

How Liturgies Grow: The Evolution of the Byzantine “Divine Liturgy”

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In this paper I would like to locate the evolution of the Byzantine eucharist within the larger context of liturgical history, using it as a “model” or “case study” from which to draw some general methodological principles applicable, I believe, to the growth of all rites.

STAGES OF RITUAL HISTORY

The history of the eucharistic service can be divided into several periods:

1) In the period of initial information the Lord’s Supper is separated from the agape, the World services becomes permanently joined to it, and the “first statum” of that Dom Gregory Dix called the “classical shape of the liturgy”¹ emerges by the middle of the 2d century in the Apology of Justin Martyr (I, 65, 67):

Readings

Preaching

Common prayers

Kiss of peace

Transfer of gifts

Prayer over the gifts (anaphora)

(fraction)²

communion

(dismissal)

2) The second period is the period of Church Orders, when written formularies, i. e. actual texts, first appear.³ All of them differ, showing that there was no one “apostolic liturgy” from which they derived. Yet all of them follow the same basic outline first seen in Justin’s Apology.

3) After the peace of Constantine in 313, when Christian worship became the public ceremonial of a church freed from civil restraints and fast becoming an important social force, liturgical development quickened. It is in this period that we first hear of the rite of Byzantium. Indeed, this rite can be said to be

characterize this stage of liturgical history. For it is the rite of the new capital of Constantine, the founding of which in 315 inaugurates the new era of Constantinian or imperial Christendom.

This is the period of the unifications of rites, when worship, like a church government, not only evolved new forms, but also let the weaker variants of the species die out, as the church developed, via the creation of intermediate unities, into a federation of federations of local churches, with ever-increasing unity of practice within each federation, and ever-increasing diversity of practice from federation to federation. In other words what was once one loose collection of individual local churches each with its own liturgical uses, evolved into a series of intermediate structures or federations (later called patriarchates) grouped around certain major sees. This process stimulated a corresponding unification and standardizing of church practice, liturgical and otherwise. Hence, the process of formation of rites is not one of diversification, as is usually held, but of unification. And what one finds in extant rites today, is not a synthesis of all that went before, but rather the result of a selective evolution the survival of the fittest— of the fittest, not necessarily of the best.

4) In a further stage of liturgical history, liturgical families continue to evolve, but now as already formed and hence identifiably distinct entities.⁴

THE WAYS OF LITURGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Now, if one compares these later liturgical developments to Justin’s “first statum” of the Eucharistic service, one sees that liturgical evolution respected this primitive outline in what I have called the third period of liturgical growth, and violated it in the fourth.

What we see happening in the third period, the period of the unification of rites, is a filling in of the basic common outline of the eucharist at the three “soft points”: (1) before the readings, (2) between the Word’s service and the Eucharistic prayer, and

¹ *The Shape of the Liturgy*, London 1945, 2nd edition.

² Justin does not mention the fraction and dismissal, but they are part of the classical shape.

³ Beginning with the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, c. 215.

⁴ As Baumstark wrote: “It seems to be of the nature of Liturgy to relate itself to concrete situations of times and places. No sooner had the vast liturgical domains come in to being than they began to be divided up smaller territories whose several forms of worship were adapted to local needs”. (*Comparative Liturgy*, Westminster Md. 1958, pp. 18-19).

(3) at the communion and dismissal that follow this prayer. Note that at the primitive liturgy these are the three points of action without words: (1) the entrance into church, (2) the kiss of peace and transfer of gifts, and (3) the fraction, communion, and dismissal rites. What could be more natural than to develop the ceremonial of these actions, cover them with chants, and add to them suitable prayers? For one of the most common phenomena in later liturgical development is the steadfast refusal to let a gesture speak for itself.

This process often took the form of the permanent addition to the service of rites and ceremonies which in origin [lend an exclusively local scope to] the festive or stational rites of a particular time and place. When added to the Eucharistic rite as permanent integral parts, they inevitably lose their original connection to the religious topography of their place of origin— and, hence, too, their original scope and meaning— and assume a life independent of their past. This too is a common occurrence in liturgical history. It is especially noticeable in the rites derived from cities where liturgy was stational: Rome, Jerusalem, and Constantinople, the three most important centers of liturgical diffusion in the period after Chalcedon (451).

As ceremonial and text rush in to fill the vacuum at the three action points of the liturgy, thus overlaying the primitive shape with a “second stratum” of introit, pre-anaphoral, and communion rites, a contrary movement is provoked. The liturgy, thus filled out, appears overburdened and must be cut back. Now what is fascinating about this next step is the abandonment of the former respect for the primitive shape. For it is universally verifiable that the elements thus reduced or suppressed are never the later, secondary, often questionable additions, but elements of the original core: the Old Testament lessons, the responsorial psalmody between the readings, the prayers after the readings, the kiss of peace, etc.⁵

THE BYZANTINE EUCHARIST

General Characteristics

Now it is the last two periods of liturgical history that especially concern us here, and for Byzantine tradition they extend from the end of the 4th century until the beginning of the 16th. From the end of the 4th, because the writings of John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople from 397-404, are our first witness to its liturgical uses; to the beginning of the 16th because the first printed edition of our liturgy appeared in 1526, and it was the printing press rather than the intervention of bishop, synod, or liturgical commission, that was responsible for the final unification of liturgical usage in the Byzantine East.

Of course one must not picture this unification in rigid, Tridentine categories, for in the East there is no such thing as a “typical” liturgical book, i.e. an official liturgical text obligatory on

all. Nor did the advent of printing mark the end of growth and local adaptation. But since then the developments are so easy to trace that liturgical history ceases to be a scholarly problem and so becomes relatively uninteresting except as a mirror of local customs, minor variations on a already well-known theme.

The Byzantine Divine Liturgy can be characterized as the Eucharistic service of the Great Church— of Hagia Sophia, the cathedral church of Constantinople— as formed into an initial synthesis in the capital by the 10th century, and then modified by later monastic influence. This is not a truism, to say that the Byzantine eucharist is the rite of Constantinople. There is nothing “Roman” about much of the Roman rite, and nothing “Byzantine” about the present Byzantine Divine Office, which comes from the monasteries of Palestine, and replaced the Office of the Great Church after Constantinople fell to the Latins in the Fourth Crusade (1204).

To the Westerner onlooker, perhaps the most striking quality of the rite that has evolved from the eucharist of the Great Church is its opulent ritualization, a ceremonial splendour heightened by its marked contrast to the sterile verbalism of so much contemporary Western liturgy, where worship often seems just words. The Byzantine mass ritual is structured around a series of appearances of the sacred ministers from behind the iconostasis or sanctuary barrier. The most important of these appearances are the two solemn introits. The minor introit or “Little Entrance” of the Word service, after the opening rite of the anarxis, is a procession with the gospel, said to symbolize Christ’s coming to us in the Word. The other, major or “Great Entrance” at the beginning of the Eucharistic part of the service, right after the intercessory prayers following the readings, is a procession bearing to the altar the gifts of bread and wine prepared before the beginning of the liturgy. It is said to prefigure Christ’s coming to us in the sacrament of His Body and Blood. Both these fore-shadowings are fulfilled in to later appearances, the procession of the deacon with the gospel lectionary to the ambo for the reading; and the procession of the celebrant to distribute in communion the consecrated gifts, after they have been blessed in the Eucharistic prayer.

Most of the ritual is taken up with such comings and goings. But liturgy is not ceremonial. It is prayer. And so these ceremonies are the ritual expression of a text. In the present-day Byzantine rite the liturgical formulae comprise two distinct levels. While the deacon stands outside the doors of the iconostasis chanting the litanies and leading the people in prayer, within the sanctuary a parallel service is preceding. Through the open doors of the icon screen the altar is distantly visible, brilliantly lighted and enveloped in clouds of incense, impressing upon the worshipper a sense of mystery and sacredness. Before this altar, within the holy of holies stands the celebrant, his back to the people as he faces the East, reciting in silence the priestly prayers. When the priest has to bless or address the people he comes out. Inside he is talking to God.

⁵ Cf. A. Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy*, op. cit., pp. 23ff— though B. is wrong in some of the examples he gives.

This ritual pattern is the result of centuries of slow evolution, in which many rites, at first added for a specific purpose later lost their original scope, then decomposed under the pressure of later changes and additions, acquiring in the process new mystagogic interpretations often far removed from their actual historical roots.

The enarxis

There many ways in which one can approach the history of how this came about. My one approach is structural and historical, that is, I try to identify and isolate individual liturgical structures or units, then trace their history as such, rather than attempt to study the entire rite as a unit in each historical period. For it has been my constant observation that liturgies do not grow evenly, like living organisms. Rather, their individual structures possess a life of their own. More like cancer than native cells, they can appear like aggressors, showing riotous growth at a time when all else lies dormant. Let us see how this happened in the concrete.

We shall prescind from the elaborate Rite of the Prothesis or preparation of bread and wine that precedes the liturgy. With the exception of the Prothesis Prayer or prayer of offering, it began to evolve only after the 8th century, largely as a result of monastic influence.

More important is the enarxis that introduces the Liturgy of the Word. Today the reading of the epistle is preceded by an office of three antiphons, each with its litany and collect. The minor introit takes place during the singing of the third antiphon. This entrance is also accompanied by a collect, the Prayer of the Entrance, said outside the central doors of the iconostasis before the procession enters to the altar. There follow various troparia or refrains, and then the Trisagion chant with its accompanying prayer, giving us the following structure.

- Initial blessing
- Litany and prayer I
- Antiphon I
- Litany and prayer II
- Antiphon II
- Litany and prayer III
- Antiphon III with added troparia (refrains), entrance procession, entrance prayer
- Trisagion prayer and chant
- Procession to the throne
- Greeting: "Peace to all"

During the Trisagion the celebrants proceed to the throne behind the altar for the readings. With this procession to the throne we rejoin the primitive introit of the liturgy as described in the homilies of Chrysostom at the end of the 4th century the clergy enter the church together with the people, and proceed directly to the throne in the apse. There the bishop greets the people with "Peace to all", then sits down for

the readings: no antiphons, no litanies, no prayers, nothing. But by the time of our earliest manuscript of the Byzantine liturgy, the 8th century codex Barberini 336,⁶ we already have our enarxis almost as it is today. Where did it come from?

First of all. We can see at a glance that the enarxis is made of up later, secondary additions to the liturgy, for its formulae are all common to the liturgies of Chrysostom and Basil, which are independent only from the prayer over the catechumens.⁷ Now any time we see common elements in two liturgies, it is obvious that they went from one formulary to the other, or were introduced to both simultaneously from some third source after they had begun to share a common history as variant liturgical formularies of the same local church, to whose liturgical shape the both were thenceforth made to conform.

a) The litany

Let us look at the liturgical units of this enarxis.⁸ We can dispense immediately with the opening blessing; it does not appear until the 11th century.⁹ The initial litany is also out of place. In our primitive shape such intercessions occur only *after* the readings, thus safeguarding the priority of the divine action in the order of service: Only after God speaks to us His Word do we respond in psalmody and prayer. As a matter of

⁶ For the literature on this and other sources of the Byzantine liturgy, see R. TAFT, *The Great Entrance. A History of the Transfer of Gifts and other Pre-anaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 200)* Rome 1975: "Introduction" and "Index of Manuscripts".

⁷ Some ancient Italian MSS fill in the enarxis of the Chrysostom formulary with prayers from other liturgies. A. JACOB has traced the origins of this local peculiarity, which formerly had led liturgists to suppose that the Chrysostom formulary was once different from that of Basil in its entirety. See A. JACOB, *Histoire du formulaire grec de la liturgie de S. Jean Chrysostome* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Louvain 1968); "La tradition manuscrite de la Liturgie de S. Jean Chrysostome (VIIIe-XIIIe siècles)", in: *Eucharisties d'Orient et d'Occident (Lex Orandi 47)* Paris 1970, 109-38; "L'evoluzione dei libri liturgici bizantini in Calabria e in Sicilia", in: *Calabria bizantina. Vita religiosa e strutture amministrative (Atti del primo e del secondo incontro di Studi Bizantini)* Reggio Calabria 1974, 47-69; cf. TAFT, *Great Entrance*, op. cit., pp. xxxi-ii.

⁸ For a complete history of the Liturgy of the Word, see J. MATEOS, *La célébration de la parole dans la liturgie byzantine (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 191)* Rome 1971. Mateos' study needs to be completed in certain details by the later work of Jacob (cf. previous note) in the MS tradition. Two recent studies in English, C. KUCHAREK, *The Byzantine-Slav Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Allendale, N.J. 1974; and M. M. SOLOVEV, *The Byzantine Divine Liturgy. History and Commentary*, Washington, D.C. 1970; are not reliable.

⁹ It first appears, I believe, in the Codex S. Simeonis Siracusani (c. 1030) preserved for us in the Latin version of Ambrose Pelargus (*Divina sacra Liturgia sancti Iohannis Chrysostomi*. Interprète Ambrosia Pclargo Niddano, O.P.; Worms 1541, f. _iv°). On this source see TAFT, *Great Entrance*, op. cit., pp. xxvii viii.

fact our litany was once found just before the transfer of gifts. Its remains are still visible there in the vulgate recension of the Slavonic books.¹⁰

But following a tendency observable in almost all liturgical traditions, these intercessions were either suppressed or moved up to the beginning of the liturgy of the Word. Thus, in the 10-11th century sources of our liturgy we find this litany in its original place before the transfer of gifts, and also after the Little Entrance, just before the Trisagion, i.e. at the old beginning of the liturgy, before the enarxis was added. By the end of the 11th century it is found also before the antiphons, i.e. at the new beginning. In the 12th century it disappears from its original place in the prayers of the faithful; in the 13th it disappears before the Trisagion, remaining only where we still find it today.¹¹

So our litany is really the original litany of the faithful of the Byzantine mass. The two abbreviated litanies that accompany the prayers of antiphons II and III are probably just a development of the original *oremus* of the two collects they now accompany.

b) The antiphons

What about these three antiphons and their collects? Where did they come from, and when were they added to the liturgy? The when is easy: some time between 630 and 730 A.D. There is no mention of them in the *Mystagogy* of Maximus Confessor written about 630.¹² As he describes it, the liturgy begins with the entrance into church of the people with the bishop, followed immediately by the readings. Now until at least the 11th century the bishop was not present in church for the enarxis but entered only at the Little Entrance.¹³ Obviously, then, there was no enarxis in the time of Maximus. But just one century later our next Byzantine liturgical commentary, the *Historia ecclesiastica* of Patriarch St. Germanus I (†733), does mention the antiphon.¹⁴ So they first appear at the beginning of the 8th century.

¹⁰ See A. STRITTMATTER, "Notes on the Byzantine Synapte", in: *Traditio X* (1954) 51-108; "A peculiarity of the Slavic Liturgy found in Greek Euchologies", in: *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, edited by K. WEITZMANN, Princeton, N.J. 1955, 197-203.

¹¹ Loc. cit. and MATEOS, *Célébration*, op. cit., pp. 29-31.

¹² Ch. 9, PG 91, 688-89. On this and other commentaries on the Byzantine liturgy see R. BORNERT, *Les commentaires byzantins de la divine liturgie du VIIe au XVe siècle* (Archives de l'Orient chrétien 9) Paris 1966.

¹³ Mateos' treatment of the pontifical liturgy (*Célébration*, op. cit., pp. 40-41) needs to be corrected somewhat on the basis of later research. See TAFT, *Great Entrance*, op. cit., pp. 267-9, and my review of Chr. STRUBE, "Die westliche Eingangsseite der Kirchen von Konstantinopel", in: OCP XLH (19/6) p. 300.

¹⁴ N. BORGIA (ed.) *Il commentario liturgico di S. Germano Patriarca Costantinopolitano e la versione latina di Anastasio Bibliotecario* (Studi Liturgici I) Grottaferrata 1912, p. 21. Cf. BORNERT, *Les commentaires*, op. cit., p. 162.

But this does not mean that they are a permanent fixture at that time. Liturgies tend to be snobbish. They take their time about accepting newcomers as permanent members. Even as late as the 20th century the three antiphons had not yet won a permanent place as a fixed part of every mass.¹⁵

Our main source for the history of how they did win it is the 10th century *Typicon* of the Great Church edited by Juan Mateos, S.J. of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome.¹⁶ This crucial document has provided the key to almost the whole history of the Byzantine liturgy in the post-Justinian era. A *typicon* is not used in the actual celebration of the liturgy, but provides the directions for the correct use of the books that are, indicating the proper of mass and office, and giving, like the old *ordines romani*, detailed rubrics for special celebrations that occur in the liturgical cycle.

Now in the 10th century *typicon* of Hagia Sophia we see that the liturgy of New Rome, like that of Old Rome, was highly stational in character. On many days in the church calendar the liturgy was celebrated not just anywhere, but in some specially designated church. This church was the "station" of the day, and on more solemn feasts the crowd would gather with the clergy at some other sanctuary and process solemnly from there to the station church for the liturgy. During the procession an antiphonal psalm would be chanted. Upon arrival at the station, the end of the antiphon would be signalled by intoning the *Gloria patri* that announces the conclusion of antiphonal psalmody in almost every tradition, followed by the final repetition of the antiphon or refrain, called the *περισσὴ* or "appendix". Sometimes a variant refrain would be substituted at the perisse.

The clergy recited the introit prayer before the doors of the nave—not before the doors of the sanctuary chancel as now—and then entered the church, followed by the people. Proceeding past the great ambo in the center of the nave, they went along the solea or walled-in processional way that extended from the sanctuary to the ambo,¹⁷ and took their places at the synthronon in the apse.

All this is almost the same as the opening of the contemporary Roman stational mass described in the *Ordo romanus primus*

¹⁵ The history of the antiphons is given in detail by MATEOS, *Célébration*, op. cit., pp. 34-71.

¹⁶ J. MATEOS (éd.), *Le typicon de la Grande Eglise. Ms. Sainte-Croix No. 40. Introduction, text critique et notes*, 2 vol. (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 165-6) Rome 1962-3.

¹⁷ On the solea and other aspects of the liturgical disposition of the early Byzantine church, see T. MATHEWS, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, University Park and London 1971 (cf. "solea" in Index); S. G. XYDIA, "The Chancel Barrier, Solea and Ambo of Hagia Sophia", in: *The Art Bulletin* XXIX (1947) 1-24. MATEOS (*Typicon* II, op. cit., p. 321) wrongly identifies the early solea with the sanctuary platform, which is the solea in current Greek liturgical nomenclature. Cf. TAFT, *Great Entrance*, op. cit., p. 79.

about 750 A.D. even to the entrance along a walled-in processional way, the so-called *schola cantorum* which Mathews has shown to be an exact parallel to the old Byzantine solea.¹⁸ To the best of my knowledge this surprising similarity between two liturgies presently so different in structure and ethos has never been noticed by the students of liturgy. It is but one more indication of the communality of much in early liturgy, showing again the validity of the comparative method of liturgiology first formulated by Anton Baumstark (†1948) half a century ago.¹⁹ I have already noted that the three base-traditions— Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem— out of which have come the only two universal rites of Christendom, the Roman and the Byzantine, were all distinguished by their stational character. It is not an exaggeration to say that practically every addition to the Byzantine eucharist from Justinian until the post-iconoclast period had its origin in the stational rites of Constantinople. The antiphons will be our first example.

The old typicon tells us that on some feasts, on the way to the stational church, the stational procession would stop either in the forum or in some other church along the processional route for a rogation. On some days this prayer-service included an office of three antiphons. After this rogation the procession would continue on to the stational church, to the accompaniment of the usual processional antiphon.

But evidently the office of three antiphons was very popular, because it soon became customary to celebrate it in church before the liturgy on days when there was no stational procession. Here we see an example of a liturgical unit gradually detaching itself from the service in which it originated and becoming an integral part of another service.

Note however that these three antiphons celebrated in church before non stational liturgies were a combination of the three rogation antiphons with a fourth antiphon, the processional antiphon to the church. For example, in the typicon for New Year's Day— September 1, at that time— there are two liturgies prescribed, one in the Church of the Theotokos in Chalkoprateia, one in Hagia Sophia.²⁰ The one in Chalkoprateia was stational preceded by an office of three antiphons in the forum, followed by the procession to Chalkoprateia for mass to the accompaniment of another, fourth antiphon. But the lit-

urgy in Hagia Sophia in memory of St. Stephen the Stylite begins right there with an office of three antiphons. And at the third antiphon two refrains, that of the saint, and that of the fourth processional antiphon from the stational service of Chalkoprateia, are both sung. What they have done is simply fuse together the third antiphon of the devotional service with the introit antiphon, probably because three antiphons, not four, was the customary liturgical unit in the offices of the Great Church. So the rogational office of three antiphons and the introit antiphon are two different things, which explains why today we have four orations— three antiphon prayers plus an introit prayer— with only three antiphons.

Up until the 10th century the three antiphons were not a necessary part of every liturgy. Even after this date the patriarch still does not enter the church until the third antiphon, because this is the old introit of the liturgy.²¹ And even today vigil masses in the Byzantine rite, in which mass is preceded by vespers, have no antiphons at all but begin with the Trisagion. It is said that in such masses, vespers replace the Liturgy of the Word. They replace nothing, but are joined to the mass at its old beginning, the Trisagion, thus illustrating Baumstark's law that older usages are preserved in more solemn seasons and rites.²²

Today the three antiphons have been reduced to a few scraps of their original form, and the troparia after the third antiphon have been so multiplied as to take on an independent existence detached from the psalmody which they were originally destined to serve as refrains. This exemplifies another common development in liturgical history: the process whereby ecclesiastical compositions multiply and eventually suffocate the scriptural element of a liturgical chant, forcing, in turn, the decomposition of the original liturgical unit, so that what we are left with is simply *débris*, bits and scraps of this and that, a verse here, a refrain there, that evince no recognizable form or unity until they are painstakingly reconstituted into their original structures by piecing together the remaining scraps, then filling in the blanks, sort of like doing a jig-saw puzzle with only a tenth of the pieces.²³ This is why the study of liturgical units and their mutual articulation within larger ritual structures is so crucial in the reconstruction of pristine liturgical forms,

c) The Trisagion

We see another example of this in our next piece, the Trisagion. Today it is chanted as follows:

Holy God, holy, mighty, holy, immortal, have mercy on us (*three times*).

¹⁸ M. ANDRIEU, *Les ordines romani du haut moyen âge, II: Les textes (Ordines I-XIII)* (Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, études et documents, fasc. 23) Louvain 1960, pp. 74ff; T. MATHEWS, "An Early Roman Chancel Arrangement and Its Liturgical Functions", in: *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* XXXVIII (1962) 73-95; G.G. WILLIS, "Roman Stational Liturgy", in: *Further Essays in Early Roman Liturgy* (Alcuin Club Collections no. 50) London 1968, 3-87; J. A. JUNGSMANN, *Missarum sollemnia*, vol. I, part i, no. 8 (English edition, vol. I, pp. 67ff).

¹⁹ See his *Vom geschichtlichen Werden der Liturgie* (Ecclesia orans 10) Freiburg B. 1923; and *Comparative Liturgy*, op. cit.

²⁰ MATEOS, *Typicon I*, op. cit., pp. 2-11; *Célébration*, op. cit., pp. 37ff.

²¹ See note 12 above.

²² "Das Gesetz der Erhaltung des Alien in liturgisch hochwertiger Zeit", in: *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft VII* (1927) 1-23, *Comparative Liturgy*, op. cit., pp. 26 ff.

²³ See TAFT, *Great Entrance*, op. cit., pp. 112 ff.

Glory be to the Father... now and always and unto ages of ages, amen.

Holy, immortal, have mercy on us.

Holy God, holy, mighty, holy, immortal, have mercy on us.

From what we know of the structure of Byzantine antiphonal psalmody, it seems that we have here the incipit and finale of an antiphonal psalm, i.e. the opening triple repetition of the complete refrain, then the concluding doxology, the ἄκροτελεύτιον [i.e., the fragment ‘Holy immortal, have mercy on us’], and final repetition of the refrain (*perisse*), with the intervening psalm verses suppressed.²⁴ Now we first hear of the Trisagion in the 5th century, when it was apparently used as a processional antiphon during stational services in Constantinople.²⁵ Early in the 6th century we see it at the beginning of mass. This chant, then, is the remains of the original, invariable introit antiphon of our mass, to which at a later date first one, then three variable antiphons were appended.

So at the beginning of the 5th century our liturgy opened with the entrance of the clergy and people into church without ceremony or, apparently, accompanying chant. By the 6th century this introit had been ritualized by the addition of an element from the stational processions, an antiphonal psalm with the Trisagion as its fixed refrain. About a century later, undoubtedly as a result of further developments in the stational rites, all but the refrain of this antiphon was suppressed in favor of a more recent stational antiphon that provided more variety for this rapidly expanding rite.

Why wasn't the original fixed refrain just suppressed, or retained as an occasional variant? Probably because of its immense popularity as testified to by the legends of its origins in divine revelation, because it had become a liturgical element common throughout the whole East, and because of the role it played in the Monophysite controversy.

d) The *ektene*

One further element that entered the liturgy from the stational services is the *ektene* or litany that immediately follows the gospel. It is sometimes referred to in modern versions as the “ecumenic” or “universal” prayer for all needs — i.e. the oratio fidelium of the Byzantine mass. It is no such thing, as should be obvious from its position before the dismissal of the catechumens. Common prayer with their participation was excluded, which is why they were first dismissed, and not because they mustn't receive communion, as is often thought. They were also dismissed at non-eucharistic services, where there was no risk of them going to communion. In our 10th century *typicon*

this *ektene* or penitential litany was chanted after the gospel in stational rogation services, and rubrics prescribe the same practice after the gospel of the Liturgy of the Word on certain days of the year.²⁶ This can be taken perhaps as a remnant of a previous stage of evolution when this litany was gradually gaining a foothold in the mass, where it appears for the first time in the 8th century codex Barberini 336.

Regressive Traits — The Pre-Anaphora

Meanwhile the regressive evolution whereby primitive elements were suppressed in favor of later additions is proceeding. By the 8th century the Old Testament reading,²⁷ the prayers over the penitents,²⁸ and elements of the psalmody have been suppressed,²⁹ and the prayer of blessing that concluded the Liturgy of the Word in the time of Chrysostom has been displaced.³⁰ By the 11th century the litany of the faithful has shifted forward.³¹

The disappearance from the Liturgy of the Word of its final blessing illustrates another common liturgical development in this period: the gradual blurring of the clear division between the Liturgies of Word and Eucharist. The present prayers of the faithful of the Liturgy of Basil are another example of this. They are really prayers of preparation for the eucharist, and certainly are not original to the Liturgy of the Word. In the same process, the kiss of peace, formerly the conclusion of the Word service,³² becomes detached from the concluding prayers of the synaxis and moved to before the anaphora by the addition of later ritual elements between the pax and the end of the Liturgy of the Word.

The Pre-anaphora

These later elements are the pre-anaphoral rites that now precede the eucharistic prayer.³³ They comprise:

The Cherubic Hymn

Prayer of the Cherubic Hymn (“No one is worthy...”)

²⁴ The *akroteleution* is the final clausula of the refrain, and was repeated after the verses of the psalm; the *perisse* (“appendix”) is the final repetition(s) of the refrain after the doxology that signals the end of the psalm. See MATEOS, *Célébration*, op. cit., pp. 16ff.

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 99-100, 112 ff.

²⁶ MATEOS, *Typicon* II, op. cit., index: «ἐκτενή μεγάλη» p. 293.

²⁷ MATEOS, *Célébration*, op. cit., p. 131.

²⁸ This prayer is testified to by John Chrysostom (cf. F. VAN DE PAVERD, *Zur Geschichte der Messliturgie in Antiochia und Konstantinopel gegen Ende des vierten Jahrhunderts. Analyse der Quellen bei Johannes Chrysostomos (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 187)* Rome 1970, pp. 45jff, 467) but there is no trace of it in our liturgical MSS from the 8th century on.

²⁹ E.g. at the Trisagion and prokeimenon (MATEOS, *Célébration*, op. cit., pp. 106ff, 133-4, as well as at the *koinonikon* (see below, p. 376-3 77).

³⁰ Chrysostom seems to indicate the presence of this prayer at the end of the 4th century (VAN DE PAVERD, *Messliturgie*, op. cit., pp. 464, 467) but it is not found in any Byzantine liturgical MSS.

³¹ See above, p. 362.

³² See TAFT, *Great Entrance*, op. cit., pp. 50-51, 375-78.

³³ On the history of these rites, see *ibid.*

Incensation
Transfer and deposition of gifts
Orate fratres dialogue
Litany and Prayer of the Proskomide
Kiss of Peace
Nicene Creed

The persistent attempt to interpret Eastern pre-anaphoral rites in Western terms of “offertory” have vitiated all understanding of what we are dealing with here. The primitive nucleus common to the Eastern and Western pre-anaphora was the simple, unritualized transfer of gifts to the altar by the deacons. In some Western liturgies this did evolve later into rites of offering. Attempts to read Eastern evidence in the same way have proved fruitless. My own analysis of the formulae of the pre-anaphora in the Eastern traditions has forced me to conclude that the “offertory” paradigm is not the model to be used in interpreting these rites. Ideas of offering do find expression, especially in later prayers but they are not the dominant theme. And in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom they find no place whatever in the primitive layer of the rite. In the earliest sources of this liturgy, we find only three elements:

- 1) the transfer, deposition, and covering of the gifts by the deacons
- 2) an oration said by the priest
- 3) the Cherubic Hymn sung by the people during the whole liturgical action.

It is probable that the deposition of gifts included an incensation of the altar, and that the prayer was preceded by a lavabo and by a brief dialogue between the presiding bishop and his concelebrating presbyters, similar to the Roman Orate fratres.

From this original simplicity the nature and scope of the Byzantine pre-anaphoral rites emerge. They form a twofold preparation for the anaphora:

- 1) the material preparation of altar and gifts
- 2) the spiritual preparation of the ministers by prayer, and of the people by a chant evoking the dispositions appropriate to the imminent eucharistic offering.

a) The Great-Entrance Procession

The material preparation of the gifts in the Byzantine tradition has become highly ritualized into the Great Entrance procession, in which today even the presbyters take part. But this must not be allowed to obscure its humble origins in the transfer of gifts by the deacons, originally a material act of no ritual import whatever. Formerly the Great Entrance was a true entrance into the church from outside, for the deacons had to fetch the gifts from the sacristy or *skeuophylakion*, which in Constantinople was not an auxiliary chamber inside the church, but a separate edifice like the baptistry and campanile

of so many Italian churches.³⁴ Hence, the Byzantine Liturgy of the Eucharist, like the Liturgy of the Word, once began with an introit into the church. In both cases the entrance later degenerated into a nonfunctional procession around the inside of the church that ends where it begins, in the sanctuary. Here we have a perfect example of rites which perdure, supported by newly acquired symbolic meanings, long after they have become detached from their original practical purpose.

b) Preparation of the Ministers

While the deacons were bringing in the gifts, the presiding minister washed his hands, requested the prayers of his fellow ministers, then together with them said the following Prayer of the Proskomide:

O Lord God almighty, who alone are holy, who alone accept the sacrifices of praise from those that call upon you with a whole heart, accept also the prayer of us sinners, and bring us to your holy altar, and enable us to present to you these gifts and spiritual sacrifices for our own sins and for the faults of the people, and make us worthy to find favor in your sight, so that our sacrifice may be acceptable to you and so that the good spirit of your grace may rest upon us and upon these present gifts and upon all your people.

The prayer asks for three things:

- 1) that the ministers be conducted to the altar,
- 2) that they be enabled to offer there the eucharist
- 3) that they be made worthy so that this offering will be acceptable, and the Spirit come.

It is not a prayer of offering but a prayer of preparation for the true offering, the anaphora. It is a prayer of *accessus ad altare* in which the ministers pray God to make them worthy of the ministry they are about to perform. It exists only in function of what is to follow, a pattern also seen in the two prayers of the faithful. In the first, the ministers pray for the grace to intercede for their people, i.e. for the grace to say the intercessory collect that immediately follows.

But since our pre-anaphoral oration is entitled “Prayer of the Offering” (Εὐχή τῆς Προσκομιδῆς) it is almost always misinterpreted and mistranslated understandably so. Actually, this is not the title of the prayer, but of the whole eucharistic rite of which this prayer was but the first formula, a fact that was later obscured by the addition of numerous other elements to the pre-anaphora before this title.³⁵

c) The Entrance Chant

While all this is going on, the people are chanting the Cherubicon,³⁶ a refrain that was added to the liturgy under Justin II in 573-4 A.D. Today this troparion stands alone, but from what we

³⁴ MATHEWS, *Early churches*, op. cit., pp. 13-18, 84-5, 87, 89, 58ff, 178.

³⁵ See TAFT, *Great Entrance*, op. cit., pp. 352-55.

³⁶ For a complete study of this chant see *ibid.* ch. 2.

know of the history of liturgical chant this cannot have been its original form. In the early centuries there was no such thing as a free-standing liturgical song, i.e. a non-scriptural composition sung independently. All early liturgical chant was psalmody, and ecclesiastical songs had no independent liturgical existence, but served only as refrains to be repeated after the verses of a psalm. And in fact the historical evidence seems to indicate that the Cherubicon was added to an earlier antiphonal psalm at the transfer of gifts, Psalm 23/4:7-10 with alleluia as refrain.

So the Byzantine liturgy had an introit antiphon not only with its first entrance, just like the Roman antiphona ad introitum; it also had one with its second entrance, like the Roman antiphona ad offertorium. The later degeneration of the psalmody has obscured its original form, but the parallel in both cases is exact.

The object of the chant, however, has often been viewed too narrowly, because the misinterpretation of one word has appeared to restrict its meaning to the entrance of the gifts. The chant reads as follows.

We who mystically represent the Cherubim and sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-giving Trinity, let us lay aside all worldly care to receive the King of All escorted unseen by the angelic hosts. Alleluia. . .

The phrase “to receive the King of All” is usually taken to mean “to welcome Christ entering now in the procession under the symbols of bread and wine”. But υποδέχομαι means *receive in communion*, as can be seen not only from Byzantine liturgical terminology but also in the Protheoria (1055-63), the earliest Byzantine commentary to interpret the phrase.³⁷ So the chant does not refer only to the procession, but is an introduction to the whole eucharistic action from anaphora to communion. It instructs the faithful that they who are about to sing the thrice-holy hymn of the Cherubim (the *Sanctus* of the anaphora) must lay aside all worldly care (*Sursum corda*) to prepare to receive Christ (in communion).

A study of numerous other Eastern Hymns for the transfer of gifts has confirmed this conclusion: they are not offertory chants, nor merely processional antiphons, but are introductions to the whole eucharistic service, and serve to instill in the faithful the sentiments appropriate to the action about to begin. Thus understood, the Great-Entrance chant assumes a broader, more balanced liturgical role, tempering the exaggerated symbolic importance assigned in the later medieval period to the Great-Entrance procession itself. At the entrance we indeed welcome the gifts, symbol of Christ— but only with a view to their consecration and reception in communion.

³⁷ The passage from the Protheoria is in PG 140, 441. The whole question is discussed in TAFT, *Great Entrance*, op. cit., pp. 62-68.

d) Creed and Pax³⁸

I do not intend to trace the origins of the numerous other, lesser formulae that have been added to the pre-anaphora since the middle ages, but two older elements must be mentioned. The first, the creed, stands somewhat outside the scope of these rites. It was added during the Monophysite crisis in the 6th century, and drew with it some lesser formulae that have obscured the second rite, the kiss of peace. This fraternal greeting, an original member of the primitive shape, has since the 11th century been exchanged only by the clergy. As we mentioned previously, its original purpose was to conclude the service of the Word.

Communion Rites

The third “soft point” of the eucharistic rite includes the rites and prayers that follow the consecration of the gifts:

Litany and prayer

Our Father

Prayer of Inclination

Prayer of Elevation

Elevation: “Holy things for the holy”.

Chant: “One is holy. . .”

Κοινωνικόν (*communio*)

Manual acts (fraction, etc.)

Communion

Blessing with gifts: “O God, save your people and bless your inheritance”.

Chant: “We have seen the true light...”

Gifts returned to altar, incensed.

“Always, now and forever, and unto ages of ages”.

Chant: “Amen. May our lips be filled. . .”

Gifts returned to altar of preparation.

Litany and Prayer of Thanksgiving.

It may seem strange to skip over what is clearly the most important prayer of the whole rite, the eucharistic prayer itself, but the anaphora has undergone little ritual evolution, and the textual modifications it exhibits would require a close philological and literary analysis of the Greek text that is hardly feasible here. So I shall pass directly to the communion rites after mentioning that the anaphora of Chrysostom shows clear signs of reworking in several places. The mere fact that there is no command to repeat (“Do this in memory of me”), and that

³⁸ Cf. TAFT, *Great Entrance*, op. cit., ch. II.

the commemoration of the dead precedes that of the living,³⁹ is extraordinary and most problematic.

a) The Litany and Prayer before Communion

After the doxology that concludes the anaphora, there is a long litany comprising two distinct sets of petitions. A similar litany is found with the Prayer of the Proskomide, just before the anaphora. A textual comparison of this litany with the parallel litanies in the Liturgy of James and the Armenian liturgy shows, I believe, that the second series of petitions, the so-called ἀιτήσεις (“demands”) in Byzantine terminology, is a later addition, from the Divine Office.⁴⁰

I have not yet made up my mind as to which of the two prayers that now come before and after the Our Father is older, but it is most probable that only one of them is original at this point of the liturgy, which once followed the structure seen in the Apostolic Constitutions (VIII, 13, -3-14; ed. FUNK, I pp. 514-16): anaphora, litany, prayer, “Holy things for the holy”. So from comparative liturgy we can say that the Our Father and one of the prayers are later additions, dating from the end of the 4th century.⁴¹ And we know that the Elevation Prayer just before the fraction, which is common to the liturgies of both Chrysostom and Basil, was added much later.⁴²

b) The Communion Antiphon

More problematic are the three chants that now accompany communion. At present they are a complete structural mess,

³⁹ See the work of the student G. WINKLER, “Die Interzessionen der Chrysostomusanaphora in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung”, in: *OCF*, XXXVI (1970) pp. 302-3; “Einige Randbemerkungen zu den Interzessionen in Antiochien und Konstantinopel im 4. Jahrhundert”, in: *Ostkirchliche Studien*, XX (1971) 55-61.

⁴⁰ For the arguments, see TAFT, *Great Entrance*, op. cit., ch. 9.

⁴¹ The Our Father is not found in the eucharist of the earlier documents such as the Apostolic Constitutions (VIII, 13, ed. Funk I, pp. 514-16) or the homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia (Horn. 16, 21-22, ed. TONNEAU-DEVRESSE, *Studi e Testi* 145, pp. 563-5). Our first positive evidence of it seems to be Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 348), *Myst. Cat.* 5, 18. Somewhat later Augustine says that “Almost the whole church now concludes” the eucharistic prayer with the Lord’s Prayer (Ep. 149, 16, CSEL 44, p. 362). Chrysostom witnesses to it in the eucharist at Constantinople at the beginning of the 5th century (*De capto Eutropio* 5, PG 52, 396; cf. VAN DE PAVERD, *Messliturgie*, op. cit., pp. 526-7). For the prayer after the Our Father in the Liturgy of Chrysostom, see MATEOS, *Célébration*, op. cit., pp. 60, 169ff, 180-1. Mateos thinks that this Prayer of Inclination was originally the final prayer of the faithful. Against him one could argue that the prayer is similar to the parallel one in the Apostolic Constitutions VIII, 13, 10 (PUNK I, p. 516); that it— or a similar prayer— is witnessed to for the Constantinopolitan eucharist by Chrysostom (cf. VAN DE PAVERD, *Messliturgie*, op. cit., pp. 527-8); and that a parallel formula is mentioned by Theodore of Mopsuestia (Horn. 16, 22, éd. TONNEAU-DEVRESSE, *Studi e Testi* 145, p. 565). So the weight of comparative liturgy would seem to favor this prayer as the original one between the anaphora and communion.

⁴² Cf. JACOB, *Histoire du formulaire grec*, cit., pp. 60-1 and part I passim.

which of course betrays their youth: primitive liturgy was tidy if nothing else. Let us see if we can reconstruct their original shape. We know that most rites had antiphonal psalmody at the three “soft points” of the service, the introit, the offertory or pre-anaphora, and the communion.⁴³ Now we have already established that the Byzantine Eucharist once had an antiphonal psalm at the lesser and probably also at the major introit, so our strong presumption should be in favor of the same at communion. And in fact we have concrete evidence of just such a chant. According to the *Chronicon paschale* for the year 624, in that year under Patriarch Sergius I of Constantinople (610-38) a refrain was added to the *koinonikon*. Now today the term *koinonikon* or *communio* refers to a single psalm verse with triple alleluia sung right after the response to the exclamation “Holy things for the holy”, before the fraction. From the *Chronicle* however, it is evident that in those days the *koinonikon* included more than one verse of a psalm. The text reads as follows:

In this year [624] in the month of Artemesius— May according to the Romans— on the 12th indiction, under Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople, it was then first introduced that after all have received the Holy Mysteries, when the clergy are about to return to the skeuophylakion the precious ripidia, patens and chalices, and other sacred vessels; and after giving communion from the side tables everything is brought back to the holy altar; and finally, after chanting the final verse of the *koinonikon*; this troparion is sung: “May our lips be filled with your praise, O Lord....”⁴⁴

From this it is clear that:

- 1) the *koinonikon* was not just one psalm verse with alleluia as refrain, but an entire psalm;
- 2) so the single verse given in the books today is just an incipit indicating to the soloist the psalm to be chanted;
- 3) the refrain “May our lips be filled with your praise...” was added as a variant *périsse* or concluding refrain to be chanted after the doxology of the antiphonal psalm;
- 4) the phrase “Always, now and forever, and unto ages of ages, amen” that the priest now sings to introduce this refrain is simply the remains of that same doxology.

And in fact a study of the manuscript tradition reveals that all of the intervening material we find today between the communion verse and the remains of the doxology is a later addition not found in any early source. So what we have again, is the *débris* of what was once an antiphon— its beginning and end, with a lot of later free-floating bits and pieces added after the original unit had come unstuck in the degenerative process already observed with regard to the original antiphonal psalmody at the Little and Great Entrances. Any time such

⁴³ Cf. TAFT, *Great Entrance*, op. cit., pp. 83-4.

⁴⁴ PG 92, 1001.

scraps of verse and chant pop up in liturgy, they are either the debris of a degenerated liturgical unit, or detached elements added in the later period when folks had forgotten what psalmody was all about.

The Prayer of Thanksgiving after communion is parallel to the postcommunio of the Roman mass. The accompanying litany, like similar developments elsewhere in the Byzantine and other traditions, is just an expanded oramus.

So one sees at communion a repetition of the same basic structure that emerged in the analysis of the other two “action points” of the liturgy, the two entrances: the structure comprises a ritual action, covered by an antiphonal chant, and concluded by a collect— just, as in the Roman rite. This illustrates once again, I believe, the usefulness of a structural approach in isolating the original shape and scope of our by now rather cluttered liturgical rites.

The Dismissal

The conclusion of the liturgy is clear enough. It goes as follows:

“Let us depart in peace”.

“In the name of the Lord”.

Prayer Behind the Ambo

Ps. 112:2 (“Blessed be the name of the Lord...”) thrice.

Prayer in the Skeuophylakion

Blessing

Apolysis

The original final blessing prayer, the so-called “Prayer behind the Ambo” (ὀπισθὰμβωνος), was probably said from the great

ambo in the center of the nave as the clergy processed down the solea or processional path on their way out of the church to the skeuophylakion at the end of the service. One more prayer, the “Prayer in the Skeuophylakion”, was said in the skeuophylakion at the consummation of the left-over gifts, thus rounding off the liturgy just as it began, with a prayer over the gifts in the sacristy.

What follows this prayer in today’s rite is the traditional ending of the Byzantine monastic office, which was added to the mass as a second conclusion, in the middle ages, because of a more recent tendency in Byzantine liturgical development to shape all the services so that their beginning and end look more or less alike. The Romans are doing somewhat the same thing today. The only difference is that they have chosen as their model the Liturgy of the Word, whereas the Byzantines, under monastic influence, opted for the Palestinian monastic office that came to hold sway throughout the Byzantine East after the fall of Constantinople to the Latins in the Fourth Crusade (1204).

By way of conclusion, let me anticipate a typical question: “We have been observing the evolution of the most complex ritual in Christendom. Who legislated it all?” The answer, of course, is no one. The Eastern solution to the Western dilemma of rubricism or anarchy is not canon law, nor the liturgical commission, nor the Congregation of Rites, but the supple continuity of a living tradition. There may be a message here for us all.