baptism was the once and for all initiatory rite whereby one received the Holy Spirit and came into the Church.

The early Christians with their transformed understanding of the central elements of Judaism had a practical problem: how to conduct worship? They wanted to carry on their old Jewish worship practices while at the same time incorporating this new meaning and content. They accepted the necessity for continuity with the old, and for the celebration of the new, but could not do both together. The result was doing both in parallel. The

Temple hours of prayer and the Synagogue worship were kept, but were not centered in Christ. Each day of the week, those Christian believers in Jerusalem would attend the Temple for prayers during the daily cycle, and on Saturday — the Jewish Sabbath — they would attend either Temple or Synagogue.

Sacrifice in Christian Worship.

These elements constituted the revealed manner in which the worship and sacrifice of Israel were to be made to God. Again, the primary function here was that of sacrifice: the offering of an animal to propitiate and atone (make amends or reparation) for the sin of God's people. The belief of the early Church was that the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and His subsequent resurrection supplanted all temple sacrifice as a means of propitiation and atonement. In the sacrifice of Himself, Jesus Christ becomes the propitiation for all of mankind's sins; He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Thereafter, for Christians, there was no need for an additional sacrifice. The Good News of Jesus Christ is that sins are forgiven in Him, and in Him Christians are reconciled to the Father.

So why continue any of the temple practices? — Because they included communion as well as sacrifice, and because they constituted revealed worship — they were part of God's intent from the beginning. And because temple worship was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the worship which Christians offer to God goes on forever. It continues both here on earth and in Heaven before the Throne of God. To be specific, heavenly worship is the worship, the liturgy. That is, Heaven is a dynamic condition of praise and worship — of liturgy — to the Father. And earthly worship partakes now of the eternal, heavenly worship.

For example, Hebrews Chapter 8 describes the role of Jesus Christ as the heavenly High Priest in contrast with the Old Testament priesthood. And what is the word used to describe what the High Priest is doing? It is liturgy. The passage properly reads from the first verse of the chapter as follows: "We have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a liturgist (leitourgos) in the sanctuary and true tabernacle which is set up not by man but by the Lord" (8:1-2). The worship of heaven, the liturgy, has been established forever by God Himself. Hebrews then goes on to demonstrate that what is done on earth should be patterned after that in Heaven — both in the Old and New Covenants. Literally, "now Jesus has been given a liturgical work (liturgist) which is superior to theirs, just as the covenant which He arranged between God and His people is a better one..." (8:6).

According to the Bible there is worship in Heaven, and it is to be our pattern. The original Greek word in every major early text is leitourgos. It means liturgy, or liturgical worship. It is easy to understand why the early Christians continued in their synagogue and temple practices. Worship had been revealed to them by God. Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of all that God had promised in the Old Testament; in Him all the hopes of Israel were fulfilled. It was only natural that in worshiping God through Jesus Christ, believers would continue to do so as they had been told, in the manner God revealed to them.

This was natural, almost automatic for the Jews who accepted Jesus Christ as Messiah. There was, however, one major change for these Jews which had been completed in Jesus Christ. The animal sacrifices of Old Testament practice had been fulfilled in the person of Christ. All that had been anticipated was now completed. All that had been prophesied was now reality. The Messiah had come. So for these early Christians, the Jewish worship practices were continued with a brand new understanding of the centrality of the victorious Christ, and new-found joy. Christians did not view their Jewish liturgical practices as passé? Nor did they simply continue in some kind of mindless habit of outmoded ritual. They maintained this liturgy as their own, as described in the inspired Scriptures of the Old Covenant carried over into the New. In fact, that Jewish liturgy made the work of God in Jesus Christ comprehensible. The Old Testament worship practices, now fulfilled and given new meaning in Christ, became the core of Christian worship within this New Covenant.

Early Worship in Antioch.

If one realizes that Jewish worship was liturgical and provided the worship structure for the early Church, and then one reads the New Testament seriously, a whole new side to the question becomes clear. The earliest and clearest reference to liturgy comes in Acts, the book which chronicles the inception and growth of the early Church. The church at Antioch was the first Gentile church outside of Jerusalem, established approximately A.D. 38 when Barnabas was sent to teach there (Acts 11:25 ff.). Acts 13 describes the selection of Barnabas and St. Paul for the first missionary journey. This would have taken place approximately A.D. 46, in what by then was a well-established and structured community of believers.

Luke records that the calling of Paul and Barnabas was the work of the Holy Spirit, and that it took place during the "liturgy." The text reads, "as they were 'liturgizing' (leitourgounton) before the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul to the work to which I have called them'" (Acts 13:2). Luke was a physician and well educated. He must have understood what he meant to say about worship:

namely, that the community was together in formal and ritual worship, accompanied by fasting, when the Holy Spirit spoke. So in A.D. 46, this early church was worshipping in a liturgical manner using a Christian form carried over from the synagogue. And this was within sixteen years of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The continuity of worship between the Old and New Covenants is very evident.

The Eucharist and the Resurrection.

But what to do about the Eucharist? It could not be added to a Synagogue service, yet it was to be celebrated as the Lord had commanded. The answer was tied to the Resurrection. Jesus had been crucified on Friday, the day before the Jewish Sabbath, and had risen on Sunday, the third day. Thus the day after the Sabbath was seen as the day of the Lord's Resurrection, the Lord's Day. At the Lord's Supper, the parousia or presence of Jesus Christ was experienced in the consecrated gifts; here people encountered Christ's new life in His resurrection. It was only natural that the Eucharist or Lord's Supper should be celebrated each Resurrection Day. Thus, the typical pattern for early believers became Synagogue worship on the Sabbath, followed by gathering for the Lord's Supper on the "next day." For the Jews, the day ended at sundown and the next day began. Sunday began at nightfall on Saturday. As Luke records in Acts 10:7, "*On Saturday evening we gathered together for the fellowship (communion) meal*" (NEV). The pattern typically became one of worshipping in Synagogue on the Sabbath morning, and then gathering together again in the evening (the next day — Sunday) for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

In the early Church, the Lord's Supper was celebrated at the end of the Agape (love) or fellowship meal. This was an extension of the Passover supper tradition, and was a means for believers to show each other the love and unity they shared together in Christ. All gathered, each bringing what they were able. At the conclusion of the meal was the Eucharist, the "thanks-giving" for the grace of Jesus Christ. The sacrament conveyed the understanding and symbolism of the Passover Supper, now consummated in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. It is highly probable that it was the absence of this Jewish understanding that accounted for the disintegration and abuse of the Agape meal in the Gentile churches. Paul berates the Corinthians for being selfish, causing some to go hungry, and for drunkenness at the meal which became so pervasive that it even prevented the Eucharist from being celebrated (I Cor. 11:20-21).

What can be seen, however, especially during the early years prior to the Gentile missions, was a link between these old and new worship practices. A Jewish male who became a follower of The Way would have been circumcised as a child, and with his wife and family would continue in the normal Jewish worship pattern with a new Christian understanding. The early Church proceeded in this manner until two things occurred: the Gentile missions brought into the Church people without a Jewish tradition, raising the sort of problems just noted.

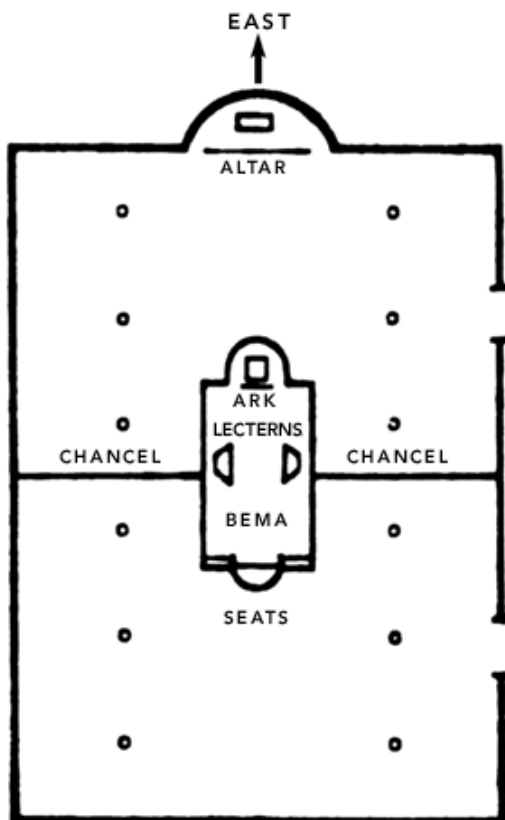
The Impact of Persecutions on Worship.

The persecutions shook this co-existence and steered the Jewish Christian worship transition into a more distinctly Christian form of worship. The first persecution was recorded in Acts 6 and 7, and involved the martyrdom of St. Stephen. The early persecutions were by the Jews, and aimed at this new sect that was winning converts from Judaism and was seen as heretical. With the persecutions, the life of the Church was changed because the result was exclusion from Judaism. And that meant exclusion from Jewish worship. Christians did no longer gathered in the Synagogues, and were unwelcome in the Temple as well as described in Acts 21 when St. Paul is mobbed within the Temple grounds. The active Jewish persecutions excluded Christians from the Temple, and forced them toward new worship practices.

The Core of Christian Worship.

What was this resulting Christian order? The Synagogue worship structure, consisting of a litany of prayers, a confession, eulogies, readings from the Scriptures, an address or homily, and a benediction. This form constituted the core of what was to become specifically Christian worship.

Evidence for this can be found in archaeological evidence from the earliest Syrian churches, as well as in the Apostolic Constitutions and the Didache, and in the continuous practices of the Nes-



torian Churches. “The old Syrian church appears as a Christianized version of a Jewish Synagogue.” [1] There is a bema in the center, an Ark with veil and candle to hold the Word of God, and a seat for the bishop (that is) representative of the seat of Moses. To these Synagogue elements was added an altar, and now the Church had an orientation. The architectural arrangement can be seen in the following illustration.

Christian churches were oriented facing the East for a very specific reason. Christians look to the heavenly Jerusalem from which the Messiah will come, and know themselves to be the “temple of the Holy Spirit.” However, the East is the place of the rising sun, and for early Christians this was “the only fitting symbol of the last appearance of Christ in His parousia, as Sun of Justice in Zecharia.” [2] Tertullian speaks of public and private prayer to the East as being an Apostolic tradition, and it expressed the eschatological expectation that Christ will appear as the Rising Sun that will never set.

To the core Synagogue structure (commonly referred to as the Synaxis or the Liturgy of the Word) was added the fulfilled Temple worship, the Eucharist, which was inserted prior to the benediction. This included the use of sung or chanted Psalms which were part of Jewish worship, and to which St. Paul refers in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 when he encourages the use of “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” Again, St. Paul’s Missionary approach demonstrates this connection, for his approach in any new city was to worship first in the Synagogue using that base for proclaiming the Gospel. The Jerusalem Church was the “Mother Church” for early Christianity, to which the Church at large looked for guidance in all things theological and liturgical. The missionary churches naturally followed the form of the Jerusalem Church. Thus, the Gentile churches which came into being as a result of St. Paul’s preaching and teaching had this same Jewish rule of prayer, or order of worship. The similarity to the Synagogue ritual within the first century Church demonstrates an early universal acceptance of Jewish worship origins. [3]

In his book, *The History of The Church* (18.1), Eusebius, a fourth century historian and bishop, quotes Philo, a Jewish historian writing in the first century. Philo describes the Christian “all-night vigils of the great festival, the spiritual discipline in which they are spent, the hymns that we always recite, and how while one man sings in regular rhythm the others listen silently and join in the refrains of the hymn.” [4] This is antiphonal singing of litanies, and certainly reflects Jewish worship practice, which Philo recognizes. By the end of the first century, the Christian Church was present throughout much of the Empire. There were established churches in most of the major cities and many smaller ones. These churches continued following the order of Jewish worship, essentially the Synagogue form with the inclusion of the Eucharist. But, the typical worship of the first and second centuries was by necessity simple. The Church was generally under persecution, so it tended to hold its worship services in secret, and usually in the homes of members. As Fr. Alexander Schmemmann states, the liturgical form was commonly “the bishop, surrounded by presbyters (elders) facing the assembly, the Supper Table, on which the deacons placed the gifts (bread and wine) which were being offered, preaching, prayer, the anaphora (prayer before Communion) and the distribution of the Holy Gifts.” [5]

The freedom of the first years of the church’s life in which she could be liturgically Jewish in Synagogue and Temple and also celebrate the Eucharist were over. What is evident is a liturgical contraction under the duress of persecution. By now the “unnecessary” material of the Synagogue service had been eliminated. What was left was a simpler service focused on the Eucharist, but one that still reflects the Synagogue form and contains its major elements. But this liturgical contraction does not imply that the Early Church was primitive, had no ceremony, and subscribed to simple beliefs. In his introduction to *The History of The Church*, G. A. Williamson says of Eusebius that in his own statements and those of the earliest authorities on which he draws, we see a church which we would recognize as our own. “We shall find the same line drawn between clergy and laity, the same division of the clergy into the three orders of bishops, presbyters, and the deacons, the same practice of Episcopal ordination and consecration, the same insistence on Apostolic Succession and on the establishment by Christ of One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. We shall find Christendom partitioned up into dioceses and archdioceses, presided over and ruled by bishops who are held in the highest esteem.” [6]

Focus on the Eucharist.

By the second century, the Lord’s Supper (or Eucharist) began to be separated from the Agape meal. Differing opinions exist as to whether this was due to problems such as those in Corinth, or the growing Gentile expansion in the Church with a lack of Jewish perspective. The result was the celebration of the Eucharist without the Agape meal.

The word Eucharist means thanksgiving or the giving of thanks (see Luke 22:16). At the Last Supper, the institution of the Eucharist, Christ’s intent was not on the perpetuation of a mere meal or Passover supper. Instead, that meal was fulfilled in the partaking of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. And it is after the Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost that the incredible significance of the Eucharist comes to light. For the Lord

Who gave the Church this sacrament became alive again and ascended! He is the living Lord Jesus Christ, Who reigns at the right hand of God the Father. He said not only “this is my Body and Blood,” but He also told His followers “unless you eat of my Body and of my Blood you have no life within you” (John 6:53). One cannot get around this point in Scripture.

The early Christians took their Lord at His word, believing that in a mystery, bread and wine became the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and that it was life-giving. That is, through the work of the Holy Spirit, each believer was nurtured by grace (sacramentally) and received spiritual sustenance. Behind this understanding of the nature of the Eucharist was the understanding of worship held by the entire early Church. As Fr. Schmemmann tells us, “the worship of the church has at its real center the constant renewal and repetition in time of the one unchanging Sacrament: unchanging that is in its meaning, content and purpose. But the whole significance of this repetition is in the fact that something unrepeatable is being recalled and actualized. The Eucharist is the actualization of one, single, unrepeatable event. [7] This is readily apparent in the portion of the Liturgy or Mass before communion; the memorial which remembers, which “re-presents every Sunday the saving death of Christ in the expectation of the resurrection... the Eucharistic meal has taken the place of the former sacrifices. No other sacrifice can have any meaning but the cross of Christ, celebrated in the Christian meal. Through it, while taking part in His passion, we are being given a foretaste of His resurrection.” [8]

These liturgical actions plus the faith of the early Christians were on the Body and Blood of Christ. More specifically, it was the Biblical promise of the reality of His sacrifice made available in these gifts, and the reality of spiritual nurture they bring. Ultimately, it is a question of Life. Jesus said He came that believers could have life and have it more abundantly. He also said He would send His Spirit, the Spirit of Life, to transform believers and all creation, to set believers apart.

The belief of the early Church was that the Eucharist was this transforming life — spiritual life. It was not a memorial experience of the Lord. It was a miraculous experience of the Grace of God in the Holy Spirit. For St. Ignatius this transformation centered around the altar, the place of sacrifice, from which the believer receives the bread of life. On this altar was consecrated the elements which became the life-giving mysteries. [9]

This was certainly the belief of Justin Martyr, circa A.D. 150, who said: “For we do not receive these things as though they were ordinary food and drink... the food over which the thanksgiving has been spoken becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus in order to nourish and transform our flesh and blood.” St. Justin called this food Eucharist, thanksgiving or blessing, just as he called baptismal washing “enlightenment.” For him this was a real and powerful act of God. [10]

Thus, for Christians now as for the Apostles then, the Biblical promise is that by believing on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and being baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, believers receive new life in that sacrament through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And as believers partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, they continue to receive new life in Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit. This indeed is something to give thanks for! Hence the name Eucharist: the Thanksgiving. This was the uniform view of the early Church. For St. Ignatius, who died in 107 A.D., “thought of the Church as a Eucharistic society which only realized its true nature when it celebrated the Supper of the Lord, receiving His Body and Blood in the Sacrament.” [11]

Gregory Dix, in his classic treatise on the development of liturgical worship, states that in the earliest accounts of the Eucharist, the Church places the words of institution central in the Eucharistic Prayer. He goes on to point out that it used formulas which were in keeping with those of John’s Gospel, “that Bread which cometh down from Heaven and giveth life unto the world, he that eateth of this Bread shall live for ever.” [12] He then quotes St. Ignatius who had described the Eucharistic Bread as “a remedy bestowing immortality, an antidote preventing death and giving life in Jesus Christ.”

Worship and Belief.

This belief of the early Church can also be seen in how they worshiped. For the majority of the service the Bishop would be seated on the bema or stand thereon. The Ark had become in the Syrian Church the place where the Gospel Book was “enthroned”; and this was probably so throughout the early Church. The Word was taken from the Ark and proclaimed from the bema. By it the believer was led to the altar and beyond it to the Kingdom. This happened literally as well as spiritually! There were no pews in the early Church. This was true almost universally up until the seventeenth century in the West, and is still true in most Orthodox Churches today. Upon the completion of the prayers and Scripture readings, the clergy would take the bread and wine and proceed to the East — to the altar for the Eucharistic meal. The vital nature of the early Christian worship is expressed in this procession toward the East (that is, the Kingdom). “Therefore the whole assembly, far from being a static mass of spectators, remains an organic gathering of worshipers, first centered on the Ark, for

hearing and meditating upon the Scriptures, and finally going toward the East all together for the Eucharistic prayer and the final communion.” [13]

The Great Entrance.

This movement toward the altar with the gifts is the origin of what is now called the Great Entrance in the Orthodox Liturgy when the clergy bring the bread and wine from the Preparation Table to the Altar before the Eucharist. The only major change over time in the structure of this portion of the Liturgy was the movement of the Gospel into the sanctuary before the Altar, in advance of its reading to the assembled congregation. In part, once again, this was due to the circumstances the Church experienced. For the early Church, the Gospel Book was of inexpressible value, for it was the Word of Life. One of the common goals of the persecuting Romans was to confiscate and destroy the Gospel Book. Thus, along with the sacred vessels, it was kept in a safe place during the week, and only brought out for the service of the Divine Liturgy. This circumstance would have existed through the early part of the fourth century changing only with the end of the persecution of Diocletian.

What transpired then, was the assembling of believers before the Liturgy began, typically singing Psalms of praise in anticipation of the impending communion with God. The clergy would arrive bearing the Gospel Book and the sacred vessels and enter the Church, carrying the Gospel Book to the center of the building (onto the bema in the very earliest churches). Then, after the reading of the Gospel lesson to the assembly, the Gospel Book would be carried to the Altar. From this real experience has come two portions of the Orthodox Divine Liturgy; the Antiphons and the Little Entrance.

The Antiphons.

The Antiphons (two or three are commonly sung) are composed of Psalms that are antiphonally sung by cantor and choir or congregation. These go back to the Psalms sung by the assembled congregation while awaiting the arrival of the clergy. The Little Entrance is the bearing of the Gospel into the sanctuary, and it likewise can be traced to the carrying of the Gospel Book into the church. With the end of persecution it could be kept in the church. Until recent times, the practice was for the Gospel to be in the middle of the church at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, and from there to be carried into the sanctuary during the Little Entrance to be read before the altar. Having been brought into the midst of the assembly, the Book of Life is then carried into the sanctuary, where, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, all of the assembly enter into the Kingdom to partake of the Eucharist.

St. Ignatius of Antioch referred to the Church as a “Eucharistic community” who realizes her true nature when she celebrates the Eucharist. His view of the Church was the local community gathered around its Bishop, celebrating the Eucharist. It is important to note that St. Ignatius became Bishop of Antioch in A.D. 67 — in the midst of the New Testament era while most of the Apostles were still alive and active. St. Ignatius was the second Bishop of Antioch succeeding St. Peter. Thus we can safely trust that this understanding of the nature of the Church and the Eucharist was representative of that held by the Apostles and the Church at large.

By the end of the first century the basic form or order of the Liturgy was established and universally celebrated throughout the Christian Church, though with regional and cultural differences in expression. The Liturgy had as its center the worship of Jesus Christ and the partaking of His Holy Gifts. In the process she remained true to her origin in Jewish worship which the Lord Himself had practiced and which had been revealed by God. The shed blood of bulls or goats was no longer at the core. This sacrifice was fulfilled for all time in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, which is central still to the life of the Church in the Holy Eucharist. Thus, as the lives of the Apostles ended, as the responsibility for the Church was being handed on to the next generation, her worship of God was established. The basic form of the Liturgy was settled, to be refined and enhanced over the coming years, but never altered in its basic form and meaning.

The major structural change in the development of the Christian rite took place by the latter part of the third century. Until this time it was not uncommon for Christian worship to still have two separate components, the Synaxis (directly derived from the Synagogue) and the Eucharist. The Eucharist was for believers only, and while all were expected to attend, this portion of the service was closed to non-believers. With the removal of persecution and the development of public worship, the need for separate services disappeared. By the end of the sixth century, holding one rite without the other had become very uncommon. The two rites had some similar and overlapping components, which were easily incorporated into each other. Prior to this synthesis, the Synaxis and the Eucharist services had the following components:” [14]

Synaxis or “Meeting”	Eucharist
Greeting and Response	Greeting and Response
Lections interspersed with Psalmody	Kiss of Peace
Psalmody	Offertory
Sermon	Eucharistic Prayer
Dismissal of Catechumens	Fraction
Intercessory Prayers	Communion
Benediction	Benediction

It is very easy to see how these two services could be fused together to form two parts of one celebration. In the Eastern and Western Church this synthesis occurred and included liturgical enrichments, including the addition of hymns, expanded use of litanies, and the inclusion of the Nicene Creed. As shown, this synthesis was true to the original worship of the Early Church. The Synaxis is very similar to the Synagogue service. And the Eucharist is almost identical to the Eucharist which Justin Martyr describes in his *First Apology* as taking place at Rome in 150 A.D.

Credits: Parts of this page are excerpted from: Williams, B. and Anstall, H.; *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple and the Early Church*; Light and Life Publishing, Minneapolis, 1990.

[1] Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist*, Notre Dame University Press, Notre Dame, 1968, p. 25.

[2] *ibid*, p. 28.

[3] Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction To Liturgical Theology*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, 1986, p. 154.

[4] Eusebius, *The History of The Church*, Dorset Press, New York, 1965.

[5] A. Schmemmann, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

[6] Eusebius, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

[7] A. Schmemmann, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

[8] L. Bouyer, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

[9] Willy Rordorf, editor, *The Eucharist of the Early Christians*, Pueblo Publishing Co., New York, 1976, p. 61.

[10] *ibid*, p. 75.

[11] in Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, New York, Penguin Books, 1978. p. 21.

[12] Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, The Seabury Press, New York, 1982, p. 137.

[13] L. Bouyer, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

[14] G. Dix, *ibid*, p. 434.

Heavenly Worship.

Worship begins in heaven. The Holy Scriptures record numerous instances of the drama of heavenly adoration taking place before the very throne of God. It may be that for the person familiar with Scripture, some of these are so apparent they are overlooked. The concept of heavenly worship begins with God’s revelation to the children of Israel about the building of the Tabernacle, and the manner of worship to take place within it. This revelation formed the basis for the Old Testament worship of the Jews. Worship on earth was to reflect worship in heaven.

Worship on Earth — As It Is in Heaven.

The summary New Testament passage on heavenly worship is Hebrews 8:1-6. Here Jesus Christ is described as the High Priest, seated at the right hand of God, Who has accomplished salvation and reconciliation through His mediation. Verse 2 says that this High Priest has another role also. He is the Liturgist (the word is *leitourgos*) of the sanctuary. Jesus Christ Himself is the Liturgist, and this liturgy takes place in the “sanctuary of the true tabernacle” which is in Heaven before the throne of God. Verses 4 and 5 say that worship on earth is patterned after that in Heaven. This is described in verse 6 as the “more excellent liturgy” which He has obtained because He is the mediator of “a better covenant.” The teaching is quite clear — liturgical worship is not optional. Rather, it is normative for Christians.

Worship on earth, then, is to be an extension, a reflection, of that in the Kingdom. It is to be a window to heaven. Christian believers cannot decide that this or that is unnecessary and disposable because it is not con-

temporary or is not in vogue. The obligation is to follow and to serve God, to accept His Word of revelation. This is the guardianship of Tradition in the life of the Church; to remain true to the faith as revealed, as it was in the beginning.

Recall in the book of Acts when the followers of The Way were first called Christians, meaning those who followed or acted like Jesus Christ. The implication is clear. The believers were living lives which appeared like the very life which Christ lived. So are all believers to live: conformed to the will of God, loving and caring for all brothers and sisters. And so are believers to worship: In a heavenly pattern which shows forth the Kingdom of God in which Jesus Christ reigns. The Kingdom of God is the critical element of worship for good reason. It was the reality and advent of this Kingdom which constituted the core of the preaching and teaching of Jesus, especially in His parables.

From the New Testament one can make three summary observations about the nature of the Kingdom of God. First, it is a present spiritual reality (Rom. 14:17), as well as the realm or dimension into which followers of Jesus have entered (Col. 1:13). Second, it is the reign or rule of God which has been established in Jesus Christ, and will be consummated when He returns (Matt. 8:11, 11:27). Third, it is the inheritance which will be bestowed upon God's people when Christ comes in glory (Matt. 25:34).

Christ came to bring followers into the Kingdom of His Father. This is where the focus must be. Fr. Thomas Hopko describes it well when he says, "The two comings of Christ are held together in Christian thought, action, and prayer at all times. They cannot be separated. When they are, it is the end of the Christian faith, life and worship. The first coming without the second is a meaningless tragedy. The second coming without the first is an absurd impossibility. Jesus is born to bring God's Kingdom. He dies to prove His kingship. He rises to establish His reign. He comes again in glory to share it with His people. In the Kingdom of God there are no subjects. All rule with the risen Messiah. He came, and is coming, for this purpose alone." [1]

Believers in Jesus Christ live both in this world, and in the Kingdom of God. They experience the Kingdom in their midst through the work of the Holy Spirit. Based upon their faith, they know it is the eternal life they have begun to experience. They recognize that it is not yet fully manifested in this world, but will be so at the return of Christ. It is in the Church that Christians have the fullness of the foretaste of the Kingdom of God.

Thus Jesus said, "I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18). His Kingdom is Life, and it is what life on earth is about. Belief in Jesus Christ brings believers into the Kingdom of God through Baptism and makes them its citizens. At the same time, they are made members of His body, the Church, to be a holy nation unto Him. The Divine Liturgy focused on the Eucharist as the mystery and sacrament of that Kingdom is indeed a living continuity with the beliefs and practices of early Christianity.

The Ascent to Heaven.

Both of these truths, that of worship as "heaven on earth" and of the Church as the presence of the Kingdom of God, are crucial to understand Early Christian liturgical worship in its fullness. Worship is an entrance into the dimension of the Kingdom. The Eucharist which is the focus of the Liturgy, is a sacramental thing — that is, a thing of grace, a thing of the Kingdom which involves "the idea of transformation, which refers to the ultimate event of Christ's death and resurrection, and is always a sacrament of the Kingdom." [2] For the Christian, the Eucharist is not a mere remembrance, a symbolic acting out of an historical event in the life of Jesus Christ. Christians take the Lord and Savior at His word when He said, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you; he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life..." (John 5:53-54). In communion believers receive bread and wine that has become the Body and Blood of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, by the grace of God.

Like that of the early Church, "For Orthodox tradition there is no difference between the Body of the risen Christ and His Eucharistic Body, that is, the Church in its two-fold nature, spiritual and sacramental. The Eucharist constitutes the Church more surely, more essentially, than any of its sociological aspects. In and through the Eucharist, the Church becomes a chalice from which flows the power of resurrection 'for the life of the world'." [3] The Eucharist is not of this world, it is of the Kingdom. It is the Body and Blood of Him Who rules in the Kingdom of God. Thus, how can Christians expect to receive the things of the Kingdom on this earth? For them, Christians must go to the Kingdom. That ultimately is the "purpose" of the Divine Liturgy. It is an ascent to heaven, to the Kingdom of God. It is the liturgical and sacramental dynamic that carries Christians from this world into the dimension of the Kingdom where they may partake of spiritual things, and participate in spiritual worship before the Throne of God!

At a common sense level, this is simply applying to the Eucharist what Christ expected believers to apply to their lives, for as St. Paul enjoins, "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). Believers are to live in a manner that demonstrates their citizenship is in heaven. Applied to worship, this is likely what Jesus meant

when He told the Samaritan woman that “the hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem shall you worship the Father.” But as He went on to point out to her, “the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshipers” (John 4:21-24). Worshiping God is not a thing of this world, it is a thing of the Spirit. And if the Kingdom is the place of God, then the Kingdom is where the Christian had better be worshipping “in spirit and in truth!”

The destination of the Liturgy is known from the outset — the first words said by the priest are “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.” The believer’s destination is the Kingdom of God, to worship Him in spirit and in truth; to join the saints and the Host of Heaven in worship.

Fr. Schmemmann writes that “to bless the Kingdom is not simply to acclaim it. It is to declare it to be the goal, the end of all our desires and interests, of our whole life, the supreme and ultimate value of all that exists. To bless is to accept in love, and to move toward what is loved and accepted. The Church is thus the assembly, the gathering of those to whom the ultimate destination of all life has been revealed and who have accepted it. This acceptance is expressed in the solemn answer to the doxology: Amen. It is indeed one of the most important words in the world, for it expresses the agreement of the Church to follow Christ in His ascension to His Father, to make this ascension the destiny of man.” [4]

Experientially, the Liturgy is an act of Divine Beauty. To witness and to participate in it and become aware of its aesthetic value is to become aware of God’s love for us. The point of any writing or analysis of the Liturgy is to encourage the reader to experience and appreciate it for its true worth. Its value, of course, is in the lasting spiritual sustenance it provides. Here is the element that sets the Early Christian liturgical worship apart; it is not this-worldly, rather it is an other-worldly experience. Christians ascend to heaven, of which they are now citizens and to which they are ultimately destined, to commune with the God who loves mankind and has shown forth this love. There Christians worship this God and receive His gifts. This is truly what worship was meant to be: the ascent to heaven in the company of the saints to worship and to know God.

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[1] Thomas Hopko, *The Winter Pascha*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, 1984, p. 67.

[2] Alexander Schmemmann, *For The Life Of The World*; St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1973, p. 64.

[3] *The Living God*; St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood,, 1989, p. ix.

[4] Alexander Schmemmann, *For The Life Of The World*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, 1973, p. 28.

The Royal Priesthood.

In saying that the communion of Saints is at the heart of Eastern Orthodox worship, it must also be understood that worship or liturgy is celebrated. More than celebrated, it is co-celebrated by the clergy and the people gathered to praise the one true God. But, it is also co-celebrated with the Saints and the Heavenly Host, for all worshipers in the Church are saints together, equally children of God brought into the Kingdom by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is communion that forms the basis of worship: believers join with those in Heaven before the Throne of God, and offer Him praise and blessing. Those who have been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ in Holy Baptism become members of the royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9).

What is a priest? One who stands before God and offers to Him in thanksgiving that which He has given to us: life. Because of the fall of Adam and Eve, humanity turned away from the worship of God and became self-centered. In the book of Romans, St. Paul identifies the key mark of sin: unthankfulness (1:21). Man refuses to say thank you to God, to love Him back. But reconciled believers are “an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9-10), the people of God. Having been restored to priesthood, believers return to worship.

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann writes, “All rational, spiritual and other qualities of man distinguishing him from other creatures have their focus and ultimate fulfillment in this capacity to bless God, to know, so to speak, the meaning of the thirst and hunger that constitute his life. ‘Homo Sapiens’, ‘Homo Faber’... yes, but first of all, ‘Homo adorans,’ The first, the basic definition of man is that he is the priest. He stands in the center of the world and unifies it in his act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to

God — and by filling the world with this Eucharist, he transforms his life, the one that he receives from the world, into life in God, into communion with Him.” [1]

Priesthood and Vocation.

And at the most practical level, what does this mean for believers? It means that believers were created to bless and praise God, to worship Him. This is the primary human vocation because this is precisely what human beings were created to do: to be in communion with God as His priests, and in that role to worship Him. The dictionary defines vocation as follows: “Any occupation or pursuit for which one qualifies oneself, or to which one devotes one’s time or life; a calling.” [2] Believers are called to this vocation because human beings are created for it. And in accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and entering into the Church, believers are enabled by God’s Holy Spirit to carry out that for which human beings were created. Liturgy literally means the work of the people. It is not just that which worshipers are to do during the Divine Liturgy, but that work which they are to be doing throughout all of their lives.

There is a personal issue to be considered which has to do with the fulfillment of this fundamental attribute for which all human beings were created. The inherent ability to be a priest may be exercised to varying degrees or not at all. Those who are outside the New Covenant of faith in Jesus Christ and are not members of His Body are not fulfilling this created purpose. They possess the capacity by having been created in the image of God, but they are not able to actualize it until they are reconciled to God in Jesus Christ. Those within the New Covenant have been restored to this priesthood. Then the question of fulfillment becomes the issue.

The understanding of humans as priests is but one part of the created role. In Christian theology Christ is understood to have manifested Himself in three offices, to have worked in three ways: as king, priest and prophet. Jesus Christ is King, He is High Priest and He is Prophet. Christ is King because He is the anointed Messiah; He is Priest because He offered Himself for the life of the world; He is Prophet because He fulfilled all the prophecies in coming in human form.

Notice that all three key off of the human nature which Jesus Christ took upon Himself in the Incarnation. It was through taking on and fulfilling His calling, in human form, that He became King, Priest and Prophet. As Divine, as a part of the Godhead, there is no need to refer to Him in these ways; it is self-evident. The point is that these three offices or characteristics of Christ are also the created offices or characteristics of human beings. Human beings were created to be priestly, prophetic and kingly; and though fallen, it is what they can become in Jesus Christ.

St. Paul observed that “God works all things together for the good, for those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28), indicating a fundamental inter-relationship of all that believers are and do in Jesus Christ. This is equally true of the Church. The liturgical and the sacramental character of the Church are linked together, and they are the way the Church is to be and to worship. This was so from the beginning of the New Testament Church. The ability to fulfill this vocation or calling is directly tied to the liturgical and the sacramental and cannot be fulfilled outside the Church.

It is this priesthood that undergirds Christian worship, and most particularly the Divine Liturgy. Why? Because worship of the One True God can and must take place in the only place of true worship, the Kingdom of God. The Liturgy is a celebration of salvation. It is a feast of the joy that is accessible in the Holy Trinity which Christ came to give. It is saying thank you for the grace of God which is continually available through the Holy Spirit in the sacraments. It is a festival with all the accompanying joy and gladness that characterize heaven itself. Jesus described the Kingdom of God in terms of a royal feast, “And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down (lie at table) in the Kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29). And St. John says in Revelation that the Saints at the heavenly wedding feast cry out, “Allelulia! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lord has come, and the Bride has made herself ready” (Rev. 19:6-7).

The Priesthood In Action: Worship.

In worship, celebration takes two forms: con-celebration and co-celebration. Con-celebration is a term used to describe what the priest(s) and deacon(s) do together: they con-celebrate together their part of the Liturgy. Co-celebration describes the role the clergy take in the Liturgy with the congregation. All worshipers in the Church celebrate together, or co-celebrate, this worship which is offered up to the Holy Trinity and is called the Divine Liturgy. The sacramental role which the priest performs is done on behalf of the gathered believers; the priest and the assembly of believers offer their worship to God as a corporate whole. The priest leads the assembly in their corporate worship, as Christ (as the Head) leads the mystical Body. The royal priesthood of all believers — both clergy and laity — assures the access of each person to God as His people, and makes this worship possible.

The priest has a specific sacramental role; he is “called” to the priesthood as the father of the faithful ordained by the bishop. That role includes leading the worship, preaching, and consecrating and serving the Eucharist. The priest is first and foremost the icon of Christ to his people, and the designation “father” connotes the pastoral role he is to have. He is President of the Holy Assembly, “the man who stands in front” representing the bishop and bringing the entire priesthood to the throne of God. Recall that in the early Church, the Bishop was the central figure around whom the congregation gathered to celebrate the Eucharist. The Bishop as direct successor to the Apostles was the representative, the icon of Christ. And so the priest, as the representative of the Bishop, is the icon of Christ to His people.

The key role of the Bishop in maintaining the integrity and continuity of what Christ began was not a late political or medieval development, designed to further the power of the Church within the state. For the fourth-century historian Eusebius, the Apostolic Succession was a crucial and critical issue. It is not only apparent doctrinally, but if one considers the structure of his treatise *The History of The Church*, one can see that it is linked together like a chain. And what constitutes the links? The Bishops of each Church. His entire history from the time of Christ through the ascension of Constantine is traced from bishop to bishop.

For Eusebius, the Apostolic succession is critical because “that succession includes the whole intellectual, spiritual, and institutional life of the Church, and is the guarantee of the preservation of one unchanging God-given doctrine.” [3] He quotes Philo, the Jewish historian, who “writes about the comparative status of those entrusted with the ministries of the Church, from the diaconate to the highest and most important office, the episcopate.” [4]

The Presence of the Lord in Worship.

What makes the Church the Church is the presence of the Lord. As the Icon of Christ, the Lord is sacramentally present in the Church through the priest. In Hebrew the word *qahal* means to congregate, to be gathered together in the presence of the Lord, or the gathering where the Lord is present. The important element is that the Lord is present, that He is doing the gathering, and that believers have assembled in response to and in anticipation of His action in their midst. True, all share the royal priesthood, but sacramentally the Church needs the priest to be the Church. This understanding of the assembly gathered together by the Lord, where He is present to act, can be seen in Exodus 35:1, Deuteronomy 4:10 and 5:22, II Chronicles 20:14, and numerous other Old Testament references, and carries through into the New Testament.

While acknowledging that the priest in his sacramental role as the icon of Christ is necessary for the celebration of the Eucharist, it must be realized that more than the priest is necessary. For the early Christian Church (and this practice continued in the Eastern Orthodox and Western Roman Churches down to this century), it has always been understood that three elements must be present together: people, priest and the Holy Spirit. The liturgy is the work of the people, and people and priest are required. A priest cannot celebrate the Eucharist without the people present. The mystical work whereby the elements become the Body and Blood require the prayers and presence of the priest and people and the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ is present and works through His icon, the priest; the people of God are exercising their royal priesthood; the Holy Spirit mystically works in their midst making the gifts the Body and Blood.

This has been the conviction of the Church from the beginning. This expectation of the presence and action of the Lord within His Body in the proclamation of the Deacon before the Eastern Orthodox Divine Liturgy begins. The Deacon declares to the Priest that “It is time for the Lord to act!” This is a clear anticipation that the Lord through the Holy Spirit will be present and will be so sacramentally through the priest, His icon. This sacramental role of the priest does not reduce the value of each believer, for all are to be icons of Christ because all are made in His image (Genesis Chapters 1 and 5). Rather, it is just this royal priesthood which allows and enables believers to come together — to be present when and where the Lord acts, and to work with Him in this responsibility called worship.

Some might say, does not liturgical worship by its very design and structure create a distinction between clergy and laity? Yes, in an outward or organizational sense — but not in terms of standing before God. No more so than liturgical worship with male priests creates a distinction between men and women. Two observations may expand the understanding of these so-called distinctions. One of these practices is standing during worship. It is still practiced in Orthodox Churches, and was practiced in Western Christianity through the seventeenth century. This was indeed the practice in Jewish synagogues, and in the earliest Christian churches, where the assembly gathered around the bema and then moved to the altar. The historic worship practice has been that of standing most of the time, kneeling for short periods on the ground, but never sitting.

Here is Fr. Bouyer’s observation on this practice: “In the view of the modern Western Christian this may seem an intolerable burden. But when one has become accustomed to the practice it is impossible not to

realize how much of the feeling of intense participation always felt in an Orthodox liturgy is due to it. A seated assembly is necessarily a passive assembly. And it is not disposed by its position to worship, but at best to accept some instruction, or most of the time just to look more or less curiously at a spectacle in which it takes no part. Even when it kneels to pray it will be for a private prayer and not for a common supplication. And just as a sitting assembly usually sings badly or not at all, it is hopeless to try to bring it together to praise and thanksgiving.” [5]

Liturgical services, drawing on the historical forms of early Christian worship, are by definition “sung services.” The clergy and people perform the work of worship and the text is chanted or sung by either or both. It is this understanding of the communion of the saints participating ultimately in the Eucharist and made possible by the royal priesthood of believers that makes the liturgical service a dynamic, joyous and beautiful experience. It is the oneness before God as a priesthood restored to its original purpose that allows believers to fulfill this calling and offer up praise and worship to the Lord. It is the Kingdom of God to which believers ascend, for it is there that all true and spiritual worship takes place.

Credits: Parts of this page are excerpted from: Williams, B. and Anstall, H.; *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple and the Early Church*; Light and Life Publishing, Minneapolis, 1990.

[1] Alexander Schmemmann, *For The Life Of The World*; St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1973, p. 64.

[2] *New Standard Dictionary of the English Language*; Funk & Wagnalls, New York.

[3] Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, Dorset Press, New York, 1984, p. 21.

[4] *ibid*, p. 93.

[5] Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist*, Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1968, p. 97.

Church, Empire and Culture.

Beginning in the fourth century a number of major historical and cultural events impacted the Church, all of which affected the Liturgy as well as the practice of the faith. When considering these events, remember that the basic structure of the liturgy had been established; future changes occurred within the framework of that basic shape. The persecutions that the Christian Church experienced began in Palestine with the persecution by the Jews, and later continued when Rome herself began to persecute the followers of The Way. The persecutions waxed and waned depending upon the current emperor and the need for political scapegoats. Christianity was even accused of atheism in this polytheistic society, for subscribing to the worship of only one God.

The persecutions forced the Church underground. There are two references in the text of the liturgy still used today which harken back to those days of persecution and secrecy. During those years the Church lived within a society that was against it formally and informally, actively and passively.

In both the Eastern and Western Church, after Constantine released the edict of toleration which made Christianity a “legal” religion, interactions between church and state were not only inevitable, but as the Christian Church became one of the most potent forces in the Empire, they became necessary. Not all of these interactions were necessarily bad. Many of them were theologically positive, and enabled Christianity to develop and define the doctrines and practices that became core components of the faith. On the other hand, there were many periods in the first millennium of the Christian Church which were characterized by a struggle with the state.

The Conversion of Constantine.

Although he was not baptized until just prior to his death in A.D. 337, Constantine embraced Christianity, made it legal, and for all practical purposes made it the religion of the state. With the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D., he granted free religious worship and recognition by the state. As a result, the persecution of the Church finally ended, as did the need for secrecy. This caused the first of the major changes in the form of the Christian liturgy.

The persecutions of the Church during the previous two hundred years had waxed and waned, depending upon the Emperor and his orientation; there were periods of relative peace and tolerance, and periods of active persecution and martyrdom. During these periods of tolerance the church flourished, privately and publicly. Yet, as an “illegal” entity within the state, it could not really grow and flower in any large-scale fashion. With the acceptance brought about by Constantine, all of this changed. Now it became possible to publicly erect churches dedicated to the worship of God, and to do so with state support. Christian worship became a public affair, and these changes not only allowed the reversal of the “liturgical contraction” that had occurred earlier under persecution, but out of necessity resulted in an elaboration of the ceremonial aspect of worship. Christian

worship was now being seen by non-believers; thus it not only had to be understandable to them, but the necessary sense of reverence and thanksgiving had to be conveyed. It had always been corporate, now it became public.

In addition, worship began to take on an understanding of having a missionary and proclamation role to fulfill that it had not had before. All of this resulted in a more literal understanding of the “do” in Christ’s words “Do this in remembrance of Me.” The result was a greater focus on action and ceremony within worship. [1]

These enhancements in act and ceremony manifested in a variety of ways. The Church had always worshiped in homes, but during times of toleration, it began taking over secular buildings, and converting them for Christian worship. The new public places of worship were larger, and there was amplification of the service over what had been celebrated in earlier times. Clerical vestments began to appear. The use of chanting and hymnody, having their basis in Jewish worship, became more highly developed in this more public worship and proclamation. There was a heightened sense of drama, with entrances, processions, and censing [2], also built upon Old Testament worship. Icons, as a means of remembering Christ, His Saints, and martyrs, spread in their use. These changes occurred in response to the cultural change that the Church was experiencing with the end of persecution and its open acceptance within society.

Clerical Vestments.

Perhaps nothing better illustrates this process than the development of clerical vestments. The most striking aspect of the development of vestments is that they came out of everyday culture. In the early church, in fact, there was a marked attitude that there should be no liturgical vestments; that the celebration of worship and of the Eucharist should take place in everyday dress. This was in spite of the fact that Exodus 28 describes clerical vestments to be worn by the priests. With the exception of the use of a stole as a sign of office, all dressed alike in “street clothes.” This sign of office was present early on, for Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, refers in 190 A.D. to the Apostles John and James who “became sacrificing priests wearing the mitre.” [3] St. Gregory of Nazianzus records between 375-400 A.D. that there was “no difference between clerical and lay dress.” [4]

The clothing of the day derived from the normal and traditional clothing worn in Greek and Roman society. What brought about the changes in clothing within the Church was what began to happen within society. “What turned this clothing into a special liturgical vesture was mere conservatism. When the dress of the layman finally changed in the sixth and seventh centuries to the new barbarian fashions, the clergy as the last representatives of the old civilized tradition retained the old civilized costume.” [5] Again, a change within the culture had resulted in a favorable liturgical change within the Church. Dix goes on to point out that to this “accidental” distinction which developed between lay and clerical clothing added “symbolic enrichment” to add Christian meaning to things that had utilitarian origins; and that included the use of lights and censing during the Eucharist as well. [6] Again, elements of Old Testament worship were being retained and, in fact, taking on new meaning in the worship of the New Covenant.

Beauty in Worship.

The beauty and aesthetic aspect of worship must not be taken lightly any more than that of any other aspect of life. Anyone who has walked into a large and solemn church or cathedral, especially one that is old or of a liturgical tradition, knows this: the intuitive and natural sense of the solemn and reverent. It is natural to want to be beautiful, to live in beautiful homes. What is aesthetically pleasing is preferred to the crass. Should one expect anything less in worship, when one enters into deep communion with God Who created all things in beauty? Christian worship is of the Kingdom of God and is to show forth the Kingdom — spiritually and symbolically. Thus, the natural desire to make worship and the church itself both beautiful and aesthetically appealing.

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann writes of the development of the Divine Liturgy that “the faith and experience of the Church are inseparable from Scriptures, which are its source. Everything the Church believes and by which it lives took place ‘according to the Scripture’... But this ‘according to the Scripture’ means much more than fulfillment of prophecies and predictions; it means first of all the inner link between what Christ did and what the Scripture relates — aside from this link neither Scripture nor the meaning of Christ’s acts can be understood. The unfolding and deepening reflection of this link is precisely the content of the Christian service, of Church poetry, and even of the rite itself.” [7]

Notice the three key words in this observation. First, obviously, is Scripture. It is and must be the basis of all the Christian is and does. The second key word is unfolding. Just as theology and doctrine (the understanding of why and what is believed) took many centuries to develop, so did the unfolding of the form of worship require a similar amount of time to develop and blossom. The third key word is deepening. As with any-

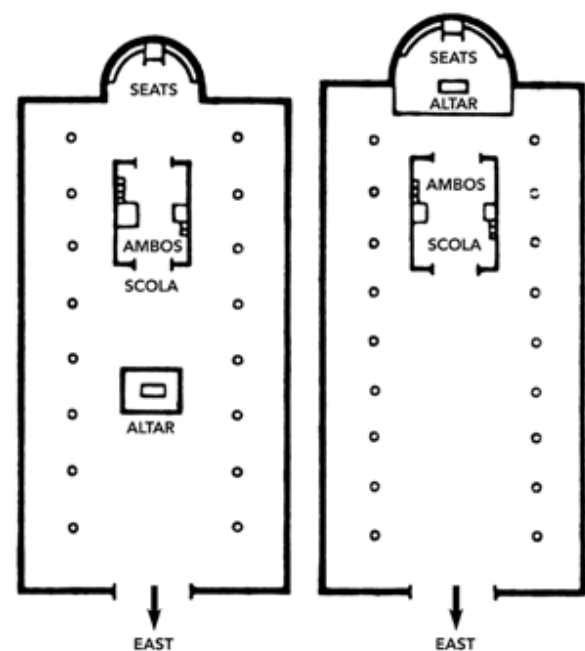
thing in life, for it to become filled with meaning and value requires time. The process of Christian worship itself moving beyond the immediate and the obvious to the meaningful and deep (i.e. “the breadth and length and height and depth” of the faith in Eph. 3:18) required time. And the process of this natural development also included the desire to make worship beautiful.

This is important to grasp as one considers the process by which the Liturgy developed. It can be seen how Christian worship made the transition from Jewish worship forms to Christian. Under Constantine the Christian worship and especially the Divine Liturgy continued to change. And the result is a form of Christian worship almost two thousand years old, one that naturally developed and matured under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. How can one account for its beauty, for its aesthetic appeal, for its splendor, other than by this process and the desire of the Church that worship be a reflection of heavenly worship? In other words, that it be deep, beautiful, moving, compelling and meaningful.

Architecture and Worship.

It has been described above how clerical vestments came into being, both to preserve the old dress traditions and to show forth the glory of the Kingdom. An architectural illustration may help explain the significance of what was now occurring within the Christian Church. The most common form for large public buildings in the Roman Empire was the basilica. Essentially a large rectangle, the span of its roof was held up by two rows of pillars running the length of the building. This form constituted most buildings which had been erected for secular purposes and were then taken over for Christian worship, demonstrating that the building in and of itself was not the most important aspect of the “temple.” It remained the most common form of church architecture in the West through the Renaissance. The illustration shows two common forms.

The basilica had inherent limitations. First, the two rows of columns divide the inner space of the Church into three sections, and so the assembly is divided into three sections. Only the center portion could house a “united” congregation; the re-



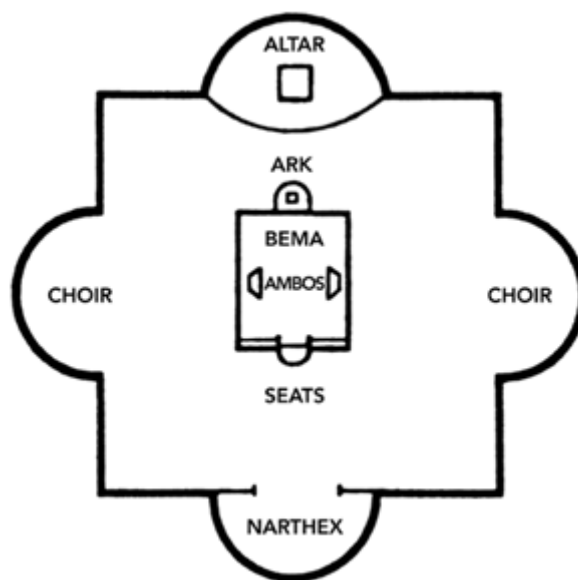
sult was three congregations. In larger subdivisions, the result could be five groupings. In addition, the length of the resulted in a further separation due to the the rear to the altar.

For the early Byzantine architects, under Constantine, these problems were developing a building where everything was own purpose. The most dramatic aspect of architectural development was replacing the a square building with no columns, but with to cover the span. The bema with the ark, bishop’s seat could be centrally located with the believers assembling around the bishops the synaxis. The assembly would then open procession of the holy gifts to the altar and so as to be gathered around the altar. It is from the diagram below how this architectural arrangement would enhance worship.

The Church of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) begun by Constantine “would become the grandiose model of the new type of Christian church, which may be the best adaptation to its primary purpose ever achieved in the past.” [8]

The Synaxis and the Eucharist.

The major structural change in the development of the Christian rite took place by the latter part of the third century. Through this time it was not uncommon for Christian worship to still have two separate components, the synaxis (directly derived from the synagogue) and the Eucharist. The Eucharist was for believers



basilicas with separate basilica distance from

beginning solved by there for its this rectangle with a dome atop it the lectern, and no hindrance to and readers for for the rearrange itself easy to see

only, and while all were expected to attend, this portion of the service was closed to non-believers. With the removal of persecution and the development of public worship, the need for separate services disappeared. By the end of the sixth century, holding one rite without the other had become very uncommon. The two rites had some similar and overlapping components, which were easily incorporated into each other. Prior to the synthesis occurring, the synaxis and the Eucharist services had the following components: [9]

Synaxis or “Meeting”	Eucharist
Greeting & Response	Greeting & Response
Lections interspersed with Psalmody	Kiss of Peace
Psalmody	Offertory
Sermon	Eucharistic Prayer
Dismissal of Catechumens	Fraction
Intercessory Prayers	Communion
Benediction	Benediction

It is very easy to see how these two services could be fused together to form two parts of one celebration. In the Eastern and Western Church this synthesis occurred and included liturgical enrichments including the addition of hymns, expanded use of litanies and the inclusion of the Nicene Creed. Two facts show that this synthesis was true to the original worship of the Early Church. The synaxis is very similar to the synagogue service. Further, the Eucharist is almost identical to the Eucharist which Justin Martyr describes in his *First Apology* as taking place at Rome in 150 A.D.

The early Christian Church inherited from Judaism an understanding of sacred or liturgical time, weekly and daily, with corresponding liturgical services. In addition to Sabbath services, in Judaism there were daily prayer services. These came into Christianity and were the basis of the original “ordo” or order of prayer. There is not a great deal of textual evidence for these first centuries, but it is fair to say that at a bare minimum the accepted norm was morning and evening prayers, which had developed by the mid to late 3rd century into Matins (Orthros in Greek) as the morning service, and Vespers (Esperinos in Greek) as the evening service at sunset.

In the context of liturgical maturation during this period, two points are important to keep in mind. First, liturgical changes of the fourth century were not a radical break with what preceded. Fr. Schmemmann says of this period, “It is really impossible to speak of a ‘liturgical revolution’ in the fourth century, if by this we mean the appearance of a type of worship differing radically from that which had gone before.” [10]

The same holds true of the enhancements and beautifications which took place in the early Byzantine period. Gregory Dix in *The Shape of the Liturgy* states that the main form of the Eastern Liturgy had been “reached by the end of the fourth century, after this the process is no more than one of adjustment and development of detail.” [11] He goes on to say that the final shape of the Liturgy was set by 800 A.D., with only minor variations occurring thereafter.

Worth mentioning for those concerned with this “late date,” is that most of what we take for granted as normative Christian belief and doctrine is equally late. The authoritative formulation of the doctrines of Christ and of the Holy Trinity were also fourth century products, the work of the early Ecumenical Councils in combating heresy. So was the formulation of the New Testament Canon. The major task of the early ecumenical Councils was defining these doctrines and the Creed and the Canon of Scripture, and these theological definitions then naturally became part of the liturgical structure of the early Christian Church.

Credits: Parts of this page are excerpted from: Williams, B. and Anstall, H.; *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple and the Early Church*; Light and Life Publishing, Minneapolis, 1990.

[1] Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, The Seabury Press, New York, 1982, p. 397.

[2] Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973, p. 120.

[3] Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, Dorset Press, New York, 1965, p. 141.

[4] G. Dix, op cit, p. 399.

[5] G. Dix, op cit, p. 404.

[6] G. Dix, op cit, p 430.

[7] Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, 19xx, p. 191.

[8] Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist*, Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1968, p. 64.

[9] G. Dix, *ibid*, p. 434.

[10] A. Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*; p. 96.

[11] G. Dix, *ibid*, p. 546.

Eastern Orthodox Liturgics.

Overview.

The liturgical practices of the Eastern Orthodox Church were founded on the practices of the mother Church in Jerusalem. This is the liturgical form that spread throughout the Mediterranean basin in the first few years of Christianity, and throughout the known world in the century that followed. The common language and musical forms of the Roman Empire were Greek. Not only did this form the foundation, but in those countries and cultures that retained both Greek language and culture over time, Greek became normative. While the language of Italy changed to Latin, of France to Gallic, and of the British Isles to Anglo-Saxon (and then English), most of the Orthodox countries retained Greek. This provided a living continuity back to the original liturgical form of the early Christian Church.

Among the most striking things about the liturgical worship of the Eastern Orthodox Church is the uniformity of its form, and the high degree of correspondence to the form that was in practice across the Christian Church in the sixth century. The Eastern Orthodox Church has experienced no Reformation that transformed the theological foundation of the faith as well as essentially doing away with the liturgical form and music, as has almost all of Protestantism. Neither has Orthodoxy experienced a twentieth century council that modified both the liturgical form and music, as has the Roman Catholic Church. While the liturgical form did undergo change in the fourth and fifth centuries to reflect the theological maturity of the faith, it still retains a high degree of similarity to early Christian practice.

During the period of the fourth to sixth centuries, the shape of the Eastern Divine Liturgy reached its final form under the guidance of liturgists such as St. John Chrysostom. In this same period the major formative changes occurred, most of which resulted in liturgical components that corresponded to the Church's developing theological understanding. Among them were the hymn "Only-Begotten Son" and the addition of the Nicean-Constantinopolitan Creed (countering heresies), and "The Trisagion Hymn" reflecting the Trinitarian theology being currently defined. In this period and on through the ninth century, hymns were composed and added to the Divine Liturgy, such as the Cherubic Hymn, sung while the priest recites the prayer that is now called "The Prayer of the Cherubic Hymn."

Generally speaking, the worship of the Orthodox Church has always been in the vernacular: that is, the local or indigenous language. The best example is Sts. Cyril and Methodius, two Greek missionaries to Russia in the tenth century. They created an alphabet, now called Cyrillic, and translated the Bible and liturgical texts into the native language. While the worship services are the same throughout the Orthodox Church (that is, the theology and liturgical texts are the same), what is different is the language, culture and music. Music is an expression of culture, and two main musical and liturgical traditions have developed over the past 2000 years: Byzantine and Russian. There are also unique liturgical music forms in the Armenian, Georgian and Coptic Orthodox Churches, but the majority of Orthodox Christians follow either the Byzantine or Russian forms.

Byzantine music has pre-Christian origins in Greek music, and is based on modes and chords described by Pythagoras. The early Christian Church spoke Greek, and the common music forms of the Roman Empire were also Greek. A liturgical music form developed over the first few centuries of Christianity which relied on Jewish Synagogue chant and psalmody, and the addition of new material using Greek music theory to create a musical form that was beautiful and appropriate to praise and worship God the Holy Trinity. The earliest hymn we know of is "O Gladsome Light," sung at Vespers, which was referred to by St. Justin the Martyr in 150 A.D.

This new musical form was called Byzantine. Byzantine music, like its ancient Greek predecessor, is characterized by eight modes that are sub-divided into three genres of feeling: Enharmonic, Chromatic and Diatonic. Each mode conveys the feeling associated with the prayer being offered or the text being sung: grave (as in Holy Week); sad or lamentful (as in Christ's passion); or joyous (such as the Resurrection or major feasts). The eight scales do not correspond directly to the major and minor scales of western music, and are characterized by many more semitones, or sub-divisions within a scale. This gives Byzantine music its haunting and somewhat foreign sound, but also allows it to convey so accurately different emotions or feelings.

Byzantine music developed over the first millennia a sophisticated form of chant and a very large body of liturgical material for all the services of the Church. It is principally characterized by melody (vs. harmony or polyphony) to convey the meaning or intent of the prayer or text, antiphonal (responsive) singing, and the use

of Byzantine modes. During this period, besides the creation of a musical corpus for all the services of the Church year, masterful forms such as the Kontakion and Kanon were created. Also, great Church musicians such as St. Andrew of Crete, St. Romanos the Melodist, and St. John of Damascus lived and worked. Byzantine music uses a unique “analog” notation, and has gone through several phases (ancient, medieval and late) and refinements. The most recent refinement was the simplification of the notation in 1881.

The Russian music tradition began with the introduction of Byzantine music brought by Greek missionaries in 988 A.D. The earliest forms of “Russian” liturgical music were *Znamenny* and Kievan Chant, both of which are quite Byzantine sounding. Bulgarian chant is late-Byzantine in style, and quite unique. The type of liturgical music generally thought of as “Russian” began its development as simple polyphony in the seventeenth century under the influence of Polish religious vocal music. It was further enhanced under Peter the Great, who brought to Russia many Western European cultural influences — among them musical styles. This is why Russian liturgical music sounds so much more accessible to the Western ear: it uses the same musical theory as Western music.

Most Russian liturgical music is in the major scale (some in the minor scale), with the typical tonal intervals. The introduction of these German, French and Italian music traditions had a lasting influence on Russian Church music, and elevated it to the levels of polyphony and harmony we know today. Much of the Slavonic-speaking Orthodox Church (Serbian, Bulgarian, Albanian, etc.) follows the Russian music traditions. These music traditions were brought to North America in the nineteenth century by Russian missionaries to Alaska and the West coast.

Credits: Benjamin D. Williams

Early Eastern Orthodox Liturgics.

The liturgical rites of all the Eastern Orthodox Churches can be traced back to the original rite in use in Jerusalem prior to the Apostolic missionary activities to the Gentiles, and the subsequent persecutions that moved the Christian Church out of Judea and across the Mediterranean basin and beyond. The Apostles took with them the liturgical rite, developed as it was at the time. This became the basis of the Eucharistic service for the Church. The early Christian Church was not characterized by written rites that were carefully adhered to, but followed a highly regarded oral tradition of Eucharistic prayers.

Early Hymns.

Among the earliest pieces of Eastern Orthodox liturgical music, which attest to this transition, is the hymn “O Gladsome Light.” This hymn is recited or sung every evening at the setting of the sun during Vespers. The text of this hymn was cited by St. Justin the Martyr in about 150 A.D. in his dialogue with Trypho. Although it pre-dated the Byzantium, it is referred to as “Byzantine.” It is clearly Greek in its musical form and composition, while it possesses a text that is clearly Jewish in origin and conforms to the Jewish calendar in which the day ends and begins at sunset.

The very ancient “Hymn to the Holy Trinity” was found in 1918 in Oxyrrynchus, Egypt. It uses an ancient Greek musical notation system that fell into disuse by the last part of the third century. It conveys both an emerging Trinitarian theological awareness and a distinctly Greek musical form. (Sacred Sample)

Over time, however, as liturgical forms developed and became standardized, they were generally associated with the cities that were the Apostolic Sees, such as Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome. Initially these liturgical rites were very similar from city to city and church to church, but began to diverge over time as influenced by local circumstances and culture.

The Greek Influence.

After the persecutions and the Gentile missions, the Church became primarily composed of Greek-speaking Gentiles for whom Greek culture and music were the norm. Thus began the introduction of Greek language and musical style onto the foundation of Jewish worship structure. The earliest rites in the Eastern Church include the Jerusalem liturgy of St. James, the Alexandrian liturgy of St. Mark, the East Syrian liturgy, the West Syrian liturgy of Antioch, the Armenian liturgy, and the Coptic liturgy. Most liturgical scholars accept that in the Eastern Orthodox Church, three principal rites emerged over time: the East Syrian, the West Syrian and the Alexandrian. These liturgies were similar.

For the first three hundred years of its existence, the Christian Church was illegal and frequently persecuted. Therefore, very ancient liturgical documents before the fourth century are quite limited because the early Church was not “producing” liturgies but focusing on celebrating the Eucharist and surviving persecution. It

was not until Constantine's edict of toleration in 313 A.D. that Christianity became a legal and public religion. Following this change in public status, the Church was forced to take on a new role in society, and began to modify its liturgical form to meet the requirements of ministering in a public forum. A much broader missionary effort now required proclaiming the Gospel to those uneducated about the faith.

Combating Heresies.

The appearance of heresies in the fourth century, especially in the East, also necessitated modification of the liturgical rite. In the century following the legalization of the Church, we can begin to identify the different liturgical forms or rites. While building upon a very uniform Eucharistic core, which had been established earlier, effort now went into adding beauty in the way of music, the common use of iconography, the early use of clerical vestments, majesty in ceremony, and instruction in theological content. The liturgical form developed slowly over the course of time, and was shaped by the new dynamics of becoming a part of society and combating heresy.

If there were many different and legitimate liturgical forms in the first few hundred years of Christianity, why in both East and West are there essentially only one or two today? Ultimately, the survival and ascendance of one liturgy over the other had more to do with non-liturgical factors. For instance, in the Eastern Church the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom became the principal liturgical form primarily because it was the liturgical form favored in the cathedrals and churches of the capital city of Constantinople. Similarly, in the West the Roman rite predominated over time because it was the rite of the cathedrals and churches in the capital city of Rome.

Early Liturgical Documents.

The very earliest significant liturgical document known to exist is in *The Apostolic Constitutions* (also known as the Clementine Liturgy), a late fourth century handbook of church teaching. It claims to be based on earlier works of similar kind, and to convey the teachings of the Apostles that were transmitted to the Church by St. Clement of Rome. "For the history of Christian worship its character as a specimen rite has great value for unlike those rites which have been used it has not been modified to accord with developing practice. In its general form it can be taken as representative of the rite of Antioch in the late fourth century, from which that of Constantinople ultimately derived." [2] Perhaps its greatest significance is the great similarity it bears to the texts that exist for liturgies of the eighth century, four centuries later.

For instance, the Clementine Liturgy contains scripture readings, sermon, dismissal of catechumens, a comprehensive litany, corporate intercessory prayer, kiss of peace, procession of the gifts to the altar, anaphora and eucharistic prayers, intercessions and the communing of the faithful.

"The Clementine Liturgy enables us to form a reasonably accurate picture of late fourth century eucharistic worship in the province of Antioch. It testifies to the consolidation of the liturgical tradition in the East, parallel to that revealed by Ambrose of Milan in the West. The eucharistic prayer, which at least up to the third century had been extempore, at the discretion of the bishop, now became a fixed text. There was, of course, nothing like the uniformity of text and practice that later came to characterize eucharistic worship throughout the Church. It was still possible for new eucharistic prayers to be composed, of course following traditional lines; and considerable variety existed in the manner of celebrating the service. But the Clementine Liturgy provides us with a reasonable guide to the basic shape of the Liturgy of Constantinople at the end of the fourth century. It offers us an adequate starting point for tracing the specific development of Byzantine eucharistic worship." [3]

The principal differences in the various rites began to develop around the introductory parts of the service, that is, the introduction to what had originally been the Synaxis. The very earliest components were probably "a preliminary censuring by the bishop or celebrant, followed by the singing of a group of psalms, prefixed to the lexicons. Geographically it begins in what is for the 'far east' of classical Christendom, though the censuring was afterwards adopted by the central group of Greek churches." [4]

Now the clergy could publicly approach and enter the churches, and this provided the opportunity for ceremony. In some rites the old tradition of keeping the Gospel and other sacred books away from the Church for safekeeping during persecution was now incorporated into a formal procession by which they were brought to the church while the faithful sang Psalms. This eventually developed into the early part of the Eastern Rite service, incorporating the entrance of the clergy, the censuring of the church, the antiphonal singing of psalms leading up to the Little Entrance, and the procession of the Gospel book to the altar.

The Litanies.

The Litanies probably developed from the practice of the early church in the singing of Psalms by the faithful as they assembled and waited outside the church. It goes back to the Jewish liturgical use of chanted

Psalms, and incorporates an antiphonal chant from Judaism. Now there was the need and opportunity for a “prayer of the people.” Most likely the deacon or cantor chanted a Psalm verse and the people responded with the same refrain. The officiant then continued with the second verse to which the people responded, and so on. This is evident in the Antiphons where verses of Psalms are alternated with intercessory prayers.

The first Litany in the Eastern Rite is commonly called the Great or Extended Litany, for it covers every aspect of human need including prayers for the church, the world, and the whole of creation. The celebrating clergyman offers the petition, and the whole congregation prays together when the people respond “Kyrie Eleison” (“Lord, have mercy”).

The Trisagion Hymn.

The addition of the *Trisagion Hymn* (the Trinitarian hymn “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us”) to the Liturgy can be traced to the time of Patriarch Proclus (434-446 A.D.), a period when the heresies were beginning to appear. The period of major heresies for the Christian Church was predominately the fourth and fifth centuries. The most notable heresies (Arianism, Monophysitism, etc.) developed in the East. The *Trisagion Hymn* is accepted to have been divinely revealed at Constantinople as the text sung by the angels (perhaps a Trinitarian expression of Revelation 4:8). The hymn itself follows the prayer of the Trisagion said by the priest, and is one of the most ancient hymns of the Christian Church (see Sacred Samples). It is deeply Trinitarian and thus anti-Arian in character; Holy God is addressed to the Father Almighty, Holy Mighty to the only-begotten Son, and Holy Immortal refers to the Holy Spirit.

A parallel development in Eastern liturgical development can be seen in the incorporation of the hymn *Monogenes* or “Only-Begotten,” a response to the Monophysite heresy. It was composed by the Emperor Justinian, and incorporated into the Byzantine liturgy following the second Antiphon approximately 535-536 A.D. It immediately became part of the entrance at Constantinople and Antioch, and soon was incorporated into the Greek rites of the Eastern Church.

The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil.

The Liturgy of St. Basil has the same structural form as that of St. John Chrysostom and the other West Syrian liturgical rites. It differs only in the prayers of the priest, and is characterized by a much more extensive Biblical imagery.

Many of the liturgical modifications of the fourth and fifth centuries were introduced in the East, and then were adopted in the Western Church. The battle against the major heresies was principally fought in the East, so it is not surprising to see the results appear in the Eastern rites. It is curious, however, that many of them (the *Monogenes* hymn, the Trinitarian structure of the prayers, etc.) were not adopted in the West. Notwithstanding this, a scholar like Fr. Bouyer can say:

“We will not deny that the West Syrian eucharist can be considered ideal, at least in the sense that nowhere else has the whole traditional content of the Christian eucharist been expressed with such fullness and in such a satisfying framework? There is no question of shedding doubt upon the legitimacy or even the excellence of the theology of the Greek Fathers of the fourth Century.” [5]

The Continuity of the Eucharistic Prayers.

Most of the liturgical development in the fourth and fifth century falls into two main categories: those incorporated into the entrance or introduction of the service (the majority of the additions in East and West), and those incorporated into the conclusions of the service. Most of this change came about in response to the changing circumstance and needs of the Church, and led to a new and fuller understanding of worship. However, the Eucharistic core remained unchanged as described by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann:

“...It is important to stress that what was changed was not worship itself in its objective content and order, but rather the reception, the experience, the understanding of worship. Thus the historian can easily establish not only continuity in the development of Eucharistic prayers, but also the essential identity of their basic structures. The assembly of the Church, Scripture, Preaching, the Offertory, the Anaphora and finally the Communion — this structure of the Eucharist remains unchanged.”[6]

Credits: Benjamin D. Williams

[1] Bouyer, Louis, *Eucharist*, Notre Dame University Press, Notre Dame, 1968, p. 136.

[2] Wybrew, Hugh, *The Orthodox Liturgy*, St. Valdimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, 1990, p. 38.

[3] Ibid, p. 45.

[4] Dix, Gregory, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, The Seabury Press, New York, 1982, p. 445.

[5] Bouyer, L., *ibid*, p. 245-46.

The Byzantine Synthesis.

Beyond the cultural and theological changes of the fourth and fifth centuries, the other major cultural event affecting the development of the Divine Liturgy was the fact that the Christian faith had taken root in the Eastern Roman Empire, which was now becoming the Byzantine Empire. After becoming Emperor, Constantine established a new capital for the Empire in 330 A.D. at Byzantium. This ancient fishing town was on the Bosphorus in present day Turkey, and is now known as Istanbul. This new city became the center of the Byzantine Empire, and developed into one of the centers of world art and culture for the next thousand years.

Constantine conceived of a theocracy where the emperor ruled the empire on behalf of and for God, was the protector of the faith, and ensured the well being of the faithful. His conception was the sunlight and water that allowed the Church to flourish in the soil of the Roman Empire in which She had been planted. It was this vision of a theocracy that provided the conceptual basis for the government of what would become the Byzantine Empire. Because the Byzantine Empire was the crucible in which most of the Eastern Church was formed and flourished, it is important to understand some basic historical influences within it.

Division of the Roman Empire.

The unified empire of Constantine was short-lived. It operated as two halves of an integrated whole, both originally sharing the same world view. Before the end of the fourth century the barbarian invasion of the Western part of the Empire was under way, and the West was conquered in pieces. Most of the barbarians were Christianized over time, but the barbarian conquest slowed and often severely limited liturgical development in the West. The next four hundred years would see this struggle go on until the final rise of the empire of Charlemagne. The Ostrogoth Kingdom was founded in Italy in 493, and most of what is now referred to as Europe was under barbarian dominion. This was the beginning of the Dark Ages in the West. In the East, the empire was not without difficulties and wars, but culturally it remained essentially intact and operated as a united whole.

The Church and the State.

In the West, the Church was often called upon to exert itself as the local civil authority. This historical situation directly involved the Church in politics and worldly matters, and the Western Church, partly out of necessity and partly out of choice, elected to assert itself in this arena. The theocratic concept of Constantine continued to prevail in the East, and reached its pinnacle in Justinian's reign in the seventh century. His politico-religious view was "symphony," a symbiotic relationship in which the Church and state were not connected by law or power, but by the Christian faith. The emperor and the empire were bound by declaration of faith to maintain the faith in its entirety.

"In the Eastern concept, the Church embraced the whole world and was its inner essence, standard and the source of its gifts of the Spirit within it, but it was not the *authority* in worldly political matters, nor even the source of authority. The latter was granted to emperors and rulers, they should be guided by the truth of the Church, but they did not receive authority from the Church." [1] The result was that the Church was within the state and a part of it, but was essentially subservient to it. In the West, the Church was within the state, often at odds with it and appearing to be outside of it, but also striving to be over it. Even with Justinian's concept of symphony, there was always the question of the arbitrary authority of the state (because the emperor had ultimate power) and the Church's acceptance of it — often at its own expense and at a cost to the truth of the Kingdom of God.

"Both East and West deviated from the original New Testament conception of the role of the Church in relation to the state. However, the unique position of the Church within the Byzantine empire coupled with the historic circumstances of the next one thousand years created an environment which was highly enculturated, had well developed arts and sciences, yet did not fundamentally change." [2]

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann contends that the theocracy within Byzantium cannot simply be written off as the subjugation of the Church to the state. And it certainly was not the subjection of the state to the Church, which was frequently the case in the West. The relationship of Church and state was much more complex. Throughout its life, Byzantium experienced struggles from within to which the Church responded: correct moral value, as in the Trullan Councils; rediscovery of the spiritual realities of the faith, as in monasticism; de-

fining the theology of the faith, like the later Ecumenical Councils and the work of many great theologians; experience of the fullness of Christian worship, like the development of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

The Influence of Byzantium in the West.

The development of the Christian rite must be seen in this setting of relative stability and enculturation. The influence of Byzantium spread across the entire Roman Empire, and waxed and waned with political changes. Thus we see domed churches in Italy, the use of Greek in the Roman Mass through the tenth century, and Byzantine monasteries in southern Italy existing even until today.

This culture with its sense of the aesthetic and beautiful allowed expression of the faith and worship to flower. And these religious developments were not limited to forms of worship. Theology in the Eastern Church continued to develop unabated. And most importantly, monasticism and spirituality developed to great heights during this period. Of this Fr. Schmemmann notes: “we need only open the monastic literature of these times to find a world of spirituality — such amazing refinement of the human mind, such perception and holiness, such all-embracing, wonderful concept of the final meaning of life.” [3]

The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

The two liturgical rites of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil in the Eastern Church became the norm by the end of the reign of Justinian. The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom was probably the liturgy used originally by St. John while Bishop of Antioch, and which he carried to Constantinople upon becoming Patriarch. It was, therefore, originally a West Syrian liturgical rite. In Constantinople it was refined and beautified under his guidance. Having become the liturgical form of the Church of Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia), it became over time the normative liturgical form in the churches within the Byzantine Empire. The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom reflects both a highly refined aesthetic of beauty and majesty, tradition and mystery, and a highly developed theology. It reflects the work of the Cappadocian Fathers to both combat heresy and define Trinitarian theology for the Christian Church.

The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom preserves the continuity with the liturgical traditions of the early Church. Prior to becoming Bishop of Constantinople, St. John had been Bishop of Antioch, and his liturgical contributions to Orthodox worship included the liturgical traditions, which he brought from Antioch to Constantinople, as well as refinements he may have added as Patriarch of Constantinople. However, the final form of the Liturgy of St. John most likely reached its final compilation in the sixth century, and is attributed to the Patriarch who greatly contributed to its final form and content.

By the seventh century the compilation of the Divine Liturgy was essentially complete. Most of the changes thereafter were not changes in substance, but rather minor changes in form and style. Minor stylistic changes took place through the ninth century, but after that only minor changes in the wording of the prayers of the Liturgy [4]. A beautiful and moving historic verification of this fact can be seen in the Byzantine Collection at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington D.C. The collection includes a chalice from Rhia in Byzantium, which dates from 527 to 565 A.D. Inscribed around the rim are the words from the Anaphora, “Thine own of thine own we offer to thee, O Lord.” These very words are used by the Eastern Church in the prayer before communion today.

By the seventh century the See of Constantinople had risen to the central position in the entire Orthodox Church, and the liturgical patterns that had been synthesized in the capital began to influence other traditions. This influence took place both because of the highly developed form the rite of Constantinople had reached, and because in many instances it was enforced as the required rite within the empire. Within a hundred years the form used in the capital became the only form used within the whole Eastern Church, other than on special days. Much of the “standardization” of the rite of the Eastern Church on the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom was caused by the emperor who wanted to standardize liturgical form as a means to overcome dissension within the empire caused by heresy. This dynamic of external political force “standardizing” liturgical forms appeared in the Western Church as well, under the rule of Charlemagne.

Fr. Schmemmann points out that “Byzantium, for its part, was increasingly turning its back on the West and shifting its center of interest eastward.” From the fifth century on, “we clearly perceive the progressive orientalizing of the empire and its culture, psychology, art and court ritual.” [5] Although the East had been organically connected to the West from the beginning as part of the one Roman Empire, the barbarian invasions had plunged the West deeper into the chaos of the Dark Ages, depriving it of Byzantium’s development, which proceeded apart from the West.

Changelessness in Orthodox Worship.

While the early Byzantine Empire had provided an environment in which the Church could naturally develop, the later Empire was characterized by conservatism and absence of change. While this is in stark contrast to the cultural changes that began to occur in the West at the same time, it became an element of great importance for the Eastern Orthodox Church. This lack of change for over eight hundred years has great bearing on our understanding of the unchanging nature of the Eastern liturgical rite and the Divine Liturgy. The Church strove to be true to St. Paul's challenge to Timothy to "guard the deposit of the faith" (1 Tim. 6:20). This foundational commitment to the nature of the early Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ formed the basic view upon which future development would occur.

The need to fully present the faith in the early Church resulted in a type of change that was true to the Tradition of the Church, and yet embodied the fullness of the Gospel. This view was further established after the period of the early Fathers, those bishops and theologians who described the doctrines of belief, codified the Scriptures, and defined the Church's worship. After the passing of this period, an understanding developed that the major work had been completed, the shape of the faith and practice had been established — it was a reference against which future developments would be judged.

For the early Church, theology was from experience. The experience of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit required the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. The experience of Jewish worship and of the Eucharist forced the development of new worship forms. By the time of the last Ecumenical council, the majority of this experience had been defined. The Great Age of Christian Theology was over; the work was complete. It was this mindset coupled to the circumstances and world view of Byzantium that resulted in the changelessness of the Church.

In spite of this, there was still "a very high level of ecclesiastical culture, spiritual and intellectual interests, and constant concern for enlightenment, schools and books. Medieval Byzantium was the cultural center of the world." [7] And in spite of this apparent contradiction (perhaps because of it), it was here that the pinnacle of Eastern spirituality occurred in the persons of St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory Palamas. The problem was that the emphasis was upon maintenance and elaboration. And while this may seem troublesome in terms of the lack of development, there is something vitally important about this circumstance for the Divine Liturgy. In contrast to the Medieval and Renaissance changes experienced by the West, Byzantium experienced a steady and constant period of development in its first few hundred years, and then essentially a millennium of no change thereafter. The result has been an almost unchanged reservoir of liturgical worship practice that is true to the origins of the Christian faith.

The Schism of 1054.

Most Christians are aware of the historical event that separated the Eastern and Western Church, the Great Schism of 1054. However, this break in communion between the Churches did not happen spontaneously. It was the result of many centuries of growing apart and of developing different world views. The schism was the result of theological and cultural and political disputes complicated by the extreme differences between the two halves of the Christian world.

The fate of Byzantium, and of the Eastern Church, had little to do with the schism of 1054. The two had begun as two halves of an integrated whole, and Fr. Schmemmann eloquently describes the result: "The fate of Byzantium was finally decided in the east and the emergence of Islam marks the borderline that divided the early (Eastern) empire... from later Byzantium. The unity of the Roman world was not destroyed by an internal division between East and West, but by an external catastrophe..." [8] This external catastrophe was primarily the barbarian invasions and conquests in the West which wrenched it from communion with the East. It was deepened by the historic and cultural process, which resulted in the East being labeled "Greek" and the West "Latin." It was finally capped by the rise of Islam when the Patriarchates of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch slipped under the yoke of Islam.

Orthodox Evangelism to Russia.

Religious, cultural and political differences, which finally resulted in schism in 1054, prevented the Eastern Church from looking West. Religious difference and outright hostility prevented it from looking East. Yet it could reach North to the Slavs and to Russia. And this it did with missionary efforts that began in the ninth century. The legacy of this missionary effort was evident in 1988 with the celebration of the millennium of Christianity in Russia, the result of this outreach. By the time of the fall of the Byzantine Empire in the fifteenth century, Russia was an Orthodox country. In the view of the Russian Church the holy mission of Byzantium had passed to it.

This missionary effort to the Slavic countries, to Russia, and on into Asia speaks of the spiritual vitality still at work at the turn of the millennium within the Eastern Church in the Byzantine Empire. The result was an Orthodox Church in Russia that undertook another millennium of worship and praise and evangelism. Out of this missionary focus came the evangelism of Northern Asia and North America, and the establishment of Orthodox Christianity in Alaska in 1793.

The West, meanwhile, continued to undergo dramatic change during the Medieval period of Scholasticism, through the Renaissance, and on into the Enlightenment. These changes were not only political and cultural and philosophical, but involved substantial theological movement and innovation as well. Dix concludes the historical portion of his book with this observation: "...The Byzantine Church survived because... Orthodoxy is a far greater and more Christian thing than Byzantium — rich in faith and holiness and above all in martyrs. Until this last twenty years it was still possible (though unfair) to call it a sleeping church ... It will be fascinating to see what it makes of its magnificent patristic heritage in the modern world when it has been everywhere set free from its old entanglements with autocracy. One thing it will assuredly keep is the Byzantine rite by which all Orthodoxy worships, and has saved itself from extinction by worshipping." [9]

Credits: Parts of this page were excerpted from *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Temple, the Synagogue and the Early Church*, by Williams, B. and Anstall, H., Light and Life Publishing Co., Minneapolis, 1988. This book is available in our liturgical web store ([learn more here](#)).

[1] A. Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, p. 118.

[2] A. Schmemmann, *ibid*, p. 217.

[3] A. Schmemmann, *ibid*, p. 165.

[4] G. Dix, *ibid*, p. 547.

[5] A. Schmemmann, *ibid*, p. 143.

[6] *Ibid*, p. 200.

[7] A. Schmemmann, *op cit*, p. 226.

[8] *Ibid*, p. 170.

[9] G. Dix, (*need page reference from Ben W. . . .*).

Iconography and Worship.

The Eastern Orthodox understanding of worship begins with the scriptural understanding that there are other heavenly or spiritual beings: angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim. The Scriptures teach that in worship believers are surrounded by and worship within this communion of heavenly hosts. As the Prayer of Entrance says, "O Sovereign Lord, our God, Who appointed in heaven the orders and armies of angels and archangels for the service of Your glory, grant that the holy angels may enter with us to serve and glorify Your goodness with us." Or, as the prayer during the Thanksgiving acknowledges of God, "for this liturgy which You are pleased to accept from our hands, though there stand before You thousands of archangels, and myriads of angels, cherubim and seraphim, six-winged, many-eyed, soaring high on their wings; singing, proclaiming, shouting the Hymn of Victory."

Worship in the Kingdom.

Consistent with the earliest Christian beliefs, worship involves this heavenly host because Christian worship takes place in the Kingdom of God before the heavenly throne (see, for example, Isaiah 6: 1-8). Also gathered around the throne are all the Saints who Christians remember and who join in the worship. Christians pray for those who partake of the gifts of the Eucharist, and say "Furthermore, we offer to You this spiritual worship for those who in faith have gone on before us to their rest: forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics and every righteous spirit made perfect in faith, especially for our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Mother of God and Ever-virgin Mary." Christians throughout the ages have affirmed the "great cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12: 1), those Saints who have gone before. Christians pray for them even as they believe and expect the Saints pray for them.

Worshiping and Praying with the Saints.

When Christians gather to worship, especially to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, they recognize that it is not just those on earth who are present, but those gathered as "the general assembly and church of the first born, enrolled in heaven" (Heb. 12:23). These Saints are simply those among all Christians who have led particularly

spiritual or exemplary lives in Christ. The Church has recognized this and held up those who it knows are especially worthy of honor by all who are striving to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Since Christians do not think it unusual to pray for and ask for prayers of fellow believers, why would it be unusual to ask the Saints for their prayers as well, especially during times of trouble or extreme need? After all, the Saints really *know* how to pray and do not stop praying when they leave this life to be with the Lord. The Saints share the same spiritual communion as Orthodox Christians; they constitute the communion of the Saints. Thus it is no different to ask intercession or prayer of them than it is to ask intercession or prayer of believers on earth.

For the Christian, death is not the end, nor is it an eternal “holding pattern.” Rather, life continues in the Kingdom of God. As St. Paul declares: “to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord” (II Cor. 5:8). Christians who believe that life continues after physical death should have little trouble affirming this understanding of the Saints.

The Mother of God.

The Virgin Mary is, according to the Greek term “*Theotokos*,” — the God bearer, or Mother of God. And this is what Mary was, for she bore Jesus Christ Who is God Incarnate. In 431 A.D. during the Nestorian controversy, the Council of Ephesus decided upon the term *Theotokos* as that which most correctly described Mary and protected the proper Christological understanding of Jesus as the Messiah of God. Two great doctrines came out of this Council: the first, the Incarnation, is still affirmed by most who profess to be Christians; the second, understanding Mary as *Theotokos*, is only fully retained by Orthodox Christians.

Affirming the Incarnation.

The doctrinal decision of the Council about the Incarnation is dear to the hearts of Christians: that Jesus Christ is fully human *and* fully divine. The term *Theotokos* was introduced to affirm the understanding. The word means God-bearer and clearly states that the One Mary bore was God. As the Council determined, the two understandings go hand-in-hand; one cannot take one without the other and still be true to early Christianity. As Fr. Thomas Hopko points out, “Jesus Christ, the Son, Word, and image of God, is physically and spiritually formed in the body of Mary so that He might be formed in us as well (see Gal. 4:19).” [1]

This role of honor is most clearly seen in the final petition in the litanies in Orthodox services: “Remembering our most holy, most pure, most blessed, most glorious Lady, the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commit ourselves and each other and all our lives unto Christ our God.” The emphasis is upon, “remembering Mary... we *commit* ourselves to Christ.” In remembering Mary’s life, in calling her “blessed” as the New Testament teaches, believers recommit each day to live in conformity to Christ in the image and will of God.

Because of the lives they lived, Saints become models, images, or icons of what humble, loving and spiritual Christian life should be. Most of the early Saints were martyrs, those who willingly died for their belief in Jesus Christ. This was a testimony not only of the faith of the individual who was martyred, but it was also a testimony to the triumph of Christ over death. That is why so many early churches were built with their altars over the grave of a martyr; the martyr’s death was a testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as the Eucharist offered on that altar was spiritual food providing eternal life. The Saints may have died physically, but believers know that they have not died in any final sense; they live on with Christ in His Kingdom. If “life after death” is part of Christian belief, then what is affirmed is the reality of the communion of the Saints.

The Communion of the Saints.

This belief in the communion of the Saints goes back to the early church. St. Athanasius in his second pastoral letter regarding the Easter Feast speaks of it in 330 A.D., undoubtedly reflecting a much earlier tradition within the Church. He says, “So then, let us celebrate this heavenly joy, together with the Saints of old who kept the same Feast. Yes, they keep the feast with us, and they are examples to us of life in Christ.” [2] Notice the change in tenses: the Saints of old kept the feast, and now they “keep it with us.” The Saints are able to keep the feast because upon their death they entered into the communion of the Lord, which transcends death and is eternal.

Iconography and the Incarnation.

This understanding of the Saints as models or images of the Christian life and thus of Christ, can help provide an understanding of the Orthodox use of icons. The icons are images, or models by which believers can visualize these persons who are loved, honored, and remembered. Human beings are strongly influenced by the senses. Further, Orthodox Christian faith is a concrete one rooted in history and experience, and centered in a historical, flesh and blood Savior Who is God; it is not an abstract thing. In Hebrews 12, Christians are seen as

“looking unto Jesus...” Thus, the use of icons becomes not only practically important but a profession of belief in the Incarnation.

The Ecumenical Councils were held to determine once and for all the nature of Jesus Christ. Because He is not only fully God but also fully man, He can be portrayed in icons. Iconography and the Incarnation go hand-in-hand.

The Physical Dimension of Worship.

The Scriptures teach that God created human beings as physical as well as spiritual beings. To deny this physical aspect of being human is to deny the nature of the creation. The challenge is to affirm this physical aspect of being human in a manner which is edifying and which builds up and conforms the believer to the image of Christ.

Furthermore, the Incarnation of Jesus, the taking on of human flesh and possession of both human and divine natures, is the ultimate affirmation of the inherent goodness of creation. To deny the physical side of being human, or to affirm the spiritual at the expense of the physical, is simply not Christian. In Orthodox worship all senses are involved, through the smell of incense, the sight of candles and icons, the hearing of prayers and music, and the taste of the Eucharist.

Ernst Benz is a Protestant Theologian who writes to explain Orthodox Christianity. He contends the Orthodox Church cannot be fully understood until and unless one understands its icons. This begins by seeing the relationship between God and mankind, for human beings were created in the image of God and carry the “icon” of God within themselves. Benz believes “this image-concept also dominates the Christology and doctrine of the Trinity in the Eastern Church.” [3] Christ, the divine Word, is the image of the Father. The redemptive work of Jesus Christ, Who is the Icon of the Father, consists in renewing the image of God which was distorted by sin. Redemption is linked to this concept of image; the redemption of mankind “consists in mankind’s being renewed in the image of Jesus Christ, incorporated into the new image of Christ, and thus through Jesus Christ experiencing the renewal of his status as image of God.” [4]

Iconography and Jesus Christ.

At the heart of all iconography is Jesus Christ, and thus God the Father. The Saint portrayed in an icon is in the image of Jesus Christ. In venerating the Saints, Orthodox Christians are venerating Jesus Christ (“if they receive you they will receive me” Matt. 10:40); that is, God, in Whose image and likeness they were made. Icons serve to challenge and motivate, to encourage and bless because in them one can see and experience Jesus Christ, the hope of glory.

Older Jewish synagogues frequently contained illustrations of Biblical scenes, symbols or stories. Archaeological excavations have shown great similarity between the frescoes and mosaics used in some synagogues and those used in early Christian iconography. The excavations of both a synagogue and a Christian church in Dura-Europos in Syria testify to this fact. The older Jewish selection of facts and stories are now interpreted in the light of Christ. It was the martyrdom of believers that initiated the painting of icons of particular Saints. Those icons bear witness to the eternal life which was theirs in Christ and which their death proclaimed.

The Gospel in Color.

In the first millennium of the Church when the majority of the people were illiterate, the icons were “the books of the people.” More recently they have been called “the Gospel in color.” They provided images, with the associated facts and history, of those who had gone before in the faith. In many old world Orthodox countries, especially in Slavic countries, ancient churches can be found with icons painted on the outside of the building for the purpose of edifying and instructing the faithful.

Icons, by definition, are very stylized and are not naturalistic. They are not supposed to represent the scene or person as if in a portrait or photograph. They are for spiritual and prayerful purposes, and the veneration given them is referred to the person represented, and thus ultimately to Christ, and not to the image. Icons of the Incarnation or the Resurrection, for instance, are filled with images that not only illustrate the occurrence, but also convey the full meaning of what took place. Icons urge the believer to continually accept and worship and believe in Jesus Christ, and to do so as the Church has taught from the beginning so that the *theological truth* is conveyed to the observer, rather than a particular visual experience. Icons are “the most successful attempt, maybe, in the whole history of the Christian Church, to make the invisible visible in Christian worship.” [5]

The beloved Russian priest of the nineteenth century, St. John of Kronstadt, summarizes the importance of icons for the Orthodox Christian in this way:

“Images or symbols are a necessity of human nature in our present spiritually sensual condition; they explain visually many things of the spiritual world which we could not apprehend without images and

symbols. It was for this reason that the divine teacher, the personal Wisdom through Whom all things were created, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, often taught men by means of images or parables. It is for this reason also that in our Orthodox churches it is the custom to represent many things to the sight of the Christian by imagery; for instance, to represent the Lord Himself, the immaculate Mother of God, the angels and Saints, on images, in order that we may conform our lives, all our thoughts, words and deeds, to the image of the thoughts, words, and deeds of the Lord and His Saints.” [6]

Credits;

Parts of this page were excerpted from *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Temple, the Synagogue and the Early Church*, by Williams, B. and Anstall, H., Light and Life Publishing Co., Minneapolis, 1988. This book is available in our liturgical web store ([learn more here](#)).

[1] Thomas Hopko, *The Winter Pascha*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, 1984, p. 22.

[2] Jack Sparks, *The Resurrection Letters*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 19xx, p. 60.

[3] Ernst Benz, *The Eastern Orthodox Church; Its Thought and Life*, Anchor Books, New York, 1963, p. 19.

[4] Ibid, p. 19.

[5] Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist*, Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1968, p. 70.

[6] Father John of Kronstadt, *Spiritual Counsels*, edited by W. Jardine Grisbrooke, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1989, p. 82.

The Byzantine Typicon.

The order of services or prayer in the Eastern Orthodox Churches is set forth in the Typicon, a volume that provides the order of church rites for all services, special prayers, and church celebrations for the whole year. The two main sources of the Typicon are

- 1) the ancient Ordo of St. Sabas monastery in Palestine (the Jerusalem Ordo), and
- 2) the later Studite monastery in Constantinople.

These monastic centers were places where the existing practices were complied and synthesized and codified into a more standardized form.

The St. Sabas Ordo is associated with many great monastic saints in Palestine, and the churches and monasteries associated with holy places in the area around Jerusalem. The Ordo of St. Sabas developed as the Church grew, as monasticism prospered and became a normal part of Church life, and as monasticism was an important part in the battle against heresies. It became the rule of prayer for the whole Church, and reached its final synthesis in the ninth century.

The Studite Ordo is very similar in structure to the Jerusalem Ordo, and is a later synthesis that took place in the Byzantine capital. It is particularly notable for its hymnography (especially the development of the Lenten Triodion), harmonizing the more ancient Ordos, and some unique structural elements. The development of these two Ordos represents the compilation and synthesis of the liturgical form and practice of the Eastern Church and its development to a peak during the middle Byzantine period. The development of the Ordo in the Eastern Church since this period has been minimal, and possesses no change either in structure or in the expression of the rule of prayer.

What is most important to understand is the premise and motivation behind the whole concept of developing a uniform rule of prayer, and the principles underlying such an undertaking in the Byzantine tradition. Perhaps the best summary is by Fr. Schmemmann in a section titled “The Byzantine Typicon” in the concluding chapter of *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*:

“Side by side with the true development and discovery of the Church’s *lex orandi* [rule of prayer] there has been an obscuring of her tradition. We feel that this fact should be admitted and at least some attempt made to explain it, no matter how much this conclusion may run counter to the extraordinary widespread and blind “absolutization” of the Typicon in all its details, which exists throughout the Orthodox Church. What is truly fixed and eternal in this Ordo which has come down to us through such a complicated process, and which includes so many various layers of material? What is its essential nature as the liturgical tradition of the Church, as the “rule of prayer,” which, according to the Church’s teaching, contains and reveals her “rule of faith”? If we have termed the culmination of this development and building up of layer upon layer a “synthesis” rather than a hodge-podge, in what way does this synthesis have a creative and determining significance for the future? At a moment when the world in which the Church lives can no longer be called Christian in the sense in which it was Christian from the fourth to the twentieth centuries, this is the only question, which really matters.

“No restoration in history has ever been successful. Only if there is a lack of faith in the Church herself as the source of Life can the traditions of the past be dealt with on the principle “let what has been set before us remain forever!” Tradition for the Church is not the vista of a beautiful past, which can be admired in a mood of aesthetically religious nostalgia, but rather a summons and an inspiration. Only a liturgical theology, that is, a detailed study and elucidation of all the elements which form the liturgical tradition of the Church (her Sacraments, cycles, rituals and ceremonies) can provide a true answer to our question. The present work is only a very general introduction to a proposed complete course in liturgical theology. In concluding this introduction we must point to what we are convinced the Ordo shows to be the guide in the study of Orthodox worship.

“What is absolutely essential for a correct understanding of the general spirit of the Byzantine synthesis is that it was unquestionably formed on the basis of the Church’s original rule of prayer, and from this point of view must be accepted as its elaboration and revelation, no matter how well developed are the elements which are alien to this *lex orandi* and which have obscured it. Thus in spite of the strong influence of the mystical psychology on the one hand and the ascetical-individualistic psychology on the other, the Ordo as such has remained organically connected with the theology of time which contained its original organizing principle. This theology of time was obscured and eclipsed by “secondary” layers in the Ordo, but it remained always as the foundation of its inner logic and the principle of its inner unity.

“This connection is evident, first, in the correlation (preserved throughout all the changes) of the Eucharist with the liturgy of time or in other words, in the special place occupied by the Eucharist in the general structure of the Ordo. The Eucharist has its own time, its *kairos*, and this time is distinct from the units used to measure the liturgy of time. We have spoken of the ascetical and individualistic modification, which occurred in the view of the Eucharist under the influence of monasticism, and or how, in connection with this, the Eucharist was included within the liturgy of time as one of its component offices. But this change was never fully accepted in the Ordo, and in it there is a characteristic ambiguity toward the Eucharist. The lectionary, the setting apart of a relatively small number of non-liturgical days, and a whole series of other rubrics all point to the success of one tendency in this process. Its success can be traced also in the popular acceptance of the so-called “votive masses,” of the idea that the Eucharist can be subordinated to individual needs.

“On the other hand if all the rest of the prescriptions of the Ordo are taken together, if one carefully considers their inner logic and also the rite of the Liturgy itself, it can hardly be doubted that the Eucharist has preserved its basic character as the Feast of the Church, as the expression and actualization of her eschatological fullness, as an action which is combined with the liturgy of time and related to it, but precisely by virtue of its ontological difference from it. It is true that the prescriptions concerning the *kairos* of the Eucharist have become a dead letter in modern times. But what is important is that these prescriptions have in fact been preserved, and this means that for those who have been brought up on the “Byzantine synthesis” they constitute an inviolable part of the liturgical tradition of the Church and are part of her rule of prayer. What else do these prescriptions prove, this whole complicated system of relationships between the Eucharist and time — with its hours, days and cycles — if not that the time of the Eucharist is something special, and that what it expresses in time fulfills time and gives it another standard of measurement.

“The fundamental meaning of these different prescriptions must be seen in the principle of the incompatibility of the Eucharist with fasting. The Eucharist is not celebrated during the week days of Lent. On the strict fast days of the eves of Christmas and Epiphany it is celebrated in the evening, just as the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated in the evening. The whole complicated system for the transfer of the Christmas and Epiphany eves of fasting to Friday if they happen to fall on Saturday or Sunday expresses the same idea: Saturdays and Sundays, being Eucharistic days, are incompatible with fasting. Obviously what is preserved here in full force is the liturgical concept of fasting as a condition of expectation in the Church herself, related to the Eucharist as the Sacrament of the *Parousia* of the Lord. Even where the Eucharist is thought of as a daily service, it is not simply inserted into the system of daily offices, but preserves its special *kairos*, depending on the length of the fast, the degree of importance of the commemoration, etc.

“The meaning of all these prescriptions is clear: the Eucharist must be preceded by a fast or vigil (which is in fact the liturgical expression of fasting, as a station, or *statio*, *vigilia*), since in this fast or vigil, in this time of expectancy and preparation, time itself is transformed into what it has become in the Church: a time of waiting and preparation for the unending Day of the Kingdom. The entire life of the Christian and the entire earthly life of the Church become a fast in the deepest meaning of this word: the eschaton, from the end and fulfillment of time, since everything is connected with this End, everything is judged and illuminated in relation to it. But this “End” can become a force which transforms life and transmutes “fasting” into “joy and triumph” only because it is not something in the future only, the terrifying dissolution of all things, but rather something which

has already come, already begun, and is being eternally “actualized” and “fulfilled” in the Sacrament of the Church, in the Eucharist.

“We have been fulfilled by thine everlasting life, we have joyfully tasted thine inexhaustible food, which thou hast deigned to communicate to us all in the age to come...” That same Life will appear at the End which is already in existence, that New Aeon will begin in which we are already participating, that same Lord will appear who is now coming and is with us. This rhythm of fast and Eucharist which is perhaps the forgotten and unfulfilled but still obvious and basic principle of the Ordo shows that at the foundation of the Church’s liturgical life there is still that same unchanging and inexhaustible experience of eschatology, the experience of the Church as new life in new time existing within this old world and its time for the express purpose of its salvation and renewal.

Thus too in the daily cycle, which is the basis of the liturgy of time, the Ordo or structure of its services can be understood only in relation to the theology of time, which they contain and express. Outside it they become an inexplicable, arbitrary sequence of diverse elements connected in no way other than by a “formal” law. The Christian theology of time is clearly expressed in Vespers and Matins, in which four themes follow one another in a definite sequence. In Vespers there is the theme of Creation as a beginning (the preparatory psalm “Bless the Lord, O my soul”), the theme of sin and fall (“Lord I have cried ...”), the theme of salvation and the coming into the world of the Son of God (“O Gladsome Light”), and the theme of the End (“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant...”).

“The same themes form the order for Matins, only in the opposite order. The daily cycle is a kind of constant contemplation of the world and the time within which the Church dwells, and of those ways of evaluating the world and its time, which were manifested by the *Parousia* of the Lord. The note of cosmic thanksgiving, the perception of God’s glory in creation, its affirmation as something “very good,” these insights which come at the beginning of Vespers, followed by the commemoration of the fall of this world, of the indelible mark of separation from God which accompanied it, the relationship of all things to the Light of salvation which has come into and illuminated this world and, finally, the concluding “thy Kingdom come” of the Lord’s prayer — here is the liturgical order of the daily cycle. Each day Christians pray that in and through the Church the time of this world may become the new time for the children of light, may be filled with new life for those whom she has brought to life. And so she “refers” this day to that which constitutes her own life, to the reality of the Presence which she alone in this world knows, and which she alone is able to reveal.

“The Church year, which has been torn away from the theology of time more than all the other liturgical cycles, still preserves the sign of its original and inerradicable connection with this theology in Easter and its year long cycle. No matter how many other Feast Days there are and no matter what they celebrate, they all reflect something of the light of Easter, and it is not by chance or for the sake of an artificial emphasis that the late Byzantine liturgiologists constructed the “pre-festivals” of Christmas and Epiphany — two of the most ancient and important feast days of the Christian year — on the pattern of Holy Week. Whatever is being celebrated, the celebration is fulfilled in the Eucharist, in the commemoration of that Paschal night when before His Sacrifice our Lord bequeathed the Supper of the Kingdom to the Church, in the commemoration of that morning when the new life shone in the world, when the Son of Man had completed His passage to the Father, and when in Him the New Passover had become the Life of men. Each Feast Day is related to that New Time which is celebrated by Easter.

Like the Lord’s Day in the week, so also Easter each year manifests and “actualizes” that eternal beginning which in the old world appears as an end, but which in the Church signifies an End that has been turned into a Beginning, thereby filling the End with joyous meaning. Easter is an eschatological feast in the most exact and deepest meaning of this word, because in it we “recall” the resurrection of Christ as our own resurrection, eternal life as our own life, the fullness of the Kingdom as already possessed. As the beginning and end of the Church year Easter links this eschatological fullness with real time in its yearly form. Life in the world becomes a “correlative” of the eternal Easter of the New Aeon. Thus Easter reveals the essential nature of every Feast Day, and is in this sense the “Feast of Feasts.”

“Having preserved the eschatological theology of time as its foundation and principle of formulation, the Byzantine synthesis has also preserved the ecclesiological significance of the Church’s “rule of prayer.” No symbolical explanation, no mysteriological piety and no ascetical individualism could obscure completely the unchanging essential nature of worship as the Church’s act of self-revelation, self-fulfillment, self-realization. It must be frankly admitted, in our modern “liturgical piety” this essential nature has been very poorly understood. Nowhere is the need to “unfetter” the meaning of the Ordo so apparent, nowhere is the need to rediscover the meaning of the Ordo’s now dead language so urgent.

The Ordo was fettered precisely because the ecclesiological key to its understanding and acceptance had been lost and forgotten. It is only necessary to read over the “rubrics” and prescriptions with new eyes, and to meditate on the structure of the Ordo, in order to understand that its major significance lies in its presentation of worship as the service of the new people of God. From the unchanging liturgical “we” of all liturgical texts to the most complicated rite for an All-night Vigil, with its vesting and unvesting of the clergy, its shifting of the center of the service from the altar to the middle of the church, its censings, processions, bows, etc., everything that is important and basic in the Ordo is a Byzantine “transposition” of the original meaning of worship as the corporate act and “fulfillment” of the Church. From the standpoint of “eternal” value and inner consistency certain details of this transposition can be called into question; one can distinguish between what is local (and often accepted as “universal”) and what is universal (and often accepted as “local”); but it is impossible to deny that in the overall design of the Ordo, in its essential and eternal logic, it was, is and always will be the Ordo of the *Church’s* worship, a living and vital revelation of her doctrine about herself, of her own self-understanding and self-definition.

“Finally, the ultimate and permanent value of the Ordo, a value which determines the whole complex path of its Byzantine development, is the Church’s “rule of faith” which is revealed and imprinted within it. The theology of time and ecclesiology which in some way define the very essence of the Church’s cult have been preserved in the Ordo in spite of the various pressures exerted upon it, and the revelation in and through the Ordo of the Church’s dogmatic teaching must be regarded as a genuine product of Byzantine Christianity.

“The Byzantine period of history still awaits a proper evaluation in the mind of the Church. It can hardly be doubted that the development of dogmatic thought went hand in hand with a weakening of ecclesiological consciousness. The “Christian world” on the one hand and the “desert” on the other obscured the reality of the Church, which had come to be understood more as the source of a beneficent sanction, as the dispenser of grace, than as the people of God and the new Israel, a chosen people, a royal priesthood. This eclipse of ecclesiological consciousness was reflected in liturgical piety, in the forms and the view of the cult. But what constitutes the permanent value of this period is that in Byzantine worship the Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon were not simply “transposed” from the language of philosophy into the language of sacred liturgical poetry; they were revealed, fathomed, understood, manifested in all their significance.” [1]

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[1] Schmemmann, Alexander, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, 1986, p. 213-220.

Chant Development.

Chant development in the Eastern Church was clearly built on the musical norms that came into the Christian Church from Greek culture. It appears that the earliest example we have of Christian music composed in classical Greek meter is a work of Clement of Alexandria, and it seems to imitate common metrical poetry in style. According to Egon Wellesz, this hymn “shows how the master of the Catechetical school tried to combine the spirit of Greek poetry with Christian theology.” [1] The dependence upon Greek musical theory, meter and form is further illustrated by what is probably the earliest Christian musical document we have, the Oxyrhynchus Hymn to the Holy Trinity. This document (Papyrus 1786) contains words and music dating from the end of the third century. The lyrics are in Greek, and the notation used is classical Greek vocal notation.

After Constantine’s edict of toleration, and the legalization of Christianity which allowed (in fact required) it to develop a more public demeanor, music began to develop in formal ways. These musical types almost certainly were based on classical Greek theory and practice, although they were now coming to be called “Byzantine” after the new capitol of the Empire. In the coming centuries the development of liturgical chant blossomed in parallel with the theological and worship development of the Church.

The adoption of the eight modes of Greek music allowed Byzantine music to develop and convey specific feeling (such as sorrow or joy) that could correspond with the liturgical cycle. During this same period, some of the greatest composers in the history of the Eastern Church created glorious music and contributed new musical forms to the Church. The Church honored these composers, such as Ephraim the Syrian, Andrew of Crete, Joseph the Hymnographer, Kosmas the Poet, John Damascene, and Romanos the Melode, by enrolling them among the saints. [2]

During this same period, other forms of Eastern chant developed, such as Armenian, Georgian, Maronite, etc. Most were practiced in the non-Chalcedonian churches (those not subscribing to the Council of Chalcedon, and therefore considered non-Orthodox) and this allowed their continuation. For the Byzantine Church, liturgical music, like the liturgical rite itself, became standardized at a fairly early time.

As Eastern or “Greek” Christianity spread through its missionary efforts, so did the use of the vernacular language. When in 862 Sts. Cyril and Methodius (brothers from Thessaloniki, Greece) undertook missionary efforts in Slavic lands (Moravia), they were chosen and sent by Patriarch Photius, and brought with them Byzantine chant. The period of their ministry was rife with political and ecclesiastical tension in the Slavic countries, and at one time resulted in an appeal to Pope Hadrian regarding the question of liturgical language. Cyril and Methodius received the Pope’s blessing to continue the use of Greek. One of the long term outcomes of their work was the creation of an alphabet to allow the translation of Scripture and liturgical texts into the vernacular language.

As the Slavic lands, and last of all Rus, adopted Christianity, most also initially adopted Byzantine chant. Over time, however, these new cultures contributed their own musical heritage and cultural elements, thereby developing chant forms uniquely their own. For instance, among the earliest chant forms in the history of Russian Orthodoxy is Znamenny Chant. It is a very “Byzantine sounding” chant from which used a different notation system and included distinctively Russian musical elements. Kievan chant, another early Russian chant form, likewise developed.

A variety of other minor chant forms developed in the history of the Russian church, but the most notable changes in Russian Orthodox chant development came with the reforms of Peter the Great. Peter imported musicians from Western Europe and undertook a major change in the musical form of Russian liturgical music. The result is the unique ambience and feeling of Russian Orthodox music, in contrast to Byzantine chant.

[1] Wellesz, E., *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, p. 149.

[2] Topping, E.C., *Sacred Songs: Studies in Byzantine Hymnography*, Light and Life Publishing, Minneapolis, 1997, p. 19.

Byzantine Music History.

Introduction.

The author of this essay is a practitioner of Byzantine music and has been studying the art for over six years. This is an important fact to keep in mind when one reads the following essay, for there will be some occurrences where a known fact is stated but no necessary source for the fact is cited. This is so because there are limited resources in the archives of North America, where the small number of psaltes (singers of Byzantine music) are seldom scholars in the academic sense. Even those who are academic scholars are primarily Greek-speaking and consequently are not able to produce works concise and detailed enough to provide for an accurate representation of Byzantine music for the Western world. So the author is found in a situation where the knowledge has been passed down from a long line of teachers (called mastores (English: masters) or protopsaltes) but the necessary sources in the form of books are not necessarily available. The cited works will provide information on my primary source for this essay; namely my present teacher of Byzantine music.

Body.

What is known today as Byzantine music has been developed and refined for over two millennia. With its earliest roots going back to Pythagoras’ philosophy on the division of chords, its latest and final revision took place in 1881 in the city of Istanbul; the city still referred to by the practitioners of this complex art by its more ancient name of Constantinople. For the purposes of this essay, the name Constantinople will refer to the city up to and including the present day.

To provide for a clearer understanding of the theory of Byzantine music, the process of the development of Byzantine music as it is known today will be divided into two eras. We will call these two eras pre-Byzantine, and Byzantine periods of musical development. The pre-Byzantine part of the essay will cover developments made before the foundation of Constantinople. This period includes everything before c. 330 C.E. The Byzantine period will include all of the advancements made after the founding of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire. Every refinement made up to the present day, the most important dates being the simplification of the notation in 1821 by John Koukouzeles and the great council of 1881, will be included in this period, but not, unfortunately in the essay.

Although there is a very significant part played by notational theory on the development of Byzantine music theory and Hymnography, the scope of this essay does not allow for us to delve into this connection too

deeply. It is therefore necessary to attempt to separate these two arts as much as we can and focus on the strict Hymnographical and theoretical part of the development.

Pre-Byzantine.

The date of 330 is an important date to end this period because the adoption of a practice of toleration of Christianity by the Roman Empire, under Constantine the Great, encouraged the growth of Christianity as a religion. Thus, for the first time, Christians could worship as they chose. This ending of repression allowed for a great increase of musical and theological advancement by Christians, although original musical creativity in the Western sense was never practiced. Traditionally, Pythagoras' philosophy on musical chords is thought of as the predecessor of Byzantine music, but academically, the roots of the music are ascribed Hebraic origin. We will deal with the academic theory first.

Because Christianity sprung up from the roots of the Judaic tradition, it is obvious that there will be traces of Jewish tradition in Christian worship. It is less known (to the non-academically inclined at least), however, that early Christians did not think of themselves as Christians at all, but rather as Jews (Hexter, 1995, pp. 60-100). It is therefore natural that the earliest followers of Jesus, who were primarily Jewish, maintained the rituals and practices of the Synagogue, including the ways of its chanters and readers. It is also inferred that the converts who were chanters and readers in the Synagogue instructed their fellow Jesus-followers in the musical tradition of the Synagogue as it was taught to them: through oral tradition.

This tradition included practices that have been followed ever since in Byzantine music such as certain Jewish rules of cantillation, which allowed for small improvisations in the way a piece was sung but never to the extent where the traditional formula and cadence were altered (Wellesz, 1954, p. 1). There is evidence that exists to this very day that proves the relationship of Byzantine music to Jewish music through the common recitation formulas that exist in both.

"Certain chants in use even today exhibit characteristics which may throw light on the subject of the evolution of Byzantine music. These include recitation formulas, melody-types, and standard phrases that are clearly evident in the folk music and other traditional music of various cultures of the East, including the music of the Jews."

So we see that a basic link exists between the music of the Synagogue and early Christian music. A further relationship exists between the two traditions in the form of similarities of Psalmody and Hymns. Briefly, Psalmody is the chanting of the Psalms of David by the Jewish congregation, which carried over to the Christian musical tradition and modelled the way other forms of Byzantine musical pieces were sung (Christian doxologies being the best example of preservation of Jewish Psalmody). Hymns on the other hand, are paraphrases of biblical text, which are written in such a way as to fit to conform to a traditional cantillational formula. This practice was firmly based in Jewish tradition and found in Jewish liturgies. Early Christian attempts at Hymnography (creation of hymns) were immediately condemned because they were not exclusively based on the words of the Scripture. But after only altering passages that were allowable by the Orthodox majority did Hymnography take hold within the Christian tradition (Wellesz, 1954, pp. 3-4).

So we can see that the transferal of the Jewish tradition was primarily practical in nature. This means that the origin of what is today Byzantine music was based on the established practices of converted Jews whose liturgy emulated that of the Synagogues from which they came: they simply kept the practices that they learnt from the many years they spent singing and worshipping in their Synagogues and applied these practices to the worship of, what was to them, a continuation of their religion.

Traditionally, Pythagoras is taught as the founder of what has evolved to become Byzantine music. This is true to a certain extent. Where the Jews contributed tradition and practice, Pythagoras contributed theory. He was the first to connect music to mathematics and pioneered the study of acoustics. Pythagoras was also the first to create modes of music and to ascribe ratios to several series of notes. This created scales which are the basis of the Oktoechos (English: "eight modes") which is the center of Byzantine music theory (Pythagoras' notes are still used in Western music as well; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1981, pp. 662-663, 704-705, v.12)

Ancient Greek musical modes are simply different arrangements of notes of varying pitch. These arrangements create scales that are related to one another but are characterized by different "feelings," much like a major scale compares to a minor scale in Western music. Thus, modes were classified by assigning different names to them according to the feeling which they imitated (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1981, p. 740, v.12). The eight modes that are comprised from Byzantine music are separated into three genres of feelings. This is directly descendent of the ancient Greek practice, for in both systems, the number and names of the genres are the same.

The three classificational names used both in Byzantine and ancient Greek music are:

- Enharmonic: modes that are of this genre are heavy and/or powerful in nature. One may think of an ancient Byzantine army singing a war song when one hears music in this scale.
- Chromatic: these modes are sad but harmonious. Funeral and mourning hymns are usually sung in this scale.
- Diatonic: this scale is the one closest to the Western or European musical scale. Miracle hymns and Christ's spoken words are sung in this usually happy scale. However, this scale is almost universally used in Byzantine music as well, being the scale which possesses most modes (four Diatonic modes compared to two Enharmonic and two Chromatic).

There is often confusion when one speaks of modes, scales and such to a person who may not be accustomed to this subject, so we will take some time to explain the matter at this point. We will assume that the reader has had some exposure to Western/European music. As a visual queue we will use the keys of a piano to compare to the scales of Byzantine music. Now in European music, there are two basic variations of pitch that are possible: the tone, and the semi tone. A full tone separates do from re and re from mi, but only a semi-tone separates mi from fa (using the scale with notes do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do). If you look on a piano's keys, you will see that in between every full tone (the distance between do and re for example) there is a black key in between the white keys. These keys represent semi-tones which are equivalent to half the tonal distance between do and re. Therefore, every semi-tone could be played from do to do.

However, the natural scale of European music (also known as the major scale) is played exclusively on the white keys, hitting every natural note from do to do. This produces a scale with the following tonal intervals:

1 -- 1 -- ? --- 1 ---- 1 --- 1 -- ½
do - re - mi -- fa -- sol -- la - ti -- do

Now, since we know that there are two scales in European music, we will now explain how the minor scale is played with the use of the semi-tone keys. The first ? interval between mi and fa now moves between re and mi while the second ? tone interval between ti and do remains the same. Now a new ? tone interval is created between sol and la making la and ti 1? tones away, making the scale like this:

1 -- ? -- 1 -- 1 - ? -- 1? -- ½
do - re - mi - fa -- sol - la -- ti -- do

Note that although the scale is now played differently and although it definitely sounds differently, there are still 6 full tones separating the notes in the scales. Now a mode is simply a scale which may be the same scale as a different mode but is played with a different base note, changing the way a scale sounds slightly, but usually modes have scales that are unique and independent of any other mode.

There is a fundamental difference that exists between Byzantine music and European music which has not yet been discussed, however. This is the fact that Byzantine music has inherited micro-tonal intervals that separate its notes. Deriving these micro-tones from ancient Greek music, Byzantine music has been able to produce scales that could not possibly be played using European notes. A good example of such a scale is the second plagial mode of Byzantine music. This scale, like all Byzantine scales, separates its notes with the equivalent of six European tones, just like European scales. The fundamental difference is that in order to be able to play every Byzantine note, one European tone must be subdivided into 12 micro-tones. That is to say that instead of having 13 keys on a keyboard, you must have 73 keys spanning the same tonal distance. Using the scale with notes pa-bou-ga-di-ke-zo-ni-pa, the scale looks something like this:

6 -- 21 -- 3 -- 12 - 6 -- 21 - 3
pa - bou - ga - di - ke - zo - ni - pa

Any further comparison would take too much time at this point, so we will leave the pre-Byzantine era of musical development on this note (excuse the pun).

Byzantine.

From the time of Constantine the Great, the Orthodox Church was integrated into the Imperial office. With all the privileges that it endowed upon the new religion, the Roman Empire found itself unconditionally tied to its Christian subjects. Constantine began a habit of building churches, funding projects to copy bibles and scripture, adding bishops to the Imperial payroll, and exempting clergy members from civil duties on town councils. All but a very few Emperors from that time supported Christianity at great public expense. This shows that Christianity was now forever a part of the Imperial establishment. This meant that a unified empire meant a unified church, and the Emperor was the one responsible for both. The first major attempt at conquering every

opposition to the Emperor's role as the head of both church and empire came 200 years after the reign of Constantine by Justinian I.

From the beginning of his reign, "Justinian made every possible effort to strengthen religious life throughout the Empire" (Wellesz, 1954, p. 15). One such effort that Justinian made was that he ordered all the monks of the Empire to perform three services a day in their monasteries. These three services were the Mesonyktikon, the Orthros, and the Hesperinos, (still practiced in Eastern Orthodox churches and monasteries) all of which were compulsorily sung daily in the churches and monasteries of the Empire. As a result of Justinian's efforts in strengthening the church, a certain degree of splendor was added to every aspect of religious life. It was in Justinian's time when Hagia Sophia was built. It was in Justinian's time when hymns were being increasingly produced to enrich the liturgical services of the church. Gradually, music and hymnography took a major part in the liturgy of the church and the singing and chanting of music became increasingly popular.

The controversy of Iconoclasm was a surprising boost to monastic hymnography. Although the persecution, torture, and death of monks was ordered by the Iconoclast Empire for over 100 years until 842 (Treadgold, 1997, pp. 346-447), the inhabitants of the monasteries found courage in the persecution and hymnography increased in activity within the Empire's persecuted inhabitants. Even after the controversy came to an end, hymnography enjoyed a prosperous period of renewed interest. It was in this period that two great forms of Byzantine hymnography, the kontakion and the kanon, emerged. The kontakion and the kanon are both examples of hymnography.

In order to understand a little bit about hymnography, certain words that are used in the study of it need to be understood. One such word is metrics. When we talk about metrics, we talk about the way in which a series of words are spoken. For example, when two sentences are metrically identical, they possess the same amount of syllables. When we say that two stanzas are metrically identical, both the sentences and the syllables of the stanzas pair up with one another, making a melody created for one of them fit the other perfectly.

In Byzantine music, stanzas are units of paraphrased biblical text that are grouped together, by both theme and similar metrical composition, under an heirmo. An heirmo is a stanza to which a melody is attached. Usually, the heirmos is a well-known hymn that could be used as a template through which to sing all stanzas of similar metrical composition. That is why most heirmoi are used in several places throughout the kontakion and the kanon.

The Kontakion.

The kontakion, according to Dimitri Conomos, is a "long and elaborate metrical sermon, reputedly of Syriac origin, which finds its acme in the work of St. Romanos the Melodos (sixth century)." (Conomos, 1998, online) These, as other hymnographical works, are paraphrases of biblical scripture and were sung during the Orthros, known as the service of the Laudes in Western English churches.

The way in which the kontakion was sung was in a straight syllabic style (meaning one note per syllable). There are eighteen to twenty-four stanzas contained in the kontakion, all of which follow traditional musical formulas. The first stanza in the set, the heirmos, sets the cantillational melody which every other stanza follows with extremely limited musical liberty, for all the stanzas have the same meter as the heirmos. Consequently, any but the most conservative musical alteration would result in a notable mispronunciation of a word in the text, or an error in the well-known melody of the heirmos.

Most scholars regard this period of hymnographical composition as the highest achievement of Byzantine hymnography. However, the advent of the kanon, often thought of as a notable decline in Byzantine musical and poetical quality, presents us with a shift in the focus of the period's hymnographers to an increasingly harmonious blending of metrical poetry and musical conformity, the apex of which is found in the works of John of Damascus.

The Kanon.

In the second half of the seventh century, the kontakion was suddenly replaced by a new type of hymn, the kanon, which is still used in the Orthodox Church to this very day. It comprises of nine odes that are musically and metrically independent of one another. Like the kontakion, each ode is comprised of stanzas, this time numbering six to nine, which are modelled after the first stanza, once again called the heirmos. The advent of the kanon was a great step in the advancement of musical composition. Compared to the kontakion, the kanon was melodically diverse. Instead of one melody repeated twenty-four to thirty times, the kanon included nine melodies sung up to nine times each.

It is therefore inferred that the kanon, introduced by St. Andrew of Crete (c.660-c.740) and refined by Saints John of Damascus and Kosmas of Jerusalem, was created primarily for liturgical purposes, not as a form

of art. The fusion of words and music in the kanon are complete; so much so that the meaning of the stanzas are never missed by the congregation although a few words may be omitted. Therefore, the idea that hymnography declined in this period is erroneous. The fact is that more effort was made to join words and music rather than creating a poetically superior stanza. This effort cannot be understood comparing the simple literary art found within the kontakion to that found in the kanon (Wellesz, 1954, pp. 22-27).

The Oktoechos.

The last great achievement that we will discuss in this period is the introduction of the Oktoechos by John of Damascus. Although evidence has been found of the Oktoechos going back to the Jewish tradition, the advancement of the art by John of Damascus was immense. Adding great amounts of stanzas to the kanon, John is also credited with the creation of all of the heirmoi of the kanon.

The Oktoechos is the way that the Byzantine church collected hymns according to the mode in which they were composed. Thus, using one of the eight different modes in Byzantine music meant that there were eight divisions of hymns in the Oktoechos. Literarily meaning “eight modes,” the Oktoechos cycles through each of the divisions every week (Saturday night Hesperinos, vespers, being the exact office in which the mode switches) so that by the end of eight weeks every division is read and sung.

There is a matter which I purposely left out in my discussion of Byzantine chant in order to make this essay concise and on topic, but it is an error on my part which must be addressed. The theory that Byzantine music is descendant of ancient Greek music is a viewpoint that has been disputed by Egon Wellesz, probably the greatest Byzantine music theorist in the Western world. Far be it for me to attempt an argument against Wellesz’s theory, but I do note a grave error in his thesis. He puts forward an argument that “the music of the Byzantine church ... was a legacy from the music of the Synagogue,” and that Byzantine music theory was “treated by Hellenistic and Byzantine philosophers only in the course of their metaphysical speculations on numbers” (Wellesz, 1954, p. 43).

Throughout the course of my studies, Byzantine music theory (the theory of Byzantine scales in which notes are sometimes separated by micro-tonal intervals (sometimes as small as one sixth of a full European tone in practice and often one twelfth of a tone in theory) and sometimes separated by huge tones (up to twice the tonal interval of a European tone)) has been a mixture of philosophy and practice. Without knowing what distance lies between the note you are singing and the note you need to hit next, it would be impossible for you to advance further in the study of Byzantine music. Theory is not just that, however. Often in Byzantine music, a scale is required to be sung using a similar scale fitted to different notes. This causes a shift in the base note’s interval compared with the scale. For instance, in the most common mode (almost exactly equivalent to European music’s scale), the fourth plagal mode, the scale is such:

12 - 10 - 8 - 12 - 12 - 10 - 8
ni - pa - bou - ga - di - ke - zo - ni

However, you are often required to sing “ni os ga” meaning that the scale remains the same but the notes are shifted three intervals higher. Thus the note ni is sung at ga’s spot, using the intervals that ga would normally use. This makes the base note of the mode, ni, use intervals that it doesn’t normally use. The scale looks like this:

12 - 10 - 8 - 12 - 12 - 10 - 8
di - ke - zo - ni - pa - bou - ga - di

So instead of increasing your interval by 12, 10, 8 when advancing up the scale from your base note, you increase it by 12, 12, 10. This is a change of about half a tone (European) but only cumulatively. Without the theory of Byzantine music, this slight change of interval, and consequently “feel” of the modified mode, would be lost.

How could Wellesz miss such a point? By the way he presents his argument on pages 42 and 43 in his essay on the Music of the Eastern Churches he fails to point out that there are still two schooling methods that psaltes use to this day. That of praktiki and that of theoritika. By praktiki, a student will spend most of his time in the psalter with his teacher, learning ‘by ear’ how modes sound by learning the heirmoi and other well-known hymns sung in the church. This is the same as someone being able to sing a song that they’ve heard over

and over again through their memory. Students schooled in this method cannot read music and do not usually sound too pleasant.

The second schooling method of *theoritika*, however, starts with study sessions between the student(s) and the teacher that include both philosophical theory of scales and modes as well as singing under the guiding of the teacher. Of course, the next stage is to learn the *praktiki* as well, since there are many services and countless variations on them. The only way to properly conduct such services is to have experience in deciphering the codes of the church that indicate precisely what is to be said during a liturgy according to what day of the week, what week of the *Oktoechos*, whether there is a feast day, what part of the year it is, and many other such small variables that are all accounted for by the church.

Therefore, although the Synagogue did provide us with the methods of *praktiki* that its chanters and reader followed for centuries, the ancient Greeks provided us with the philosophical divisions and modifications of the scales that are frequently used in the Byzantine Church to this day. Even the methods that the ancient Greeks used in creating scales were used in the last revision of Byzantine music in 1821. Although this revision is one of the most important ones in Byzantine music history, for it gave us the form that Byzantine music has today, it was nothing more than a definition of the scales and modes as well as the simplification of the notation.

Byzantine music is a living art, still studied and practiced by many of the Greek, Russian, and other Eastern Orthodox churches. As we find ourselves increasingly progressing towards a global community, we find that many young people born far from Greece are losing both their language and consequently, their religion. The *maestros* of the present age are exclusively from Greece or Constantinople, and therefore have an excellent grasp of Greek as a language, but often fail to understand the difficulties of the present day. The new Byzantine musical and religious community, however, sees this problem and is taking steps to solve it. The result is that a new age of hymnography is seeming to evolve to meet the new needs of the world. Ancient melodies are being fitted to English and French hymns created using metrically similar words and phrases. The *maestros* are slowly resurrecting an art that has been literally dead since the eleventh and twelfth centuries when there were so many hymns already present in the church that hymnography became outlawed.

My teacher is one such *maestros* who is bringing Byzantine music to the French language. Teaching a course in Byzantine music in Montreal, under the University de Sherbrooke, he is revising and re-creating hymns fitted to melodies without the proper metrical analysis needed. Also, new technology never before available is being used to study the scales accurately. We are now able to purchase equipment that can play tonal intervals of one thirty-sixth, more than accurate enough for our purposes.

With the new needs of our community expressing themselves the way they are, Byzantine music is an art that will see a new age of renewed interest and activity. Although the troubles that Byzantine music is facing in the face of a new generation of foreign speaking people is a serious and dangerous threat to its survival, it is not a threat that has had no equal. Byzantine music is known to have flourished in the face of threatening dangers. It has done so before in the eighth and ninth centuries during the Iconoclast controversy. Instead of losing faith and creativity, the hymnographers of the age were considered of the greatest in the history of Byzantine music. We are seeing something of this reaction today, proving that Byzantium is still alive and well, even after over five centuries from its historical end.

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Author's Note: My teacher, K. Costas Lagouros, is a source for many ideas in this essay. He is the protopsalti at the Church of the Evangelismo in Park Extension and a professor at the University of Sherbrooke in Byzantine and Theological Studies.

Early Orthodox Chant and Music.

The flowering of Christian worship took place in the first two centuries following Constantine's edict of toleration, which legalized Christianity, and put upon it the burden of developing a musical form, of developing the ceremonial, and of providing theological education about the faith. Within this period the musical aspect of Eastern Orthodox worship began, and some of the greatest hymns (many still in use) were composed. In his book, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann summarizes the dynamic, motivation, and purpose of the Church in developing its music and chanting in the following section entitled "Chanting and Music":

"We have said that the chanting of 'songs and hymns and spiritual songs' was an essential part of Christian worship and was inherited from the Hebrew tradition. In spite of this demonstrated inheritance by the Church of Hebrew chant forms and traditions, however, there can be no doubt that here again after the fourth century a profound change gradually occurred. This was not a change or development in musical theory or technique, but a change in the function of the Church's chanting, its new place in the general structure or worship, its acquisition of new liturgical significance.

"This change is best demonstrated by the peculiar duality in the place and function of chanting in our modern worship. On the one hand, a 'singing quality' has been assigned to almost every word pronounced in Church; Western rubrics still speak of the 'chanting' of the Gospel by the deacon, and the manner of reading the psalms or *parimia* is close to being a form of chant. In using the term 'chant' ancient Ordos had reference to the entire service, which was thought of in all its parts as a singing of praise to God.

"We find the same definition of worship as chanting in the New Testament. In Revelation the elders sing a new song before the Lamb, and the Apostle Paul summons the faithful to 'teach and admonish one another ... by grace singing in your hearts to the Lord' (Rev. 4:9; 14:3, 15:3 and Col. 3:16). While not dealing here with the heart of the question, whether there was here a 'Semitic' concept of liturgical chanting, we may note simply that the first meaning of chanting in our Ordo and worship correspond precisely to this Semitic concept. This does not mean that early Christian worship recognized no difference between the various types of chanting and made no special provision for 'hymns' — i.e. for material written expressly to be sung (for example, the biblical 'song'). But their function was the same as that of prayers and psalms and litanies — all were to the same degree the prayer of the Church, all were subordinated equally to the general scheme of worship.

"On the other hand there is within our Ordo a second, narrower, more specialized concept of chanting. This is the chanting which is set in contrast to reading. A whole great area of worship (the Oktoichos, for example) consists almost exclusively of hymnody: troparia, canons, versicles, etc. Moreover the musical execution of this material, its division according to tones, stylistic similarities, etc., represents its main purpose. It can be said that here chanting acquires its own independent significance, is set apart as a special element of worship distinct from all others. If in the first view all worship is expressed melodically, and *is* chanting in some sense, then in this second view chanting is isolated and acquires its own special function in worship. So much significance is attached to this function that the Ordo directs the chanting or non-chanting of a given text depending on the festal nature of the service. One of the earliest Church hymns or canticles — the Great Doxology — is in our modern Ordo directed sometimes to be sung and sometimes to be said. Chanting has become the expression and sign of festival character, of a festal day (by means of the number of versicles, etc.). Secondly, chanting has acquired its own special material, which has gradually taken a central place in worship.

"In this evolution of the place and significance of chanting in the Ordo we must distinguish the historical factors which brought it about, and also the interpretation which was given to it and permanently fixed its significance in Byzantine liturgical theology. We have already pointed out its general cause: the change in the external conditions of worship which marked the period after Constantine, reflected first of all in huge church buildings, with their need for a corresponding 'amplification' of liturgical material. The influence of the Imperial court ritual undoubtedly played a great role in this 'amplification' and development in worship of external festal solemnity. We may assume that the terminology of the Hellenistic cult of the emperor was partially appropriated by the Church even at an earlier date — and applied to Christ. It cannot be doubted that after Constantine both the language and the form of this cult were received into Christian worship and became one of its characteristic 'expressions.' Hymnographical material (greetings, anthems such as 'long live the Emperor,' etc.)

played a very prominent part in this cult. The experience and view of chanting as a special liturgical function, as a manifestation of festal solemnity, was a natural result of the new liturgical piety — i.e. the understanding of the cult as primarily a sacred, solemn ceremonial.

“But if Christian worship acquired its general concept and experience of the function of liturgical chanting from this ‘secular’ source, this source did not determine the content of Christian hymnography. Modern studies of the history of Byzantine chanting point clearly to the Church’s resistance to ‘Hellenic’ poetry, even when vested in Christian clothes. This is not the place for a detailed description of this antagonism. In his *Hymnography of the Greek Church*, Cardinal Pitra has stressed the fact that the Church rejected the forms of classic poetry even when the early Fathers were its authors, preferring a more ‘lowly poesy.’ Since then the purely technical study of Byzantine Hymnography has taken a great step forward, and it may be accepted that the decisive influence both in form and content was not Greek but Semitic poetry. The earliest forms of this hymnography — the troparion and kontakion — show a dependence on Syrian poetry (the so-called *memra* or preaching homily) and, as Wellesz notes, ‘the music of the early church.’ Thus the position of chanting in Byzantine worship was determined by two ‘co-ordinates.’ Its place in the structure of worship, what we have been calling its liturgical function, may be traced to the ceremonial, ‘festal’ concept of cult, characteristic of Hellenic liturgical piety, while its content and poetic form may be traced back to the early Christian, biblical and ‘Semitic’ tradition.

“These two co-ordinates reach a synthesis in that theologically liturgical interpretation of the Church’s chanting which we find first clearly expressed in Pseudo-Dionysius, which in turn defined the whole subsequent development of the Church’s hymnography within the framework of the Byzantine Ordo. According to Dionysius the hymns, songs and poems used in Church are a ‘resounding’ or echo of the heavenly chanting, which the hymnographer hears with a spiritual ear and transmits in his work. The Church’s hymn is a copy of the heavenly ‘archetype.’ We recognize here that familiar principle of consecration to a higher order, a hierarchical ascent to an invisible reality. The Church’s canticles are proclaimed by angels, and therefore the hymnographer must follow the established types of heavenly origin (hence the significance of the ‘model’ in Byzantine hymnography, understood as a ‘metaphysical’ concept rather than as an object of simple imitation). Here it is important only to take note of this new understanding of the Church’s chanting as a special element in worship, an understanding clearly connected with the experience of worship as a festal and mysteriological ceremony.

“Simeon’s description of the *Sung Service* in all probability reflects a rather early stage in the development of this type of worship — since in it the chanted material is still closely bound to biblical texts and has not yet developed, as it did later, into an independent hymnody. His description is interesting, first, because already there is an unusual stress laid on chanting. ‘All Catholic Churches in the whole world,’ he writes, ‘have observed it (the *Sung Service*) from the beginning and have uttered nothing in worship except in song’; and second, because of Simeon’s contrasting of this — from his point of view — ancient and universal type of worship with the monastic type, celebrated without chanting. ‘Of course,’ he remarks, ‘this latter institution was brought on by necessity and was determined by pastoral authority.’ By necessity ‘all the sacred monasteries and Churches followed this Ordo and only a few retained for a while the Ordo borrowed from the great Church of Constantinople.’

“Simeon’s service is undoubtedly an early one; this is indicated by its antiphonal structure and, more important, by the absence of an elaborate hymnody in the form of independent *canons* and groups of *troparia*. For this reason we can see in it all the more clearly the point of departure for the general path of development of this hymnody — from refrains to verses of psalms, from biblical songs to hymns actually displacing the biblical texts. (Thus, for example, to the verses of the ancient Vespers psalm ‘Lord I have cried...’ the refrain was added, ‘Thy life-giving Cross we glorify, O Lord...’ this being the embryo of future hymns based on ‘Lord I have cried’). There is no need here to set forth the further development of hymnody, since although the forms of hymns were later modified (*troparia* developed into *kontakia*, *kontakia* into *canons*), the liturgical function of chanting and its general place in worship remained unchanged. This process of development, as modern research is showing, was very complicated, influenced by a multitude of different factors.

“One thing is sure: there was a gradual complication and expansion of hymnody; increasingly hymns took a central place in the liturgical life of the Church. Pitra has indeed called the introduction of the troparion a ‘revolution’ in the common prayer of the Church. This did not mean simply the addition to the service of new material more suitable to its festal and ceremonial nature. It was the result of a profound change in the very understanding of worship. ‘It would be easy,’ writes Pitra, ‘to find many analogies between a solemn service of the Greek rite and the ancient Greek drama. It has already been noted that the choirs and semi-choirs corre-

spond to the antiphonal chanting of psalms, the *idiomela* and *katabasiai* to the monostrophes and parables, the anthems to the responsive verses, etc. Undoubtedly we must attribute the terms *kathisma*, *katabasia*, etc., whose mystical etymology is extremely obscure, to the significance of groups either moving or standing still during the singing of sacred songs. It may be that the term *oikos* refers simply to the groups arranged in a circle around the leading chorister or precentor as he recited a poem, which was then continued in a musical form since given the name *kontakion*...

“Again let us note that the details of this complicated process — leading to the substitution of the *kontakion* by the *canon*, etc. — have been set forth in special studies, and there is no need for us to repeat them here. In these works one can also trace the gradual growth of *troparia* and *heirmologia* — their slow organization in the form of the *Oktoichos*. All this belongs to a special field in the history of the Church’s chanting. From the viewpoint of the history of the Ordo it is important simply to point out the general fact — this rapid growth of hymnody and the transformation of chanting into a very special and complex stratum in the Church’s liturgical tradition.’ [1]

The development of hymnody in the early and mid Byzantine period must not then be thought of as an external influence which caused the Church to create a large body of aesthetically pleasing but theologically irrelevant material. Quite the opposite. In much the same way as the efforts of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and (among others) the Cappadocian Fathers defined the theological and doctrinal foundations of the Church, the work of the hymnographers naturally incorporated this teaching into the liturgical life of the church for the purpose of edifying the faithful and building up the faith. Someone once asked Fr. Georges Florovsky (a great twentieth century Orthodox theologian in America) where was the best place to go to learn the teachings of the church. He is said to have replied: “Go and stand next to the chanter’s stand for a full year and you will learn the theology of the Church.”

As two brief examples, let us consider elements of *kontakion* and *canon*, parts of Orthodox hymnody discussed by Fr. Schmemmann above. St. Gregory Nazianzen was not only a great theologian, he was a hymnodist, and composed a Hymn for Easter which was sung in the early church and comes down to us today. It conveys joy in the Resurrection and theologically sound teaching:

“This is the Day of Resurrection.

Let us offer God its first-fruits — which is ourselves.

Let us, as his most precious children, return to the likeness of God,

What is verily his likeness is us.

Let us reverence our worth.

Let us honor our Exemplar.

Let us come to understand the power of the ‘mystery’ wherein Christ died.”

The hymnographer generally considered to be the greatest in the Eastern Church was St. Romanos the Melodist. His prelude to the *Kontakion* for the Nativity is still sung and has become one of the best-loved hymns of the Orthodox Church:

“Today the Virgin gives birth to him who is above all being,

And the earth offers a cave to him whom no one can approach.

Angels with shepherds give glory,

And magi journey with a star,

For to us there has been born a little child,

God before the ages.”

Credits

Excerpted with permission of the publisher from *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann. Copyright St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press. This book is available in our Web Store (learn more here).

[1] Schmemmann, Alexander; *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, 1986, p. 164 ff. This title is available for purchase in our Web Store learn more here).

Words and Music.

Earthly worship is an imitation of heavenly praise. The earthly church at prayer unites the faithful with the prayer of the angelic praise. This thought is not simply a Byzantine theoretical supposition combined with platonic imagery, but is the vision of the Prophet Isaiah and the account of heavenly worship expressed in the

fourth chapter of the book of Revelation. That the song of the church on earth is united with the praise in heaven is a theme found in the writings of many of the church fathers. St. John Chrysostom writes: "Above, the hosts of angels sing praise; below men form choirs in the churches and imitate them by singing the same doxology. Above, the seraphim cry out in the thrice-holy hymn; below, the human throng sends up the same cry. The inhabitants of heaven and earth are brought together in a common assembly; there is one thanksgiving, one shout of delight, one joyful chorus." [1] Byzantine mystical thought developed the idea of the angelic transmission of the chant itself. In the sixth century Pseudo-Dionysios articulated the concept of the divinely inspired "prototype"; the idea of an "intuitive divine inspiration... in which the hymns and chants are echoes of the heavenly song of angels, which the prophets gave to the people through a sense of spiritual hearing." [2] These divinely inspired hymns and chants, which were viewed as models of the heavenly songs, serve as the foundation for all creativity. God and beauty are interrelated, and in the words of Pseudo-Dionysios:

"Divine beauty is transmitted to all that exists, and it is the cause of harmony and splendor in all that exists; like light, it emits its penetrating rays onto all objects, and it is as if it called to it everything that exists and assembles everything within it." [3] The task, then, of the church artist or musician is not self-expression, not creation that reflects individual, personal feelings, attitudes, and principles, but "the comprehension and reproduction of heavenly songs, the re-creation of divine images that were transmitted by means of ancient religious archetypes." [4] These songs are not his, they do not belong to him. They have been revealed to him and he transmits this revelation to the collective body of the church. This explains why the names of the composers during the early Byzantine and Slavic periods remain anonymous; their works are not their self-creations which they personally own, but are the inspired revelations which they transmit to all of humanity. The artist submits his will to the will of God in order to be able to receive and to transmit the divine revelation.

Is not this the essence of the story of the writing of the Nativity Kontakion by Romanos? In his recorded "Life" we read that the great poet-hymnographer received the gift of composition of kontakia when there appeared to him in a dream the likeness of the Holy Virgin who gave him a piece of paper and commanded him to eat it. He thought it best to eat the paper. This was the feast of the eve of the Nativity and, straightway from arousing from sleep he mounted the ambo and began to sing "Today the Virgin..." [5]

This is the concept that has served as the root for the development of both music and icon painting in the church and has much to offer us today in understanding the function of the artist in the life and work of the church. It strongly emphasizes that the artist, the iconographer or the composer — does not work in a vacuum. There are patterns, models, prototypes that serve as the foundation for the creative process. These models are the collected treasury of the church and the prototypes which serve as the artistic canon or rule. "The more lasting and firm the canon," writes Pavel Florensky, "the more deeply and purely it expressed general human spiritual need; the canonical is that which belongs to the church; that which belongs to the church is collective, and the collective belongs to all humanity." [6]

For the early church musicians, then, the compositional process consisted in fitting together, with slight modifications dependent on the text, such transmitted short melodic patterns (called by musicologists music formulae or kernels) which constitute the melodic substance of the hymn. These formulae came into existence as a result of constant oral repetition so that in the course of time, they became crystallized into fixed melodic patterns that were organized and then associated or assigned to a certain church mode, or echoes. In church iconography, the icon's beauty is understood to be a reflection of the holiness of its prototype. When the artist lost this understanding and replaced it with the goal of representing people and objects in their visible, daily condition, that is, what is disclosed to the eye alone, to the emotions, and to human reason, not only was the spiritual value lost but the aesthetic quality itself deteriorated. [7]

Byzantine Chant.

The music of the Greek Orthodox Church developed in Byzantium from the founding of Constantinople in 330 until its fall in 1453. Although Byzantine musical manuscripts exist from the tenth century, the earliest notation, which is readable and can be transferred into the modern Western system, dates from only the last quarter of the twelfth century.

Evidenced by these manuscripts, Byzantine psalmody and hymnody were organized and transmitted in a system of eight church modes (echoes, *echoi*, *pl*) referred to as the *Octoechos* (lit. eight *echoi* or modes). While in the West the modality of the tonal system is predominantly associated with a certain scale, in the Byzantine tradition, the echoes or mode is defined on the basis of the types of melodic patterns that are grouped together, and make up the material for a complete mode.

On the basis of these manuscripts, the early Byzantine chant can be defined as a unison chant whose melodies are diatonic. The music is closely related to the words and, with the exception of the final cadence, very seldom, if ever, do any of the words appear improperly accented.

The compositional process for the Byzantine church musician consisted in fitting together, with slight modifications dependent on the text, short melodic patterns of formulae which constitute the substance of the hymn. These formulae came into existence as a result of constant repetition so that, in the course of time, they became crystallized into fixed melodic patterns. Basically a pattern is assigned to only one particular mode. However, there are instances where several modes are employed in the chanting of a particular hymn. Musicologists frequently refer to the chant tradition of the Greek Church after the fifteenth century as neo-Byzantine.

In this tradition many of the old Byzantine melodies have survived, though often with considerable modifications, including the use of chromatics in the basic melodic patterns and the employment of the *ison*, one pitch or sound sustained throughout a musical phrase to support the modal identity of the melodic line.

Znamenny Chant.

The development of the early unison Slavic chant (called *znamenny*, from the Slavic word *znamia*, or “sign,” referring to the neumes or musical signs used in notating the chant) reached its apex in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Trained singers associated with singing schools of city cathedrals embellished the simple chants with the creation of new and more elaborate musical patterns — a single tone might have as many as ninety or more short melodic patterns (called *popevki*) which could be selected by one singer as he was “creating” the music for a given liturgical text.

The developed melodies of the later *znamenny* form reveal a deep emotional expressiveness. Musical “picture painting,” the highlighting of strong or important words in a text, is accomplished with the *fita* (from the Greek, *theta*), an extensive melismatic passage sung on a single syllable, which not only emphasizes a particular word but draws attention to the exceptional vocal talents of the singer-virtuoso.

Bulgarian Chant.

Although Bulgaria accepted Christianity almost one hundred years prior to the baptism of Rus, no Bulgarian musical manuscripts contemporary with the Christianization of Rus have as yet been discovered. Present-day Bulgarian liturgical singing is late-Byzantine, adopted to the Church Slavonic language with Bulgarian pronunciation. In the seventeenth century hymns with the inscription “Bulgarian Chant” appear in western-Ukrainian singing books. Some musicologists see in this chant melodic kernels with Bulgarian folk song characteristics; others find it to be closer in spirit and character to Russian singing, although the melodies are quite different from the *znamenny* symmetrical movements. The Bulgarian chants are more melismatic in character than recitative. It is not unusual that a melodic line is repeated precisely in succession throughout several textual lines of the work, as evidenced in the setting of “The Noble Joseph” sung in so many of our churches on Holy Friday.

Carpathian Chant.

Similar to the Byzantine and the *Znamenny*, the Carpathian chants, whose origins date at least to the second half of the seventeenth century, are subordinated to a full eight-tone system, called *osmoglasnik* (lit., eight tones) and the principle of composition is formulaic, that is, existing musical patterns are used which are identified with the particular tone or mode.

The eminent Slavic musicologist, Johann von Gardner, after 1917, spent four years living in Subcarpathian Rus and was particularly amazed at the religious knowledge of the simple peasants, acquired simply by singing in church. He describes the singing which he heard in the churches of the Carpathian regions; “In Subcarpathian Rus in all the villages both among the Uniates and also among the Orthodox, there was always practiced only congregational singing of the complete services, not excluding the changeable (proper) hymns in all the varied chants. They sang according to the Great Zbornik (collection of prayers and liturgical texts) which contained every necessary text. The numerous chants (including all the *padobny*, not even found in the Synodal notated liturgical books) were known by everyone, even the children of school age. The leader of song — the most experienced singer from the parish?was standing at the *kliros* and sang the chant. As soon as the worshippers heard the beginning, they would join in the chant and the entire church sang; they sang all the *stikheri*, all the *troparia*, all the *irmosy* — in a word, everyone sang properly.” Usually when the worshippers join in the singing, a second part, sung in parallel thirds to the melody, occurs.

Polyphony.

A new style of polyphonic church music, developed in the Ukraine and Byelorussia under the influence of Polish religious vocal music, was adopted in the Orthodox churches of southwestern Russia in the seven-

teenth century. This new style of singing was called *partesny* singing (from the Latin *partes*, meaning parts) and was taught in the schools established by the Orthodox Brotherhoods. Its development in northern Russia was greatly promoted by Patriarch Nikon who encouraged its use in churches, cathedrals, and monasteries in Novgorod and Moscow. Its spread throughout Russia was greatly facilitated through the publication of Nikolai Diletsky's *Musical Grammar*. Diletsky, a Kievan musician who studied in Poland, first at Warsaw and then at the Jesuit academy at Vilnius, was recruited from the southwest and taught the art of composing Western-style polyphonic music in Smolensk and Moscow.

Diletsky presented two musical styles in his grammar, the *kontsert* and the *kant*. The chief stylistic features of the *kontsert* were continuous alternation of musical motives, canonic imitation, contrasting passage of solo voices (*concertino*) with full choir (*tutti*) and a clear tonic-dominant harmonic relationship. In time the *kontserty* grew larger and more complex, employing dynamic and polychoral effects that many musicologists are fond of comparing to the Gabrielli's Venetian works (without instruments, of course).

The powerful injection of Western influences, culture, and traditions begun with Peter the Great, and the move of the Russian capitol from Moscow to St. Petersburg resulted in a vast cultural transformation of the Russian mode of life and had immense consequences for the development of Russian church music. A stream of foreign craftsmen came into Russia during the first half of the eighteenth century — French, Italian and German architects, German actors and musicians, Italian painters and composers — in order to teach the Russians the elements and techniques of their skills.

Of the Italian composers who were brought to serve at the Imperial Court, Baldassare Galuppi and Guiseppe Sarti were the two most prominent and both had a lasting influence on Russian church singing. Both trained a number of Russian church composers and both wrote a number of compositions based on Russian liturgical texts. Galuppi was the first to introduce to the Russian Orthodox Liturgy the singing of a special musical composition, in the form of the sacred concerto, during the priest's communion. Although some of these concerti were composed on the texts of the prescribed Communion Hymns, many were simply selected freely by the composer and had no relationship whatsoever with the liturgical celebration.

The works of these Italian composers were adorned with arioso solos, bold or daring passages of extraordinary leaps or runs, trills, and grace notes, in general, all of those vocal devices which gave the greatest possibilities for a vocal soloist to display his or her beautiful, voluminous, and cultivated voice. The religious idea was certainly animated, but the required correspondence of text to music was clearly lacking. "All of the sacred works of the foreign kapellmeisters," wrote the Archpriest Dmitry Razumovsky, "were acknowledged in their time and even now are recognized as truly artistic and classical in a musical sense. Yet not one of these works proved to be perfect and edifying in a church sense, because in each work the music predominates over the text, most often not at all expressing its meaning." [8]

The first Russian composers influenced by this "Italianate" style of sacred music — Artemy Vedel, Maxim Berezovsky, Stepan Degtiarev, Stepan Davydov, Dmitry Bortniansky, and the Archpriest Pyotr Turchaninov — were students of Italian maestri and produced hundreds of compositions for use in the church services. For the most part, they are all in the same Italianate style and are distinguished primarily by the relative artistic talents of the individual composer. Many of these works have not only survived but still can be heard on any given Sunday in the cathedrals and city churches throughout Russia today.

Particular note must be made of Bortniansky, the most renowned personage in eighteenth century Russian music, for his prolific compositional activity — 72 liturgical hymns (26 of them for double chorus), 45 sacred concertos (10 for double chorus), 10 Te Deums, the Liturgy for three voices, and eight sacred trios. He also was the first director of the Imperial Chapel who was given the right of censorship in the field of church music, a "circumstance that greatly affected the direction of church music in the nineteenth century." [9]

Although the works of Bortniansky have been acclaimed by many musicologists, both Russian and non-Russian, secular as well as sacred, the words spoken by Metropolitan Eugene of Kiev, delivered in a speech presented while still a professor at the seminary in Voronezh in 1799, might serve as a summary of this period in the history of Russian church music. The Metropolitan said:

"Besides this famous Russian choral director (Bortniansky), the works of many foreign kapellmeisters have in our time been adopted as compositions of the Greek-Russian Church, for example, (Galuppi, teacher of Bortniansky), Kerzellis, Dimmler and the eminent Sarti. But even so, the truth must be stated that either because of their unawareness of the power and the expressiveness of the texts of our church poetry, or because of a prejudice only for the laws of their music, they have often disregarded the sanctity of the place and subject of their compositions, so that, generally speaking, it is not the music which is adapted to the sacred words, but instead the words are merely added to the music and often in a contrived manner. Apparently, they wanted more

to impress their audience with concert-like euphony than to touch the hearts with pious melody, and often during such compositions the church resembles more an Italian opera than the house of worthy prayer to the Almighty.” [10]

Nationalism and the Return to the Old Russian Chant.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, a search for new ways of liberating Russian liturgical singing from foreign influences emerged. The Moscow Synodal School was the center for this new movement, at the head of which stood such church music historians, composers, and directors as Stepan Smolensky, Alexander Kastalsky, and Vasily Orlov. The leaders of the Moscow school attempted to establish a new direction in church music by returning to the indigenous Russian church unison melodies and using those melodies as the basis for the composing of church music, as Palestrina and others would use Gregorian chant melodies as *cantus firmi* for their polyphonic compositions.

At the same time scholarly studies and investigations on many and varied aspects of the old Russian Chant appeared. Such studies were concentrated on three areas: 1) the history of church singing, 2) semiography, that is, the study of the various notations used in chant, and 3) the forms and style of canonical church singing. A chair in church music was created at the Moscow Conservatory. Archpriest Dmitry Razumovsky, author of a three-volume work on “Russian Church Singing,” published in 1877-79, was appointed to this new position.

Simultaneous with the development of research in the area of the old Russian chant, Russian studies in historical liturgiology laid the groundwork for later theological evaluation of Orthodox worship. Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, the Russian theological schools produced a number of first-rate scholars and studies of Byzantine liturgy, the archeological investigations of Alexander Dmitrievsky standing at the forefront. As Fr. Alexander Schmemmann has acknowledged, “as a result of their work not only did Russian liturgical study win a recognized and glorious position in the realm of scholarship, but also a solid foundation was laid without which it would be impossible to speak of liturgical theology in any real sense of the term.” [11]

In a very short period, from the 1880’s to 1917 and the Bolshevik Revolution, a vast repertoire of Russian church compositions was created, numbering into the thousands. Well-known composers such as Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Grechaninov, Chesnokov, Ippolitov-Ivanov, and Rachmaninov, as well as a host of other lesser-known musicians wrote church music using the old Russian chants as thematic material. Still others wrote free compositions. But it was Alexander Kastalsky who was generally recognized as the source of inspiration for this movement.

In his later years, however, Kastalsky became disenchanted with much that was being written for the church, even if such compositions were based on the old Znamenny chant melodies. In 1925, in an interview entitled, “My Musical Career and My Thoughts on Church Music” (published in *The Musical Quarterly*), Kastalsky said:

“Of late (church music) has tended to become complex. To disregard the difficulty of performance for the sake of effective sonority, to choose harmonic and melodic means without discrimination, provided only that they be new and beautiful, and if this tendency continues to develop, church music will end in becoming like any other, except that it will have a religious text. This would be extremely unfortunate...”

He continued: “And what about style? Our indigenous church melodies when set chorally lose all their individuality: how distinctive they are when sung in unison by the Old Believers, and how insipid they are in the conventional four-part arrangements of our classic (composers), on which we have prided ourselves for nearly a hundred years; it is touching, but spurious. ... In my opinion it is first of all necessary to get away from continual four-part writing... The future of our creative work for the church can ... be merely surmised, but I feel what its real task should be. I am convinced that it lies in the idealization of authentic church melodies, the transformation of them into something musically elevated, mighty in its expressiveness and near to the Russian heart in its typically national quality... I should like to have music that could be heard nowhere except in a church, and which would be as distinct from secular music as church vestments are from the dress of the laity.

Credits: Originally presented as a lecture by Professor David Drillock, Provost, St. Valdimir’s Theological Seminary. Reprinted from by permission from: *Jacob’s Well*, Fall-Winter 1998-99.

[1] Homily I in Oziam seu de Seraphinis I; PG 1vi, 97.

[2] Vladyshevskaya, Tatiana, “On the Links Between Music and Icon Painting in Medieval Rus” in *Christianity and the Arts in Russia*, edited by William C. Brumfield, and Milos M. Velimirovic (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), 18.

- [3] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* (Mahwah NY, Paulist Press, 1987) 76. This translation in Vladyshevskaia, op. cit., 18.
- [4] Vladyshevskaia op. Cit., 18.
- [5] Germanos, *Life of Romanos*.
- [6] Florensky, Pavel, *Iconostasis* (Crestwood NY, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 87. This translation in Vladyshevskaia, op. cit., 19.
- [7] Ouspensky, Leonid, *Theology of the Icon*, Volume II (Crestwood NY, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), 345.
- [8] Razumovsky, Dmitry, *Tserkovnoe Penie v Rosii* [Church Singing in Russia].
- [9] Morosan, Vladimir, *One Thousand Years of Russian Church Music* (Washington DC, Musica Russica, 1991), 756.
- [10] Preobrazhensky, Anton, *Po Tserkovnomy Peniiu* [Church Singing].
- [11] Schmemmann, Alexander, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood NY, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986, 11.

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Russian Znamenny Chant.

Introduction to Znamenny Chant.

As a general rule, Christian chant has eluded people for many years because of a lack of understanding. Like any music, chant can be found superficially beautiful, but a true appreciation for it only arises through a thorough understanding of its history and its process of composition. In this way, chant can amazingly be compared to twentieth-century twelve-tone music; people rarely fully appreciate it without understanding how it was composed.

Western chant has been experiencing a bit of a renaissance recently with the successful marketing of new recordings. Eastern chant, including Russian, is still relatively unknown to Western audiences. This aversion is probably reinforced by the inaccessibility of Eastern chant as far as its notation and its system of composition. Indeed, a great deal of research is still needed to decipher the earliest body of Russian chant. Nonetheless, chant scholarship has unravelled many interesting secrets of Eastern chant and some of the most rewarding finds have been in Russian znamenny chant. By understanding the nature of znamenny chant, one discovers a type of music that is intrinsically beautiful.



The illustration above is znamenny notation with Shaidurov's red (cinnabar) letters designating the height and inflection of tone. The excerpt is an Irmos, the theme-song of each of nine canticles introducing the tropar and the hymn of the Feast. It is taken from the book *Irmosy tserkovanago znamenny penia*, and published by the *Knigoizdatelstvo Znamenny Peniye*, Kiev, 1913. (Nicholas Brill, *History of Russian Church Music*, Bloomington, IL: Nicholas Brill, 1980).

Znamenny chant was the principal chant of the Russian Orthodox Church for the time Christianity was imported from Byzantine to roughly the late seventeenth century. Like many things in Russian culture, chant was originally imported from another coun-

try, but it soon took on characteristics that made it distinctly Russian.

History of Russian Chant.

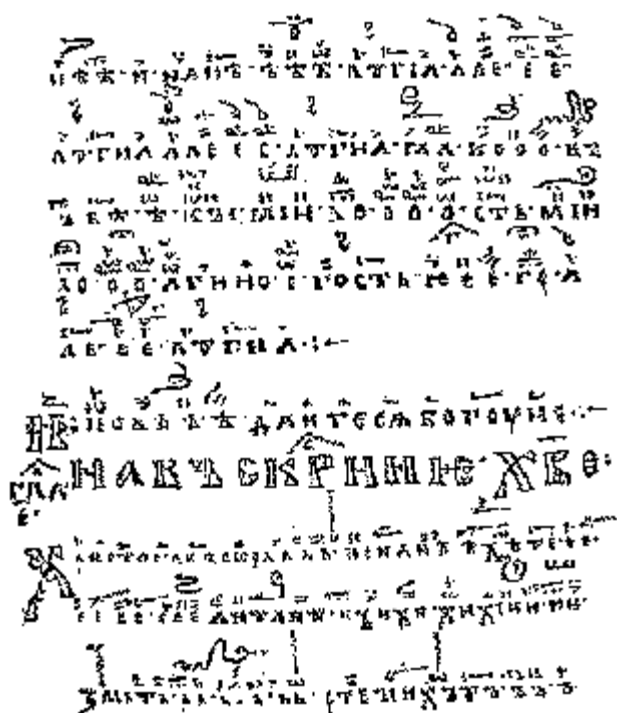
The story of Christianity coming to Russia is well-known. Vladimir I took it upon himself to chose a single religion to unite his people. Scouts were sent out to examine the religions of other countries, and the ones that came back from the Byzantine Empire had the most magnificent tales to tell. Christianity and all of its glories appealed to Vladimir, who thus proceeded to declare his country Christian in the year 988.

Eastern Orthodoxy was directly imported into Russia with all of its cultural appendages; the architecture for churches, the painting style for icons, and the music of the church were all included. Orthodox music was and still is strictly vocal chant. Just like the architecture and painting, this chant was quickly transformed by the Russians. In *New Monuments of the Znamenny Chant* Maxim Brajnikov writes:

Russian Church music — the *Znamenny Chant* — was in the long past derived from Byzantium, but was no sooner on Russian soil that it encountered an entirely new medium — the musical perception of the Russian people, its whole culture and custom, and thus began its second Russian life.

The largest influence Byzantine chant encountered in Russia was the huge body of Russian peasant folk-songs. Since a very important part of znamenny chant is its strict rhythm (as will be seen below), this influence was limited to mostly intervallic relationships and fragments of melody.

Znamenny chant scholarship is generally divided into three periods: the pre-Mongol period (from 988 to the mid-thirteenth century), the Mongol period (from the mid-thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries), and the period of late chant (from the mid-fifteenth to the late seventeenth centuries). The pre-Mongol period chant is characterized by its departure from Byzantine chant as far as its musical content. There is a surprisingly large amount of manuscripts from this period, around twenty-five, that contain znamenny chant. However, the notation of this period was *Kondakarion* notation, which was what the Byzantines used and is to this day undecipherable:



Twelfth-century Kondakarion notation.

D. Razumovsky, plate from the Library of Nizhni-Novgorod Monastery. (Q. I No. 32, p.113)

The Mongol period is no less frustrating, but this time it is because of the lack of sources for chant. The devastation of the Mongol yoke can indeed be seen as there are basically no manuscripts of chant from this period. The notation had been evolving since its inception into Russian culture, however, so that by the later period the numerous sources of znamenny chant are actually readable to knowledgeable twentieth-century enthusiasts.

This last period of chant saw a large flourishing of znamenny chant and thanks to a readable znamenny notation (not to be confused with the name of how the music sounds), there has been much study of this chant. The demise of znamenny chant came about in the late seventeenth century, when the Southern and Western Slavs developed their own style of chant. This would initially seem tragic for znamenny fans, but by being tossed aside in favor of the new chant,

znamenny was able to escape the huge influence of Western musical thought, especially Italian, which was flowing into Russia unchecked. Ironically the victim of this contamination was the the new chant of the Southern and Western Slavs. Thus znamenny chant was tucked under the wings of the Old Believers who saw it as “their” chant, and was remarkably well-preserved throughout the years.

Musical Analysis of Znamenny Chant.

Russian chant was composed using parameters alien to Western music systems. Although znamenny chant was diatonic (recognition of whole-steps and half-steps), the similarities to Western music end there. The scale used in znamenny chant is a little over an octave consisting of twelve pitches from a low B to a high D. Every three pitches are divided into a different “accordance” (Russian, *soglassya*): low, somber, bright, and

very bright. When writing a chant, the composer would indicate in which accordance the chant was to be sung. A single chant could also move between different accordances, which was indicated in the notation.

Melodic Motion and Rhythm.

The melody was usually in strict conjunct motion (no skips in the pitches) and leaps of a fourth or a fifth were used for added drama in a cadence at the end of a chant. The rhythm was mainly quarter notes and half notes, with the beat determined by half notes. There were occasional whole notes that when used were only to end a phrase or line. Eighth notes can be found in the manuscripts, but overall were very rare. Singers could take expressive liberties by sustaining half notes and whole notes longer, but sometimes the notation dictated this lengthening.

Influence of Text on Composition:

The text was all-important to the construction of the znamenny chant. Since the whole purpose of having the chant in church was to convey the holy liturgy in a beautiful and worshipful manner, it would not behoove a composer to treat the text lightly and conform it to a pleasing melody (as was the practice at this time in folk-songs). Rather, the text dictated the shape of the melody. No words were repeated, and care was taken to preserve the integrity of every word of the text. A feeling of great dignity and reverence was preserved by limiting the notes per syllable to two, and at a maximum, four.

Tonality:

Perhaps the most peculiar thing about Russian chant that would baffle a Western chant composer of this time would be the system of tonality that the Russian composer employed. The best Western equivalent of this system is probably the system of key signatures (which was *not* used in Western chant). Russian chant composers used a system of eight *glassy* that were roughly derived from the eight Byzantine *echoi*. This system was probably of Arabic origin, and it grouped melodies not by an underlying scale, but according to typical melodic patterns that certain groups of melodies were found to have in common. These patterns were called *popefki* or *kokizi*.

For example, the first *glas* was characterized by ninety-three of these popefki, and all of these popefki could be considered to have a festive tone, but at the same time, a general feel of solemnity was preserved. Each of the eight glassy had such defining popefki, and each had a certain mood or feeling that it conveyed. For example, the second glas was sweet and tender, the sixth was mournful, etc. A master znamenny composer would have all of these glassy memorized, all of the popefki memorized, and even the names of the 400 or so popefki memorized as well. Obviously, there is a lot more to znamenny chant than what initially meets the ear!

The Notation of Znamenny Chant.

Notation of znamenny chant had undergone a lot of improvements since the time it was imported from Byzantium. The Byzantine notation consisted of the written text with symbols above the syllables that indicated, as far as can be gathered, pitch, duration and other essentials for the performance of the chant. However, these symbols were never documented by the Byzantines, and their meanings were so obscure that they have never been deciphered. However, the Russians that used znamenny notation as opposed to Kondakarion notation were a bit more helpful than the Byzantines in that they actually took the time to compile somewhat of a glossary of their symbols. The znamenny notation symbols indicated a range of musical ideas, including the initial accordance and subsequent movement between accordances, rhythm, duration of notes, volume, and manner of voice. Thus the singer could get a basic idea of what he was supposed to sing.

The main problem of this notation was that the average singer could gather in what accordance to sing, but he had no idea which of the three notes in the particular accordance he was supposed to sing. For the singer to know, he would have to memorize every individual popefki to be able to recognize it immediately and know on what pitch to begin. This was obviously a significant problem that had to be addressed, as only years of training and rote memorization of hundreds of popefki would assure an accurate performance of a particular chant. Only the most masterful of chant singers were this advanced and they were far and few between.

The answer to this vexation came in the mid-seventeenth century when the Novgorod master Ivan Shaidur, or Shaidurov, invented a system of auxiliary red letters to be placed alongside the znamenny notation above the text of the chant. Each of these letters corresponded to a particular note in the church scale, thus any singer could more easily sing a chant with much more accuracy than before. (Cf. picture at top of page). The body of chant with Shaidurov's red letters is quite obviously the most accessible to the general public and it is a shame that znamenny chant was so soon put aside in favor of the new Westernized South and West Slav's chant, since a whole new expertise was again needed.

Thus znamenny chant retreated into relative obscurity, the only keepers of it being the Old Believers. In fact, the Old Believers have done such an admirable job in preserving the znamenny chant that many scholars armed with tape recorders seek them out in order to gather chant sustained primarily through an oral tradition.

Many secrets of Russian znamenny chant have been unearthed through the efforts of many persevering musicologists. Even though the earliest body of chant is still indecipherable, much has been done and is being done to solve these notational problems. This notation may be in part why Eastern chant in general is still very unknown to Western audiences, even though it is certainly very worthy of every kind of attention.

Composers of znamenny chant lived in a different world in relation to Western compositional techniques. To them, mastery was achieved when one had managed to imitate their teacher as closely as possible. Theirs was an art so confined by parameters, such as accordances, glassy, etc., that when they managed to successfully convey the meaning of the liturgical text the effect was absolutely beautiful. Centuries of time are reduced to nothing when a twentieth-century listener can learn the basics of znamenny chant and hence appreciate this unique music as well.

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Western Latin Liturgics.

Understanding the origin of the liturgical practice and music of the Western Roman Church begins with the early Christian developments and follows the local development of the rite of the Church of Rome. It requires considering such things as the Old Roman Rite, the similarities and differences between Eastern and Western Christianity, the development of Gregorian chant, the reforms of Charlemagne, and the use of Latin versus the use of Greek. The liturgical history of the Church of Rome was shaped to a significant extent by the impact and effects of the barbarian invasions, an experience that Western Christendom experienced to a much greater and more horrific degree than its Eastern brethren.

The Early Church in Jerusalem.

As described in the Early Christian Liturgics article, the early Christian Church began in Jerusalem under the leadership of the first bishop, James the brother of the Lord. A liturgical rite bearing his name is among the earliest. Thanks to the missionary work of St. Paul, within a few years Christian churches were located all the way from Jerusalem to Rome, the capital of the Empire. The liturgical rite of the Jerusalem Church became

the foundation of the worship form and practice of these new churches from Antioch to Rome and beyond. Upon this foundation developed the forms, practices and music that became recognizable as the Western rites.

Of note is the curious contrast between the fact that Greek was the common language of the Roman Empire, yet Latin was the official liturgical language of the Roman Catholic Church until the second Vatican Council in 1962. The Roman Empire developed upon the foundations of the older Greek state and culture that was distributed across the Mediterranean basin, and Greek remained the common language of the region. Even at the peak of its power and reach, most of the Roman Empire spoke Greek, with Latin reserved as the official language of the state, and the language in common usage only in Rome and parts of Italy.

Local Variations in the West.

The liturgical forms of Western Roman Christianity include many rites that developed in the first few centuries following the apostolic age, as similar liturgical developments were occurring in the Eastern Church. While all of these rites were originally based on the liturgical practice of the “mother church” in Jerusalem, local variations in structure developed over time through the addition of prayers and other elements related to the Eucharist. These structural differences resulted in the various rites such as the Ambrosian, Gallican, Mozarabic, etc. Each local church tended to develop its own unique musical form, built on the ancient tradition, but expressive of local customs. Yet the liturgical form and musical practice throughout the early Church was surprisingly similar through the eighth century. The Western Church was less centralized than the Eastern Church in the fourth to sixth centuries, and not only tolerated but almost endorsed different liturgical customs as long as they were not heretical.

The term commonly used for the liturgical rite of the Church of Rome prior to the early ninth century is the Old Roman Rite or Liturgy. The Old Roman Rite and its related chant form developed from the common liturgical practices of the Church of Rome and were formalized in the revision of the Rite by Pope Gregory the Great in 595. It is representative of the consistency of liturgical form and music in the early Church. It remained so through the eighth or ninth century when Charlemagne reformed both the liturgy and the liturgical music of the Western Roman Church. Using the liturgical rite of St. Gregory the Great and the chant form of the Church of Rome as the basis, Charlemagne undertook to create a liturgical and musical standard for his recently founded Holy Roman Empire. The result of this reform was a uniform liturgical rite for the Roman Catholic Church, and a new form of liturgical music that we now call Gregorian Chant—which became the liturgical music standard of the Western Church for centuries to come.

From Greek to Latin.

The language of the early Roman Rite before Gregory the Great was Greek. However, more and more Latin was used over time, although Greek was retained in specific sections such as the *Kyrie* and the *Trisagion*. Perhaps the best description of the transition from Greek to Latin and of the broad historical and cultural forces that affected the Western Roman Church following the barbarian invasions of Europe are in the words of Gregory Dix, in his book *The Shape of the Liturgy*:

“The local church of Rome had begun as a Greek-speaking body; the majority of its members were Greek-speaking Levantines living in the foreign quarters of the city. But it began to use Latin in its liturgy, probably in the latter half of the second century, as the faith spread among the Latin-speaking inhabitants; though the use of Greek went on side by side with Latin down to the fourth—perhaps even the fifth century. Elsewhere in the West, for example in Africa, Latin had been used by the church from the second century.

“In the fourth-fifth centuries, when Greek was ceasing to be spoken in the West but Latin was still a *lingua franca* in which, for example, all public notices were posted up from Northumberland to Casablanca and from Lisbon to the Danube, it was natural that all Christian rites should be in Latin in the West. In the fifth century the barbarian settlements brought a variety of teutonic dialects into the different Western provinces, and a cross-division of language everywhere between the new masters and the old populations. Even among the latter the rapid decline of civilization brought an inability to keep up the old cultures by complicated language. All through the sixth and seventh centuries the barbarians and provincials were mingling and profoundly affecting each other’s speech. Languages were everywhere in flux and European speech was a chaos of local *patois*. The composition of vernacular rites was impossible; there is not even a vernacular literature worth speaking of anywhere in the West from this period. The church still stood for all that was left of the old tradition of civilization, and could only conserve that in so far as it was protected from contemporary influence in a Latin armor.

“The revival of civilization which begins in the eighth century came about by the recovery of just those traditions of the past which were most favorable to the renewed use of Latin. It culminates in Charlemagne’s ‘restoration of the Roman empire’, and his imposition throughout his dominions of the Roman rite. Neither policy was calculated to elevate the position of the vernacular languages which are just beginning to take a recog-

nizable form in the ninth century. But the adoption of the ‘local Roman’ *Gregorian Sacramentary* as the core of the universal Western rite had an important result, quite apart from things ecclesiastical. It placed at the basis of all Western culture the only tradition of the use of Latin in which the language had evolved without break from the classical tongue of Cicero and Virgil, through the excessive and supple silver Latin of the third and fourth centuries, to the ‘ecclesiastical Latin’ of the age of Leo and Gregory, without any serious admixture from outside.

“The culture which sprang from the work of Charlemagne, but which finally made sure of life only in the eleventh century, was not a formal restoration of the classical imperial culture such as the sixteenth century artificially essayed, but it was its true descendant in many ways. As such it was emphatically an international culture-or at this stage when nations were still embryonic, it is truer to say an inter-regional culture-whose natural instrument was a common language. And since religion was at the very heart of this new culture, Latin (which by now was not so much common to all regions as not particularly limited to any of them) was still used in the church.” [1]

The development of many elements of the Christian Church were subject to history and culture. Clearly, the Western Church experienced this to a significant degree with the barbarian invasions of Europe all the way to Rome, and the centuries of Dark Ages that followed. In that period, the Church was one of the very few constant organizations in society, and the five centuries until Charlemagne established his Roman Empire were chaotic. During this period various other rites emerged and developed in the West, yet the Church of Rome continued to exert singular influence. So great, awesome, and mystical was the rite of the Roman Church, that in Charlemagne’s youth his father sent emissaries to Rome to establish diplomatic relations with the Papacy and so great was their amazement that within a few years the Roman liturgy and its chant became in their eyes the most exalted expression of the type of civilization they wished to promote.” [2]

The establishment of a standard Roman Rite by Charlemagne was the beginning of the end of the other local Western rites, and assured that Latin would continue to be the liturgical language of the Western Church (excepting, of course, the Protestant groups which split off in the Reformation and reverted to the vernacular) down to recent times. Gregorian chant, the liturgical music that resulted from Charlemagne’s efforts, became the standard music of the Western Roman Catholic Church into the late twentieth century.

Credits: Benjamin D. Williams

[1] Dix, Gregory; *The Shape of The Liturgy*: Seabury Press, New York, 1982, p. 617.

[2] Peres, Marcel; *Vespers of Pascha*

Early Western Liturgics.

The Dawn of Western Christianity.

Christianity was brought to the city of Rome by the missionary efforts of Sts. Peter and Paul, with Peter being recognized as the city’s first bishop. Undoubtedly they brought with them the liturgical practices of the Church of Jerusalem. As with the other early Christian communities, we can be sure that the earliest Roman Christians celebrated the rite of Baptism and Eucharist. The earliest document of the Roman Church, the letter of Pope Clement to the Church in Corinth, contains prayers replete with Jewish imagery. [1]

Some elements of Jewish spirituality were undoubtedly part of the early Christian worship, such as the use of readings from Hebrew Scriptures and even the use of Hebrew words such as *amen* and *alleluia*. New Testament accounts in Luke 4:16-30 and Acts 13:15-16 indicate early Christians were familiar with Sabbath synagogue gatherings involving proclamation of Scripture and preaching. The Christian word service may also be connected with Jewish use of hymn singing and religious discourse associated with meals. [2] Although the elements of readings, prayers and preaching are found in both fully developed synagogue worship and early Christian liturgy, a direct structural connection between these two traditions is yet to be discovered. [3] A letter of Pliny the Younger written in 112 describes Christians gathering early in the morning for a service of praise and also in the evening for a meal. This dual gathering of early Christians indicates to some liturgical scholars that originally the word and table services of Christian Eucharist were celebrated independently at different times of the day. However other liturgists surmise the word and table services were originally celebrated as a unit, and the second gathering Pliny mentions might have been an *agape* — a meal with religious meaning but distinct from the celebration of Eucharist. [4]

Because we possess no liturgical documents from the dawn of Roman liturgy we can say only a few things for certain about its earliest practice. Because of the sporadic persecutions, the Church was forced to gather in private homes for liturgical celebrations. Some of the churches in the city of Rome today still bear the

names of the owners of the homes where the first Christians met, such as Clement. We also know that the language of worship used in Rome was Greek, since it was the common language used throughout the Roman empire at that time. Like churches in other parts of the world, the Roman Church used the Jewish Calendar to determine the date of the feast of Easter and the following 50-day period of celebration leading up to Pentecost. One point of distinction of the Roman Church is that it always began the Easter celebrations on the Sunday closest to 14 Nisan, unlike some other churches who celebrated Easter on this date, no matter what day of the week it occurred.

Worship in the Second Century.

The first descriptions we have of Christian worship in the city of Rome are found in the *Apologia* of Justin, a lay member of the Roman community who was martyred around 160. These were written to the pagan civil authorities as explanations of Christian practices; they include an account of the rite of Baptism and two descriptions of the celebration of Eucharist. Concerning the latter Justin writes:

“On the day named after the sun, all who live in the city or in the countryside assemble. The memoirs of the apostles or the writing of the prophets are read as long as time allows. When the lector has finished, the president addresses us and exhorts us to imitate the splendid things we have heard. Then we all stand and pray. As we said earlier, when we have finished praying, bread, wine, and water are brought up. The president then prays and gives thanks according to his ability, and the people give their assent with an *Amen!* Next, the gifts over which the thanksgiving has been spoken and distributed, and everyone shares in them, while they are also sent via the deacons to the absent brethren.” [5]

From this description, we can see that around the year 150 the Church of Rome regularly gathered on Sunday, and that the word and table services were celebrated as a single unit. The liturgy begins directly with scripture readings, and there is already a designated office of reader. At the conclusion of the readings the “president” (from the Greek *proestaminos*, the one who stands in front of the assembly) — presumably the bishop or his designate — preaches a homily. After the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward the president improvises a prayer of thanksgiving or eucharistia in which all assembled participate with their acclamation of *Amen*. From the texts of all the later Eucharistic prayers that come down to us, we may assume that this presidential prayer was not freely invented, but followed standard structure and form similar to the Jewish *hodayah* prayer of praise and thanksgiving. [6] Elsewhere in the *Apologia*, Justin makes clear that the “gifts” of bread and wine which all share are not considered ordinary food, but the “flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus.”

In this account we see the same basic liturgical shape common to all ancient liturgies, Rome does not seem to have any particularly distinctive features. In fact, in 154 Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna visited Pope Anicetus, who asked him to preside in his place at a celebration of Eucharist, apparently without any fear of discrepancies in their respective rites.

Growth and Latinization.

By the year 251 the Church at Rome began to experience significant changes. It is estimated the Christians in the city numbered from 10, 000 to 30, 000. People listed in the financial care of the church included the bishop (Pope Cornelius), 46 presbyters, 7 deacons, 7 subdeacons, 52 members of minor orders (readers, exorcists and doorkeepers), and 1500 widows and other people in need. Also at this time Latin was replacing Greek as the liturgical language in Rome as it had earlier in the Roman provinces of northern Africa. Thus the Roman oratorical style began to make its mark on Roman liturgy — a rhetoric characterized by its simplicity, sobriety, terseness and juridical wording in contrast to the more effusive Greek. The Apostolic Tradition of this period, often attributed to the Roman Presbyter Hippolytus, contains much liturgical information, including a complete Eucharistic Prayer; however, many questions remain unanswered as to its true authorship, which parts may have been later additions, and if it represents an Alexandrian rather than Roman practice.

Worship after the Legalization of Christianity.

The Edict of Milan of Emperor Constantine in 312 brought about further changes. Now the church was free to worship openly and to own property. The Roman bishop was granted the status and privileges of imperial judges. Like their secular counterparts, the bishop now had the right to be preceded in procession by torches, incense and singers. These ritual elements began to enter the liturgy, both to solemnize the entrance of the bishop and the Book of Gospels. With the influx of converts as a result of the legalization of Christianity, the Church outgrew its domestic gathering places. The Christian basilicas, similar in design to Roman court buildings, were simple, large rooms flanked by colonnades with a rounded apse at one end. This new space allowed for stately processions and a splendid performance of liturgy. An organized system of catechesis was necessary to accommodate the many people now wanting to join the Church in its new political environment.

The sacrament of Penance in the West was part of its earliest tradition as attested by Origen and Cyprian. It was seen as a remedy for a post-baptismal “shipwreck” — for grave sins causing public scandal: murder, adultery and apostasy. As in the Eastern church, orders of penitents were formed, but treated somewhat differently. In Rome they were not dismissed along with the catechumens at the conclusion of the liturgy of the word. They were allowed to remain throughout the entire service, but, of course, did not receive communion. Special blessing prayers for penitents before or after communion are recorded in both North Africa and Rome. The penitential period came to an end with a sacramental celebration including an imposition of hands; at the beginning if the fifth century this took place on Holy Thursday.

Although the Church at Rome had celebrated the Easter cycle of feasts from great antiquity, it did not formally celebrate the Christmas cycle elaborately until the fifth century. Taking the lead from the Eastern churches, Rome began celebrating the Feast of Epiphany around the year 400. After the Council of Ephesus in 431, Christmas celebrations were enriched with a nocturnal Mass at the church of St. Mary Major in Rome.

Part of the earliest Christian tradition were prayers said at third, sixth and ninth hours of the day, either as private individual prayers, or domestic prayer services. These prayer times had their analogy in the Jewish hours of prayer. By the fourth century public celebrations of Morning Prayer (Lauds) and Evening Prayer (Vespers) were held in all the major churches of Rome.

Worship Outside Rome and North Africa.

During the time Christianity was being established in Rome, it also spread in the Western provinces of the Roman Empire. Unlike the Eastern churches with several important centers of influence such as Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria, Rome was the primary model for Western liturgical practice as indicated by the universal adoption of Latin for all Western Christian rites. We may assume the Western churches outside Rome shared the general uniform liturgical practices of early Christianity with some local variation in ritual detail.

Early on we can see two streams of liturgical tradition in the West: the North African-Rome tradition discussed so far, and the Gallican tradition encompassing the rest of the Western Roman empire, including northern Italy. The term “Gallican” is somewhat confusing in that it is used both generally to describe the liturgical family of Western rites outside the North African-Roman tradition, and specifically to indicate the liturgy of the region of Gaul. Since extensive Gallican liturgical sources are lacking from this early period, it is impossible to say with certainty if their original forms shared the simple, sober Roman character, or if their earliest texts contained the prolix, elaborate characteristics similar to Eastern liturgies that are evident by the time Gallican traditions were recorded in written form.

The Western tradition most similar to the Roman-North African rite is commonly called the Ambrosian or Milanese liturgy. The Eucharistic Prayer quoted by St. Ambrose in 390 is substantially the same as the canon found in later Roman documents. Even in the times of St. Ambrose, the Milanese rite had characteristics that it maintained distinct from Roman practice, such as foot washing as part of the rite of Baptism, and the prohibition of fasting on Saturdays, even during Lent. The practice of singing antiphons and hymns is part of the proud heritage of the early Milanese church.

The Spanish or Visigothic liturgy, usually called the Mozarabic Rite, was practiced in the Iberian Peninsula. It is assumed that North African and Roman sources formed the core of its earliest practice, although later forms show Eastern characteristics as well.

The Gallican liturgy practiced in Gaul shows a greater variety of local practice. A Celtic variant was used by the Irish, Scots and Welsh. A characteristic of Gallican liturgy is the use of a series of short, variable prayers where the Roman rite used a single unified oration. Another distinctive characteristic is the use of canonized readings, where a single reading is made up of passages from several books of Scripture.

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Credits: Joseph Metzinger

[1] Lucien Deiss, *Springtime of the Liturgy*, pp. 81-85.

[2] Paul Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer in the Early Church*, pp. 21-22, 44-45.

[3] Paul Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, pp. 27-29.

[4] Adolf Adam, *Foundations of Liturgy*, p. 16.

[5] Deiss, pp. 93-94.

[6] For a discussion of the *hodaya* prayer, see Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search of the Origins of Christian Worship*, pp. 16-17, 50-51.

Gregorian Reforms. Changes Before Gregory the Great.

Even before the time of Pope Gregory I (pontificate 590-604), we can see a number of trends which will influence the evolution of Western liturgy for the next few centuries. Although the books of Scripture were used for proclamation in liturgy from the earliest times, other texts and prayers were delivered from oral tradition or improvised according to generally accepted forms. In this period of history the texts become fixed and written down in various liturgical books. Another important trend is the spread of Roman liturgy to territories using Gallican liturgy and the mixing of Roman and Gallican elements. Although Roman liturgy during this period remains faithful to the traditional shape seen in the early sources such as the *Apologia* of Justin, the third trend we see is the modification and reordering of a number of secondary elements in the celebration of Eucharist.

The first liturgical book to develop is the sacramentary, a collection of prayers used by the presiding bishop or presbyter for Eucharist or other sacraments celebrated in the context of the Eucharist. Although such books are mentioned in the late fifth century, the oldest example that comes down to us is the Verona Sacramentary, sometimes called the Leonine Sacramentary because it was formerly believed to have been compiled by Pope Leo I. It is apparently a collection of *libelli*, booklets containing formularies for single celebration. It has been argued that the Verona was not a true sacramentary in the sense of a book used in the course of celebrating liturgy, but a private collection of *libelli* used as a reference. [1]

The formulary for each Mass (as the Roman celebration of Eucharist came to be called, from the Latin word, *missa*, dismissal) generally contains an opening prayer said before the readings, an offertory prayer said over the gifts before the Eucharistic Prayer begins, a prayer after communion, and sometimes a blessing prayer said over the people at the conclusion of the celebration. Note that with the exception of the last, these collect prayers are used at the conclusion of a liturgical action: the entrance procession, the bringing forward of the gifts of bread and wine, and the procession of people to the altar to receive communion. In addition to these short collect prayers, some of the formularies include Prefaces for the Eucharistic Prayer. The Verona formularies are for use in Roman presbyteral liturgies, although the prayers are based on Papal models, most of them composed during the fifth and sixth centuries. It is incomplete, lacking formularies for masses from January through April, including Easter.

The second and more influential of the early Roman sacramentaries is known as the *Gelasianum Vetus*, or Old Gelasian Sacramentary. It was compiled near Paris around 750 and contains a mixture of Gallican and Roman elements dating from around 650. It is similar to the Verona, but contains formularies for the entire year as well as the text of the Canon, the Roman form of the Eucharistic Prayer. Some formularies in this sacramentary contain two collects with the same apparent liturgical function, perhaps to provide an option for the celebrant. Although the only surviving copy of the Old Gelasian was written about fifty years after the leadership of Gregory I, most of its contents reflect a practice before his reforms. The Gelasian is divided into three parts according to the liturgical year.

Reforms of Gregory I and His Successors.

Sacramentaries directly influenced by Gregorian reforms are referred to as *Sacramentaria Gregoriana*. They are distinguished from the earlier sacramentaries by different arrangement of formularies without the three-part division. Eighth Century Gelasian sacramentaries are based on the Old Gelasian, but also contain ample Gregorian elements as well as more Gallican influence.

With the appearance of these earliest sacramentaries, the Western liturgy begins to show a characteristic that distinguishes it from Eastern liturgical traditions. Aside from scripture readings and chants, Eastern liturgies are generally composed of invariable texts. In contrast, Roman and other Western liturgies have a series of prayers that change depending on the feast and liturgical season; in addition to the variable Prefaces, the Roman Canon has variable phrases that change to reflect the specific images of the feast being celebrated. These characteristics reflect a Western taste for more variability and the desire to make the liturgy reflect the particular feast which it celebrates, compared with the Eastern tendency to prefer textual stability; these differences may be thought of as distinctions of liturgical style rather than a fundamental divergence in structure.

The Roman Canon reaches its mature form in these early sacramentaries, although they seem to represent a much older oral tradition of this prayer. The version quoted by St. Ambrose in 390 is substantially the same prayer recorded in the Gelasian Sacramentary. It appears that the Roman Canon was originally composed in Latin rather than being a translation of an older Greek Eucharistic prayer. It lacks the explicit Epiclesis (a prayer addressed to God the Father asking Him to send down the Holy Spirit to empower a sacramental action) in the Eastern sense. Without mentioning the Holy Spirit directly, the Roman prayer merely calls upon God to “bless” the gifts of bread and wine so that they may become the Body and Blood of Christ, while the priest extends his hands over them in a gesture of epiclesis.

Toward the end of the prayer a similar blessing is invoked upon the people who will receive the gifts as communion. This two-fold invocation over the gifts and assembly is known as the Roman “split epiclesis.” In the Roman Canon, the Eucharist is portrayed as God’s gift to the Church through Christ, and the gift of the assembly to the Father in Christ. In contrast to Eastern Eucharistic Prayers’ emphasis on praise, the Roman prayer stresses the celebration of the local assembly and the gifts offered. [2]

Changes in Secondary Liturgical Elements.

In addition to Sacramentaries, other important liturgical books developed during this time. These include lectionaries containing citations of scripture readings for use in particular celebrations, graduals containing chants for the celebration of Eucharist, and ordines containing rubrics — the instructions for ritual action.

Even before Gregory I, secondary elements in the Roman celebration of Eucharist begin to show some change. Even as late as 426 the Roman liturgy began abruptly with the Scripture readings; St. Augustine describes an Easter Sunday Mass where the first scripture reading is preceded only by a simple greeting. The addition of a prayer before the readings found in the earliest sacramentaries indicates the initial development of introductory rites. By the sixth century the introductory rites were enriched with the Kyrie, a litany where each invocation is answered by the assembly by the Greek phrases for “Lord have mercy” or “Christ have mercy.” This addition is either a direct importation from the East or a reworking and shift of position of the intercessory prayers concluding the word service mentioned by Justin Martyr. The Kyrie found in the Gelasian Sacramentary is certainly intercessory in nature. Note that in the Kyrie we find the Greek language used in a Liturgy that is otherwise almost completely Latin.

The Gloria, a hymn of praise originating in the Eastern churches, is also added at this time. It is an example of *psalmi idiotici*, non-biblical texts composed in the style of psalmody. Earlier the Gloria was used in the Office; at first it was only used at Masses as a special sign of solemnity when the Pope presided. At its introduction its use in non-papal liturgy was limited to Easter Sunday. In later practice it was used at all Masses celebrated by a presbyter on Sundays and solemnities except during penitential seasons. The Gloria is always perceived as a festive addition; it is not replaced by another element when omitted.

The reforms of Gregory the Great (590-604) and his successors, such as Honorius I (625-638) and Gregory II (715-731) affected the secondary elements of the Roman Mass that give it a distinctive form. The Kyrie litany was stripped of its invocations, so that only the responses “Kyrie eleison” and “Christe eleison” remained, perhaps in order to shorten the time required for the introductory rites. The number of readings was fixed at two; an additional reading from the Old Testament now occurred only on special days. The singing of the Alleluia before the Gospel became a standard part of the Mass except in during Lent and on other penitential days; formerly it was used only during the fifty days of Easter. The joyful, paschal nature of the Alleluia must have seemed out of character with the more somber character of these penitential times. Although the Kiss of Peace had already been transferred to a position after the Eucharistic Prayer in the early fifth century, the preliminary rites of communion were reordered so that the Lord’s Prayer was recited directly after the Canon, followed by the Kiss of Peace and fraction rite.

Later Sergius I (687-701) introduced the singing of the Agnus Dei to accompany the fraction rite — a litany, possibly of Byzantine origin, giving solemnity to the ritual of the breaking of the consecrated Bread before communion. Gregory II added Mass formularies (sets of collects and other variable texts proper to the feast) for the Thursdays in Lent, which had been aliturgical up to that time.

Reasons for Liturgical Reforms.

The changes discussed so far came about for various reasons. The rise of various heretical groups caused bishops to become scrupulous about the orthodoxy of their prayer texts, so having a codified collection of written formulae assured them their collects were doctrinally sound. The rearrangement and addition of secondary liturgical elements reflected a Western comfortability with limited liturgical change and adaptation, in contrast to the Eastern tendency to hold fast to traditional forms. Perhaps the political instability brought about by barbarian invasions provided a sense of need for liturgical codification and careful ordering of worship.

Other changes in society and the Church influenced its liturgical practice. As more and more of the general population became Christian, the order of catechumens began to decline, so that infant baptism became the norm. The rise of monasticism is also evident during this period with its liturgical influence. Cloisters were built by the popes near Roman basilicas and these communities took charge of celebrations of the Divine Office bringing their monastic liturgical practices with them. In the city of Rome, two types of liturgy became more apparent — the city or parish liturgy used in general, and the more elaborate Papal liturgy used whenever the Pope presided.

Evolution of Gallican Liturgies.

Since many of the Roman sacramentaries were copied in Gallican areas, we must assume the the Roman liturgy was being used as a model in Gallican areas. Some Eastern influence is evident in both Gallican and Old Spanish liturgy, such as the introduction of the Trisagion before the readings in both of these rites. The trinitarian interpretation of this text emphasized orthodox belief in areas beset with heretical groups challenging the doctrine of the Trinity. In general, the Gallican liturgy welcomed liturgical innovation from outside sources in contrast to Rome which was much more conservative in adopting foreign elements. The Milanese liturgy developed introductory rites similar to, but in a slightly different order than the Roman rite. Milan maintained the older tradition of the Kiss of Peace before the preparation of the gifts and the use of the Old Testament reading during the celebration of Eucharist.

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Credits: Joseph Metzinger

[1] Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources*, pp. 38-46.

[2] For an analysis of the distinctive characteristics of the Roman Canon see: Herman Wegman, *Christian Worship in East and West*, pp. 130-132.

Carolignian Reforms. The Franks Adopt the Roman Rite.

Western liturgy in the eighth century was influenced by the rise in power of the Frankish kings north of the Alps. Their ideal, especially under the later leadership of Charlemagne, was to create a Christian society in Western Europe. Stability and unification were brought about by assimilation of old Roman culture of the cities and “barbarian” cultures in the countryside, the official use of the Latin language, and the creation of a unified church-state. In order to consolidate their realms, the Franks sought to import Roman liturgy in an effort to standardize liturgical practice. [1] Their efforts were eventually successful resulting in a uniform worship, but had the unintended effect of mixing Gallican elements with Roman practice creating a hybrid Roman-Frankish liturgy. Allegorical interpretations of liturgy changed how the rites were perceived and performed. This new hybrid liturgical style dominated the West and severely diminished the importance of other Western rites.

In 754 King Pepin prescribed the Roman liturgy for use in his realm. Political unity was not the only factor in the promotion of Roman practice; pilgrims visiting Rome, especially bishops, were impressed with the beauty of the Roman ceremonies. The diversity of Gallican practice and the corruption of its Latin texts were other factors that lead to dissatisfaction with local rites. Still, Pepin's decree met with limited success: Although Roman liturgical manuscripts copied outside Rome had already absorbed some Gallican elements, Roman liturgy was particularly suited to its local community and could not be transplanted easily into Frankish lands with very different liturgical and cultural traditions.

Charlemagne's Program of Reform.

During the years 785-786 Charlemagne enacted laws to bring the process of Romanization to completion and to suppress the Gallican rite. [2] He asked Pope Hadrian (772-795) to send to Aachen a Gregorian sacramentary “in pure form” so that it could be used as a model for liturgical books in the Frankish realm. In 785 this Pope sent a sacramentary compiled around 735, now known as the Hadrianum. This book was ill suited for Charlemagne's needs; it was incomplete, lacking formularies for the Sundays of the year, and it represented the

more elaborate Papal liturgy rather than parish usage. (In the city of Rome two liturgical styles had already emerged. One form was used only when the Pope presided; the other simpler form for general use would have been a better model for Charlemagne's purposes.) Perhaps Pope Hadrian misunderstood Charlemagne's request for an exemplar book, and merely sent the most beautiful manuscript he possessed. [3]

In order to develop a usable book as a model, it was necessary to supplement the Hadrianum with materials it lacked and adapt it to the needs of the Frankish church. During the years 810-815 Benedict of Aniane filled in the missing sections with texts from the Eighth Century Gelesian, another unknown Roman source, and Gallican material. The contents of this supplement are extensive: they include not only the missing Masses for Sundays of the year, but also diverse texts such as vigils for Easter and Pentecost, weekday Masses, common Masses for saints, consecration of clerics and women religious, ordinations for minor orders, votive Masses for special needs, funeral Masses, episcopal blessings and suggestions for the addition of Gallican feasts to the church calendar. In his supplement Benedict was careful to clearly distinguish these additional materials from the Hadrianum text as he received it. [4] The resulting hybrid Roman-Frankish sacramentary was used as a model for liturgical changes throughout the realm and eventually its hybrid liturgy made its way to Rome itself.

In addition to the spread of proper Roman liturgical books through his empire, Charlemagne wished the chant in his churches to follow the usage of Rome. He sent his best singers to the Papal chapel to learn the chant used there so they could disseminate it to the rest of his realm. This standardized repertoire became known as Gregorian Chant. For more information, see the article on Gregorian Chant.

Gallican and Allegorical Characteristics.

This new form of hybrid liturgy had a different character from the traditional Roman simplicity and sobriety. It exhibited Gallican characteristics: the taste for dramatic, colorful ritual, and the multiplication and lengthening of prayers. The tone of these texts is often subjective and emotional, especially in the silent dispositional prayers of the presider. An example of this Gallicanization is seen in the presbyteral ordination ritual. In the Roman rite the laying on of hands clearly stands out as the primary symbolic action. In the new hybrid liturgy the addition of conferring of vestments, anointing of the priest's hands, and presentation of liturgical books adds to the dramatic character of the ceremony, but the central gesture of laying on of hands appears to be just one of many ritual actions.

Another factor in the development of the new liturgical books and their interpretation is shown in commentaries known as *expositio Missae*. These works interpreted liturgy in colorful, allegorical ways so that a deeper meaning was seen behind every liturgical detail. For instance, the entrance chant of the Mass was seen as the voice of the prophets foretelling Christ's coming, the Gloria as the song of the angels heralding Christ's birth, and the reading of the Epistle as John the Baptist's proclamation of Christ as the Messiah. Such fanciful interpretations led to changes in liturgical practice, such as the celebrant reciting the canon in a low voice as he was seen in the role of the High Priest alone entering the Holy of Holies of the Temple. Two of Charlemagne's advisors, Alcuin and Amalarius of Metz were proponents of this allegorical interpretation.

Like the Mass, other sacramental rites were viewed as a kind of liturgical drama reenacting scenes from salvation history. The rite for expulsion of penitents from the church was based on texts from Genesis where the penitents were spoken of as the sinful Adam and Eve banished from the Eden of the church.

Monastic Influences.

As the reforms of Charlemagne spread through Europe, other influences brought about change in Western practice that are seen throughout the medieval period. Irish and Scottish monks brought their customs to continental Europe, such as their form of the sacrament of penance. While canonical penance in its traditional Roman form was still in use, private individual celebration of the sacrament of penance became more and more common. Instead of being used for only grave sins causing public scandal, now every person recognizing his sinful nature could receive this sacrament over and over again. The normal minister of this monastic Celtic form of the sacrament was the confessor presbyter rather than the bishop.

Another trend in privatization is seen in the Mass through the following centuries. In its origin the Eucharist was celebrated only in the context of the gathering of the Christian community. Partly due to monastic influences, the Mass was increasingly celebrated by a presbyter with a single minister, or even by the priest alone. This led to the development of the Plenary Missal, a liturgical book that contained the texts of the sacramentary, scripture readings, chants and rubrics so that the celebrant alone could take on the roles of all the liturgical ministers.

The celebration of Divine Office began to take on a more monastic form. In place of the repetitive use of psalmody characteristic of the cathedral office, the monastic practice of reciting the entire Psalter in one week became standard. The recitation of the longer monastic style services became an obligation of all clerics,

who perceived themselves as praying on behalf of the laity. As a result, the office became more and more a clerical preserve in which lay people seldom participated.

The Addition of the Credo.

Although the Gallican additions and interpretations changed many details of the liturgy and how it was perceived, the overall structure of the Mass remained much the same as it was in the time of Gregory the Great. One addition of Charlemagne was the insertion of the Credo, or Nicene Creed, in Frankish territories at the end of the eighth century. Since the end of the sixth century the Nicene Creed was used in the Spanish liturgy including a local accretion to the text known as the “filioque” clause. In response to disputes of heretical groups concerning the nature of the Trinity, the phrase concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit was altered to read, “And I believe in the Holy Spirit ... who proceeds from the Father and the Son.” The Creed with this addition spread to Frankish churches rather quickly. Pope Leo III wrote to Charlemagne in 808 expressing his wish that the filioque clause not be added, and had silver plaques engraved with the original text of the Creed set up in St. Peter’s. The Creed was not used as part of the Mass in the city of Rome well into the eleventh century, when Pope Benedict VIII bowed to political pressure and included it in Masses on Sundays and major feasts. [5]

Other Western Rites.

With the dissemination of the Carolingian reforms, the suppression of the Gallican rite was complete in western Europe, although its influence remained strong in the detail and flavor of the new hybrid liturgy. The reforms did not affect Spain which maintained its own Mozarabic liturgy until the eleventh century. It is not clear from medieval sources if Charlemagne made an attempt to suppress the Ambrosian rite, or if he merely limited it to the area surrounding Milan. Thus it is the only Western liturgy not eventually supplanted by the Roman-Frankish rite and has significant use to this day.

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[1] For a summary of this complex cultural and political background, see Herman Wegman, *Christian Worship in East and West*, pp. 143-149.

[2] Adolf Adam, *Foundations of Liturgy*, p. 27.

[3] Herman Wegman, *Christian Worship in East and West*, pp. 154-155.

[4] Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, pp. 85-92.

[5] See Gregory Dix, *The Shape of Liturgy*, 487; Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 59; and Josef Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite, Vol I*, pp. 469-470.