

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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THE ORTHODOX TURGY

*Development of the Eucharistic
turgy in the Byzantine Rite*



HUGH WYBREW

Foreword

What is the Church here for? What is the distinctive and unique function of the Church, that which the Church does, and which nobody and nothing else can do? Surely the least incomplete answer is to say: the Church is here to celebrate the Eucharist. The Church is a eucharistic organism, which becomes truly itself when offering the Divine Liturgy.

It is this central action of ecclesial life that the Dean of the Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem describes in this present book. In a simple and readable manner, he traces step by step the historical development of the eucharistic Liturgy in the Christian East, conveying vividly a sense of what it felt like to worship during each period from apostolic times up to our own day. This is a study based on wide and careful reading, but the results are presented in a manner readily intelligible to the non-specialist. Hugh Wybrew not only describes the words and ritual actions used in the service, but also considers the outer architectural setting with its iconography, as well as the inner symbolism and theology.

The Byzantines spoke of the Church at worship as 'an earthly heaven, in which the heavenly God lives and moves'; and it was precisely this vision of 'heaven on earth' that converted the Russian people to Christianity a thousand years ago. The author conveys with skill the dynamic meaning of the Eucharist for Orthodox Christendom, Greek, Romanian and Slav. Underlying all that he writes there is a deep love for the Liturgy, which he knows well from personal experience. We have long needed such an introduction, clear yet detailed, sympathetic yet not uncritical. This book will be of great value to Christians whether Western or Eastern.

Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia

Preface

The Orthodox Liturgy became a formative part of my Christian experience when I was a student at the Orthodox Theological Institute of St Sergius in Paris. Subsequently I worshipped regularly with the Russian Orthodox parish in Oxford. For two years, when I was chaplain at the Church of the Resurrection, Bucharest, I often attended Romanian Orthodox services, and was able to share in Bulgarian and Serbian Orthodox worship on my pastoral visits to Sofia and Belgrade. I have come to be as much at home at the Liturgy as at an Anglican or Roman Catholic Eucharist – sometimes, in fact, more so. I am grateful to all the Orthodox communities with whom I have worshipped for all I have learnt from them.

For a long time I had wanted to know how the Liturgy came to be what it is: for having read theology at Oxford I had been trained to enquire into the development of the Christian tradition and the factors influencing its growth. That is an approach more characteristic of Western Christianity than of Orthodoxy, and I hope my Orthodox friends will forgive me for attempting to trace the evolution of an act of worship which they are happy to accept for what it is. My intention is to help others to understand better the central act of worship of a Church which I believe has an important contribution to make to the Christian Church as a whole.

I have written the kind of book I should like to have read when I first began to study the Liturgy. It is not at all intended for the expert in either the history of Christian worship or the Orthodox Christian tradition. It is meant for those who have had some experience of the Liturgy, and are curious about its shape and content. It attempts to sketch the history of the Liturgy by describing, at each stage of its development for which there is evidence, what it was like to take part in the Eucharist in the Orthodox East.

Liturgical worship is far more than the use of a form of service. The context in which words of the rite are used is at least as important as the text itself. That context includes the building in which the service takes place, its furniture and decoration; the

The Orthodox Liturgy

ceremonial, or way in which the service is performed; the music to which it is sung; and the understanding of what is done, implicit or explicit in the minds of the worshippers. I have tried to paint a broad picture of each stage of the Liturgy's development including all these aspects. Many details are inevitably missing. They can be pursued in the books to which I owe all that I know, and from which I have drawn the material from which the picture has been built up. They are listed in the bibliography, and I acknowledge gratefully my debt to their authors.

I am grateful to Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia for contributing a Foreword and for suggesting a number of improvements to the text. I am particularly grateful to Père Michel van Parys and the Benedictine community at Chevetogne in Belgium, who welcomed me so warmly for three and a half months of sabbatical leave from my parish in Pinner, Middlesex, in 1981. I completed my draft there in an ideal setting combining the resources of Benedictine scholarship with Orthodox worship in their Byzantine church. I must also thank my volunteer secretary in Jerusalem, Mrs Molly Speirs, who patiently and efficiently typed out the text.

The book is dedicated to the late Anne Pennington of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, a devoted friend of the Orthodox Church as well as a devout Anglican. Her encouragement prompted its beginnings and inspired its completion.

Hugh Wybrew
Jerusalem, February 1988

1 Western Eucharist and Orthodox Liturgy

The Eucharist is celebrated in the Western Churches in a wide variety of ways. Each Christian tradition, Roman Catholic, Anglican or Protestant, has its own distinctive ethos; and within each Church there is a great diversity of style. But a Western Christian familiar with the Eucharist in his own Church will not feel too far from home attending a celebration in another tradition. The movement for liturgical renewal which has led to the revision of forms of eucharistic worship in the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches and in many of the Protestant Churches has resulted in a remarkable convergence both of forms of service and of manner of celebration. Many differences of detail remain. But all traditions have been influenced by the study of the worship of the Church in the earliest centuries of its life, even if, in all the Churches, some congregations have embraced new forms and new ways with greater enthusiasm than others.

The Western Christian is used to a form of service whose structure is simple and clear. A brief introductory section, often penitential in character, precedes the Ministry of the Word, in which scripture readings and psalms proclaim the Christian gospel. They are more often than not expounded in a homily or sermon. At least on Sundays the Nicene Creed is recited. Then the congregation intercedes for the Church and for the world. The Lord's command to 'do this in remembrance of me' is obeyed in the Ministry of the Sacrament. Bread and wine are brought to the altar and set upon it, and the prayer of thanksgiving, the eucharistic prayer, is recited over them. The Lord's Prayer is said, and nearly all present receive the consecrated bread and wine in Holy Communion. The service ends with a brief conclusion and a dismissal. It is a short service, lasting only about one hour, even when celebrated solemnly with music and singing.

But simplicity rather than solemnity is more often than not the keynote of the modern Western Eucharist. Ceremonial is usually the minimum necessary for the performance of the

service. Unnecessary movement or gesture is discouraged, lest the essential structure and movement of the service be obscured. The setting of the service, too, is usually simple. Modern church buildings tend to be simple in their design and restrained in their decoration. It is emphasized that the building is only the place where the living church assembles, and where indeed it may well gather for purposes other than worship. The altar is designed to recall a table, where the Lord's disciples continue to celebrate the meal once eaten by Jesus and the twelve. As a focus of the celebration it must share its prominence with the lectern, from which the Church is nourished by God's Word in Scripture as in sacrament. The use of special vestments is often restricted to the chief celebrant, while readers and others who may be closely involved in the service wear ordinary clothes. Even the priest or minister may on occasion be scarcely distinguishable in dress from the rest of the congregation. In consequence of this fashionable preference for simplicity, it is sometimes hard to distinguish a Roman Catholic celebration from an Anglican or a Protestant.

The active participation of the whole church is a still more prominent characteristic of the modern Western Eucharist. Worshippers are encouraged to join fully in a service which deliberately includes congregational responses to help them to do so. The language of modern rites is simple and straightforward, to satisfy the desire for immediate intelligibility. Members of the congregation are often responsible for the readings and the intercessions, and assist with the distribution of Communion. New churches are designed, and older ones adapted, to associate the people as closely as possible with the altar and those serving at it. The Eucharist must be visible as well as audible, for, even if some distinction still remains between priest and people, it is the whole church which is the active celebrant of the service. Particular importance is attached to participation in the heart of the service, the sharing of the consecrated bread and wine. At a Roman Catholic Eucharist, quite as much as at an Anglican or Protestant celebration, all those present are normally expected to receive holy communion. Participation in the sacrament is not only an integral part of the Eucharist: it is its climax.

Western worshippers accustomed to this form and style of eucharistic worship enter a different world when they go into an Orthodox church to attend a celebration of the Divine Liturgy. They first enter a building whose shape and decoration are not only governed by a tradition going back many centuries, but are

considered to have a significance of their own, apart from the rite they have been elaborated to house. Passing through an inner porch, or narthex, they find themselves in a nave, square rather than oblong, devoid of all but a few chairs for the elderly or weak. They look up into a central dome, from whose summit an image of Christ the Almighty looks down majestically on the worshippers below. Round the drum supporting the dome there are prophets and apostles, and a procession of angelic deacons, while on the vaults surrounding the dome, and on the upper portions of the nave walls, are depicted cherubim and seraphim, the four evangelists, and scenes from the life of Christ. Particularly prominent may be those commemorated in the Church's calendar. Lower down are representations of monks and ascetics, martyrs and warriors, bishops and teachers, who enfold the congregation within a pictorial communion of saints.

Behind, on the west wall of the nave, is depicted the Dormition of the Virgin Mary; while to the east rises a screen covered with icons, separating the sanctuary from the nave. It may be comparatively low, or it may reach as high as the roof itself. Pierced by double doors in the centre and single doors to north and south, the icon-screen, in its taller form, largely reproduces the themes of the fresco or mosaic decoration of the nave. To the right of the central, or royal, doors is the image of Christ the Almighty, to the left that of the Mother of God with the Christ-child. On the royal doors themselves is the representation of the Annunciation, while the doors to north and south are adorned with the archangels Michael and Gabriel, or with holy deacons. Immediately above the royal doors there is a representation of the Last Supper. In the second rank of images are the saving events in the life of Christ, commemorated in the great festivals of the Church's year. Above them, in the third rank, are the apostles, turning in an attitude of supplication to an enthroned figure of Christ in the centre, on either side his Mother and St John the Baptist as chief intercessors for mankind. If there is a fourth rank, it contains the prophets, on either side of a Virgin and Child, while the whole screen is surmounted by a cross, bearing a painted image of the crucified Lord – for there are no three-dimensional figures in the church – flanked by the Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist.

When the royal doors are opened, worshippers see in the middle of the sanctuary, arranged normally within a semi-circular apse, the square altar, richly covered, on which stand a cross, candlesticks, and an ark, often shaped like a church, in

which is kept consecrated bread from the Eucharist. They may catch a glimpse of the decoration of the apse. Nearest the ground two rows of bishops, vested for the Liturgy, turn towards the altar. Above them Christ stands at an altar, giving Communion to the apostles, on one side from the consecrated bread, on the other from the chalice. From the semi-dome of the apse, perhaps visible above the icon-screen, the Mother of God looks out above the altar into the nave. But worshippers will almost certainly not see the altar of the prothesis, at which the eucharistic bread and wine are prepared, and to which the north door in the icon-screen gives access; nor will they be able to see its decoration, in which scenes of the birth of Christ may find a place alongside those of his death and burial. Nor can they see into the south apse, which serves as a sacristy and vestry.

So different is the typical Orthodox church, with its many oil lamps and votive candles, and pervasive odour of incense, from the surroundings in which Western worshippers usually pray that they may be less surprised to learn that Orthodox Christians are accustomed to regard the church building itself as a sacrament. Far more than a utilitarian shelter for the congregation, it is an image of heaven on earth. For while the lower portion of the nave signifies the visible world, the dome, and still more the sanctuary, are images of heaven, where the triune God is worshipped by angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven. There Christ offers himself to the Father in an eternal sacrifice of love and self-giving; and into that sacrifice the worshipper is drawn by participating in the Liturgy which celebrates in spiritual reality what the church building proclaims in sacramental image.

Awesome as Western Christians find an Orthodox church, they notice that Orthodox Christians feel more at home in it than they themselves do in their far simpler setting. As the Orthodox come in, they go round the church, and kiss icons, putting lighted candles before them and praying. They may take a small round loaf, called a *prospophora*, or offering, to the north door in the icon-screen, and hand it in, with a list of names of living and dead, to the deacon or server. There is an atmosphere at once of reverence and of informality, the latter greatly helped by the absence in all save some Greek churches of fixed pews or ordered rows of chairs, such as is rarely found in Western churches, where either the one or the other is normal.

Yet the Divine Liturgy, once it begins, unfolds with a degree of

hieratic formality now decreasingly favoured in Western Churches: and does so often with little apparent contribution to its progress from the congregation. Indeed, the first part of the service has been going on for some time before those in the nave become aware that the public Liturgy is about to begin. For perhaps an hour the priest has been performing at the side altar the rite of the prothesis or proskomidia, the preliminary preparation of the eucharistic bread and wine, for which no modern Western rite has any equivalent. But even when the public Liturgy begins, it is performed largely or entirely by the clergy and the singers: for every Liturgy is fully sung, the Western distinction between said and sung celebrations being unknown in the Orthodox Church. Little in Orthodox worship astonishes Western Christians more than the relative silence of the Orthodox congregation. They have been brought up to think that participation in worship means joining in the singing and saying of hymns and prayers. While in some Orthodox churches in recent years the people have come to sing some parts of the service, in others it is still sung by choir or chanters alone.

At the Liturgy, therefore, Western Christians must learn other ways of taking part in the service. It is impossible to attend the Liturgy with the traditional Western 'eyes closed'. Standing throughout the service, except perhaps to kneel at one or two moments, worshippers pray with their eyes: for every movement of the service has its meaning. They pray, too, with their minds, as they follow the chants and the readings. To the prayer of eye and mind they can add the prayer of the body. They may make the sign of the cross frequently, to associate themselves with the progress and the content of the service, and they may bow, with a gentle inclination or a full prostration, as custom indicates. Incense draws their sense of smell into worship, while music touches their emotions. But Western worshippers will not have learnt to participate in these ways before they receive their greatest shock: few, if any, of the congregation respond to the invitation to Communion. What is for them the normal climax of the service may be almost totally missing. Instead, at the very end of the service, they find themselves welcome to join with everyone else in receiving a piece of blessed bread whose name, the antidoron, shows it to be a substitute for the sacrament itself.

If Western Christians have to learn new ways of participating in the service when they attend the Liturgy, they have also to find their way through an order of service which differs significantly

from their own. The Liturgy, leaving aside the proskomidia, falls into two parts, the Liturgy of the Catechumens and the Liturgy of the Faithful. They correspond in general with the Ministry of the Word and the Ministry of the Sacrament into which all modern Western eucharistic rites are divided. But although the basic structure of all eucharistic rites is the same in East and West alike, important differences have appeared in the course of their development.

Western worshippers are used to a brief introduction to the main part of the Ministry of the Word. They may be invited to prepare for the celebration by confessing their sins. Having been absolved, they sing the Kyries or the ancient hymn 'Glory be to God on high', or both. A single prayer, or collect, concludes the introduction and introduces the readings. The Liturgy, by contrast, begins with a lengthy sequence of three litanies, one long and two short, each followed by an antiphon composed of a psalm or other chant. The only point of resemblance here with Western rites is the response 'Kyrie eleison' in the litanies, from which in fact the Western Kyries originally derived. After the third antiphon, often the Beatitudes, the clergy emerge from the north door in the icon-screen, bearing the Gospel-book, and, coming into the nave, return into the sanctuary through the royal doors. There follow three kinds of chant: an invitatory, based on the first verse of the Venite, Psalm 95; short hymns prescribed for the day, called troparia and kontakia; and the Trisagion, 'Holy God, holy and strong, holy immortal, have mercy upon us', which Western Christians may have heard sung in their own rite at the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday. The invitatory bears some family likeness to the psalm verse used as an entrance antiphon or introductory sentence in Western rites: the variable short hymns, though different in form and origin, serve a purpose now not totally dissimilar from that of Western collects. But to the Little Entrance, as the procession of clergy is called, the Western Eucharist contains no obvious parallel.

Not until the Scriptures are read do Western Christians feel themselves on familiar ground. Since the reforms of recent years they are used to three readings: from the Old Testament, the Acts or Epistles, and the Gospels. Between the readings they expect portions of a psalm or a hymn. In the Liturgy they find two readings only, the first always from the New Testament Acts or Epistles, the second from the Gospels. Both are chanted rather than read. Between them psalm verses are sung, with Alleluia as a

refrain. They may notice that a few verses of a psalm are sung before the first reading, and wonder whether there was ever an Old Testament reading in the Liturgy. The readings are unlikely to be followed by a homily or sermon. Western worshippers are surprised, and may be relieved, to discover that there is no provision for a sermon to be preached at the Liturgy, though one may be given, most probably at the end of the service, or even, when there are many clergy, during their Communion.

Western visitors now begin to be a little lost. They are not surprised when the Gospel is followed by an intercession in the form of a litany. They are used to the intercession, or prayer of the faithful, coming after the scripture readings and sermon; though they may wonder why the Creed is not recited first, as the congregation's response of faith to the proclamation of God's Word. But they are puzzled when the catechumens are then solemnly dismissed, and no one leaves; and when the faithful are urged to renewed intercession, and given no opportunity to pray. Nothing in their own experience points them to a familiar landmark here. Nor does Western practice provide a reliable guide when, preceded by the first part of the Cherubic Hymn, the bread and wine prepared during the Proskomidia are brought in solemn procession by the clergy out of the north door in the icon-screen, and through the nave into the sanctuary. They may be used to an offertory procession, in which the bread and wine for the Eucharist, and the financial contributions of the people, are brought from the back of the church to the priest at the altar by representatives of the congregation. But in the Great Entrance it is the clergy themselves who bring the elements from one part of the sanctuary to another, and the bread and wine are accorded a reverence which Western worshippers associate only with the consecrated sacrament.

For as the procession appears the people cross themselves and bow, and many may kneel or prostrate themselves as the richly veiled chalice and paten are carried past. In some places they may lay young children in the path of the priest who carries the vessels, so that he steps over them on his way. Meanwhile, the clergy commemorate their church leaders, the rulers of the country, perhaps the sick and those in special need, and the departed, and finally the congregation and all Orthodox believers. Blessing the people with the elements, they take them into the sanctuary through the royal doors and place them on the altar. This, the moment of greatest ceremonial splendour in the

Orthodox Liturgy, is, like the Little Entrance, without parallel in the Western Eucharist.

Unlike the Western offertory procession, the Great Entrance does not immediately precede the eucharistic prayer. It is followed by another litany, and then by the kiss of peace. No sign of peace is given between clergy and people, or among the people, though one is exchanged among the clergy. This might be felt as a lack by Western worshippers, who would in any case be used to the kiss of peace elsewhere: if Anglicans before the offertory and consecration, if Roman Catholics after consecration and before Communion. In the Liturgy it precedes the recitation of the Creed, which serves as the immediate preparation of the eucharistic prayer.

This prayer, called the anaphora, or prayer of offering, is introduced by a dialogue similar to the Western introduction, except that its first greeting is the Grace. Its final response, 'It is meet and right', is lengthier than its Western counterpart. To the surprise of Western Christians, the choir has no sooner sung it than it begins the Sanctus. The first part of the anaphora has been said inaudibly by the priest behind the closed doors of the icon-screen, and he has raised his voice only to give the cue for the Sanctus. The rest of the prayer is said in the same way, punctuated by occasional phrases chanted out loud, to which the choir's response covers the next section of the silent prayer. The only words of significance which the congregation hears are the Lord's words relating to the bread and the cup. Only Roman Catholics who remember the old way of celebrating Mass will recall that until the reforms instituted by the Second Vatican Council the Canon of the Mass was similarly recited *sotto voce* by the priest, while at a Sung Mass the choir performed an elaborate setting of the Sanctus and Benedictus. But to modern Western Christians brought up to regard the eucharistic prayer as the most important part of the service, with which they should fully associate themselves in heart and mind, it is astonishing that it should be said as inaudibly as the priest saying it is invisible. There are places where this traditional practice has been modified in recent years: in some churches the royal doors are left open throughout the Liturgy, and in some part at least of the anaphora is said audibly.

The anaphora is followed by a litany, which first commends the gifts of bread and wine to God, and then repeats the petitions of the litany chanted after the Great Entrance. Then the Lord's

Prayer is sung. The proclamation, 'Holy things for holy people', and its response will be familiar to at least some Anglicans. After the Communion of the clergy, the people are invited to receive. The priest first recites on behalf of any intending communicants a prayer which professes faith, confesses sin, and asks for the fruits of Communion. He gives Communion in both kinds at once by means of a spoon. Western worshippers may be surprised to see babes in arms receiving the sacrament in this way too. Communion over, brief hymns and prayers of praise and thanksgiving bring the Liturgy to its conclusion. The people are blessed, and go up to the priest to kiss the cross used in blessing, and receive the antidoron.

Western worshippers attending the Liturgy for the first time are struck by the many differences, of structure as well as of detail, between the Orthodox service and their own. If they study a complete text of the Liturgy, and enquire how the Orthodox themselves understand the service, two general features will be impressed upon them which are new in their experience of Christian worship.

The first is the way in which, in practice, the Liturgy appears to be two services conducted simultaneously. The one is performed within the sanctuary by the clergy, and is largely both invisible and inaudible to the people in the nave. It consists of the whole of the *proskomidia*; the prayers accompanying the litanies; a number of other prayers, of which some are the private devotions of the clergy, while others contribute to the shape of the rite itself; and, above all, the *anaphora*, the most important prayer of the whole service. The other is both audible and visible to the congregation, and is conducted mainly by the deacon, standing in front of the royal doors. It consists of the antiphons and litanies; hymns and chants; readings; the processions of the Little and Great Entrances; the Creed; responses, especially in the *anaphora*; the Lord's Prayer and Communion; and the final prayers and distribution of the antidoron. The two coincide at some points, such as the readings, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, and are interlocked at others: verbally, by the frequent greetings given by the priest from within the sanctuary and by the doxologies chanted out loud at the end of prayers recited inaudibly; visually, by the processions, and frequent appearances of the clergy at the royal doors. Nevertheless, the people in the nave appear, from a Western point of view, to be only passive attendants at the central portion of the service, which takes place

behind the icon-screen, while their attention is occupied by secondary chants. The Western Christian cannot help feeling that, while the Liturgy may be celebrated for the people, it is not celebrated by them.

The second characteristic feature of the Liturgy is the way in which nearly all its actions are understood to have a symbolic meaning. This can be seen from the text of the Liturgy itself most clearly in the proskomidia. The bread and wine have to be made ready. But they are prepared in such a way that by what is done and said the incarnation and the passion of Christ are represented. It is less evident in the text of the main part of the service. But when the bread and wine are put on the altar at the end of the Great Entrance, the priest recites some of the hymns of Good Friday and Holy Saturday; and after the clergy have received Communion, they say some of the hymns of Easter Day. Christ's burial is symbolized by the deposition of the gifts on the altar, and his resurrection has been represented by the time of Communion.

If Western Christians enquire further, they learn that these are only the chief moments in an interpretation of the Liturgy which relates every part of it to the earthly life and ministry of Jesus, and which extends its symbolism to the church building and its furniture. The proskomidia represents the incarnation and birth of Christ, and also – because he was born in order to die – his passion and death. The prothesis where it is performed stands for Bethlehem and Nazareth, and also Golgotha. The antiphons at the beginning of the Liturgy represent the time of his hidden life on earth, when he was known only through prophecy. He enters on his public ministry at the Little Entrance, when the Gospel-book symbolizes Christ's first appearance. The Epistle represents the preaching of the apostles, the Gospel that of Christ himself. The Great Entrance symbolizes his last journey to Jerusalem to suffer and die, while the placing of the gifts on the altar represents his burial by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. The altar is the tomb, the veils over the chalice and paten represent the grave-clothes. The resurrection is symbolized when, after the anaphora, a portion of the consecrated bread is put into the chalice; and when, after Communion, the vessels are removed from the altar and taken to the prothesis, the ascension is represented.

So the whole life of Christ is set before the people every time the Liturgy is celebrated: and if few participate in the service sacramentally, all can do so by contemplating the saving mystery

of the incarnation, passion, and glorification of the Lord. Such an understanding of the service seems strange to modern Western Christians, taught to regard sacramental participation in the Eucharist as alone normal. Older Roman Catholics will recall that, before frequent Communion became the rule, they were taught to meditate at Mass on the passion of Christ, every detail of which was symbolized in the movements and prayers of the service. This tradition, which with characteristic variants was common to East and West alike, has died out in the Roman Catholic Church since sacramental participation has been generally restored. It survives in Orthodox interpretations of the Liturgy, at which Communion is still in general rare.

For Western Christians the Liturgy offers an experience of eucharistic worship of a kind which they cannot find in their own tradition, and which for many of them has a profound appeal. Their own rites have been renewed in accordance with what modern scholarship assures them was the practice of the early Church. The Liturgy appears to embody principles widely at variance with those they have come to regard as fundamental in worship: and yet for many of them it provides an experience which is deeply worshipful. Familiarity with the Liturgy provokes at least two questions for the Western Christian: How did a rite which claims to go back to the early Church come to assume a form so different from what we know of early Christian worship? and, Might the Western Churches have something to learn from the eucharistic worship of Orthodoxy? The rest of this book will be largely occupied with answering the first question, but will also suggest some answers to the second.

2 *The Sources of the Tradition*

The First Century

The Origins of the Eucharist

Writing to the Christians at Corinth in AD 52, St Paul claimed to have received from the Lord the tradition 'that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."' In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me"' (1 Cor. 11.23-5).

At the Last Supper, celebrated at the season of Passover, Jesus performed an act of prophetic symbolism. Using the basic elements of human diet he enacted in advance his death on the cross. In so doing he both accepted it and interpreted it. His death was to be an act of willing self-offering to God, and by it a new relationship was to be inaugurated between God and his people. By giving his disciples a share in the bread and the cup, Jesus was giving them a share in all that his death would achieve. From that meal comes the Christian Eucharist. Obedient to the command of Jesus, the Church has 'done this' in order to recall Jesus and proclaim his death until he comes.

For the first few decades of the Church's life, Christians continued to frequent both temple and synagogue. But they also met for their distinctive community act, the Eucharist, which to begin with seems to have taken the same form as the Last Supper: a full, formal Jewish meal. It was clearly so at Corinth when Paul wrote his first letter to the church there. The congregation gathered in the dining-room of one of its members on Saturday evening, the beginning of the first day of the week. It was probably crowded: not everyone could recline at table. Some might have been obliged to sit on the window-sill, like the unfortunate young man at Troas who, having fallen asleep during Paul's lengthy sermon, fell to the ground from the third storey

(Acts 20.9). There were many lights to make the room bright. Everyone had brought their contribution to the common meal. It was not always a seemly performance, as Paul's rebuke to the Corinthians makes clear. Some ate and drank only too well, failing to discern the Lord's Body: by which Paul probably means the presence of the Lord both in the sacrament and in the community, whose poorer members had less than a fair share of the food and drink. 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the same loaf' (1 Cor. 10.16-17).

It seems that it was not long after this time that the remembrance of Jesus was separated from the common meal. Perhaps it was to avoid such scandals as Paul had had to rebuke: perhaps it was a matter of sheer practical necessity as the infant churches grew, and a full meal became impracticable. By the end of the first century the remembrance of Jesus was made in bread and wine alone. The resulting service was distinctly brief. It was not long before it came to be attached to the synagogue service of scripture readings, sermon and prayers, which the Christians continued to hold even after they had been expelled from the synagogues of the old covenant. Here was the first radical transformation of Christian eucharistic worship. Eating and drinking still formed its heart: but it was no longer an ordinary meal.

The combined Christian synagogue service and memorial meal came at an early period to be held on Sunday morning rather than Saturday evening. Its two parts broadly correspond with what came later in the East to be known as the Liturgy of the Catechumens and the Liturgy of the Faithful, and with what contemporary Western usage refers to as the Ministry of the Word and the Ministry of the Sacrament. It continued to be held in private houses, in the largest convenient room. But though its setting might be called domestic, its celebration very early came to be properly ordered. Writing at the end of the first century Clement, Bishop of the Church in Rome, speaks in this way of the Eucharist, comparing some of the church's officials with ministers of the sanctuary under the old covenant:

To the high priest (i.e. the bishop) his special liturgies have been appointed, and to the priests (i.e. presbyters) their special

place is assigned, and on the Levites (i.e. the deacons) their special services are imposed; the layman is bound by the ordinances of the laity. Let each of you, brethren, make eucharist to God according to his own order, keeping a good conscience and not transgressing the appointed rule of his liturgy' (1 *Clem.* 40, 41).

The Eucharist is an ordered celebration, in which each order in the Christian community has its own proper place and function.

But if it is orderly, it is also corporate. It is impossible to be certain about the precise form and function of the Church's ministry at this time. But it is clear that the bishop, as head of the community, presides at the Eucharist. At about the same time, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, speaks of him as representing God himself, while the presbyters represent the apostles, and the deacons Christ. But although clear distinctions within the community exist, it is the whole community which celebrates the Eucharist. In the New Testament there is no order within the Church explicitly referred to as priestly. Christ himself is 'our great high priest' who has offered the sacrifice of himself on the cross, and now eternally presents it in heaven. The whole Church is 'a royal priesthood', called to offer spiritual sacrifices to the God who has reconciled us to himself. Paul indeed speaks of his ministry as an apostle using the language of priesthood and sacrifice. But it will be some time yet before any order in the Church will be explicitly called priestly, and then it will be the bishops. But the comparison between bishop and high priest in Clement of Rome already presages future developments.

The Significance of the Eucharist

Paul says that the memorial which the Lord has given to the Church proclaims his death until he comes. The first generations of Christians eagerly awaited the Lord's coming, and their sense of expectancy was naturally heightened when they gathered for their ritual meal. This sense inevitably weakened as time went by. But for the first generations the earthly meal of the Eucharist was an image of that heavenly banquet in terms of which Jesus had often spoken of the Kingdom of his Father; and when the first complete eucharistic text appears in the East towards the end of the fourth century the Eucharist is seen to be offered by a Church still mindful of the second coming of Christ as well as of his passion and resurrection.

The early Christians, celebrating the Eucharist, looked both forward and backward: backward to the cross, whose memorial they were making, and forward to the second coming, which they eagerly awaited. Yet that does not adequately represent the significance of the Eucharist. The memorial, or anamnesis, of Christ made with bread and cup was less a looking back to a past event than a making present of that event here and now. The early Eucharist was no memorial service for the dead founder of the community. When thanks were given over bread and cup, and when the community ate and drank, the crucified and risen Christ was invisibly among them, present no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit. Had he not said, 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. 18.20), and, 'Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age' (Matt. 28.20)? Nor was the second coming a remote future event. Christ was not absent from them, he was present with them; and where he was, there was the Kingdom of God. The Eucharist was a foretaste of that Kingdom.

For the Christ who was present as the invisible celebrant of the rite, and who gave himself to the participants as the bread which came down from heaven, was himself in heaven. Eternally he presented the sacrifice which was himself at the heavenly altar. It was not inappropriate that when St John the Divine described the vision of the worship of heaven which he saw when he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day he did so in terms of the Sunday worship of the congregation on Patmos. On the bishop's chair, covered with a white cloth, God was seated, before him the golden altar, around him the presbyters in their appointed place, transformed into heavenly elders. In the midst was the Lamb, standing as it had been slain. Before the throne stood the congregation, the multitude which no man can number. The praise of the elders echoed that of the Church below: for they praised God for creation, for redemption, and for having made them kings and priests to himself – the themes of the thanksgiving said over the bread and wine by the middle of the second century – while the four living creatures sang the Sanctus of Isaiah, praising God with their 'Holy, holy, holy'. For if the Eucharist looks back to the Last Supper and the cross and forward to the final consummation of God's purpose, it also looks upward to the realm where the cross is an eternal reality, and where the Kingdom is not a future hope but a present joy. St John, describing the worship of heaven in terms of the Sunday

Eucharist, can claim to be the forerunner of many a Byzantine preacher and liturgical commentator, explaining the earthly liturgy as an image of the worship of heaven, whereby men and angels join in the common praise of their creator and redeemer.

The Eucharist in the first century was a simple rite with a profound meaning which could be grasped only by those who had been initiated into it. Its significance was to a large extent expressed by the prayer of thanksgiving said over the bread and wine. Modelled on the Jewish berakah, or prayer of blessing, such as Jesus used at the Last Supper, it gave thanks for God's mighty work in the creation and salvation of mankind. We have no clear idea of the contents of the prayer at this time, though perhaps the Revelation of John reflects its main themes. But the meaning of the service was not exhausted by the content of the prayer, and never has been. The Church has always seen more in the Eucharist than could be expressed in one prayer. St Paul, as we have seen, attached deep significance to the breaking and sharing of the one loaf: if the Eucharist is a means of communion with the living Christ, it is also an expression of the unity of his Body the Church. Paul may have been the first, but was by no means the last, to see symbolic meaning in the actions of the Eucharist beyond the primary meaning of the rite as the commemoration of the passion and resurrection of Christ. We should notice too the importance Paul gave to what was to be called the kiss of peace, which at the end of several of his letters he exhorts the congregation to exchange. Destined to become a normal part of Christian worship, and to be included in the fully-developed eucharistic liturgy, it was an expression of that spiritual love, or agape, which ought to bind Christians to one another within the love of God.

The New Testament interprets the death of Jesus in terms of Old Testament sacrifices. The Last Supper was held in the shadow of the paschal sacrifice of the unblemished lamb. Christians came quite naturally to speak of Jesus as the Lamb of God. The passion and resurrection constituted a new and greater Passover, by which mankind was freed from slavery to sin and admitted into the Promised Land of the glorious liberty of the children of God. The sacrificial atmosphere of the Last Supper was naturally and inevitably inherited by its ordained imitation, the Eucharist, which celebrated the accomplished sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It was of course true that in fulfilling the sacrifices of the old Law Jesus had totally transformed the

meaning of the sacrifice: for what gave the offering of his body and blood on the cross its value and power was not the material offering, but the obedience inspired by love which it embodied. The Christians' response to this sacrifice offered on their behalf was itself described in the New Testament as a sacrifice. 'Present your bodies as a living sacrifice', says Paul (Rom. 12.1). 'Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God', urges the Epistle to the Hebrews (13.15). The 'spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God' which Christians are enjoined to offer (1 Peter 2.5) and which consist in nothing less than a life consumed by love for God and the brethren, may or may not have been explicitly focused on the Eucharist in New Testament times. But it is clear, when evidence has become available, that the Church regarded the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the New Covenant, in which her own responsive self-offering to God, made in the power of the Holy Spirit, was taken into the sacrificial self-offering of her Lord. That sacrifice, offered once for all on the cross, was eternally presented in the heavenly tabernacle, and continually represented in the Church's commemoration of it in the Eucharist.

The Second and Third Centuries

The Eucharistic Rite

The first description of the Eucharist that we have comes from the *First Apology* of Justin, a native of Asia Minor who became a Christian teacher at Rome, and a martyr. Writing in defence of Christians about AD 160, Justin describes both the Sunday Eucharist, and the Eucharist which followed baptism. In the latter case, the synagogue service seems to have been replaced by the rite of initiation.

The Sunday Eucharist consisted of readings from the Scriptures, sermon, and intercessory prayer, perhaps concluded by the kiss of peace, which was certainly given at the end of baptism before the Eucharist began. This was clearly the Christian form of the Jewish synagogue service. Then bread and wine mixed with water were brought to the president of the brethren. Justin, writing to convince the emperor of the harmlessness of Christians, avoids technical Christian terms: but the president was no doubt the bishop. The president then gives thanks over the bread and wine according to his ability: there were no fixed texts for the

eucharistic prayer at this time. But there were traditional themes which he followed. They were thanksgiving for creation, for redemption through the cross, and for our having been accounted worthy of these things. We should not be far wrong in supposing this to be a reference to the royal priesthood of the Church, in virtue of which Christians celebrate the eucharistic sacrifice. This at any rate is the equivalent theme of thanksgiving in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus of Rome early in the third century.

The thanksgiving concluded, the bread is broken, and all present share in the bread and wine. It was unthinkable that anyone should be present without communicating. Indeed, so vital was regular communion considered that deacons took some of the bread and wine to those unable to be present: to slaves on duty, or perhaps even to those in prison for their faith in Christ.

This service is characterized by thanksgiving, in Greek *eucharistia*. Not only does the solitary prayer consist, apparently, largely of thanksgiving, but the bread and wine over which thanks have been given are themselves called *eucharistia*. Hippolytus, a little later, spoke of the bread and wine being 'thanked' – 'eucharistized' – into the 'type' of the Body and Blood of Christ. But by the thanksgiving and the thankoffering of the bread and the cup the memorial of the passion of Christ is effected. Although Irenaeus of Lyons, at the end of the second century, emphasized the Eucharist as a thankoffering of the first-fruits of creation, the view that came to predominate was that of Cyprian, that the sacrifice offered in the rite was the passion of Christ.

The Church was clear, too, that what was received in Communion was not ordinary food and drink. The bread and wine which had received the thanksgiving, or the invocation of God, were the Body and Blood of Christ, spiritual and heavenly food.

The early Church had not yet worked out a theology of consecration. Thanksgiving played an important part in the prayer. But it is probable that from an early time the bread and wine were explicitly offered to God in memory of the passion, and that God was asked to accept them at the heavenly altar. The old Latin Canon of the Mass expressed a very ancient concept of the Eucharist when in the prayers after the narrative of institution it offered to God the bread of eternal life and the cup of everlasting salvation in memory of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, and asked that they might be taken by God's angel – probably Christ himself – to the altar on high. Confident that

God would accept what she offered at Christ's express command, the Church could receive back her gifts as God's gift of the Body and Blood of Christ. From the second century great importance came to be attached to the words of Christ himself in the narrative of institution, which came to form part of almost every later eucharistic prayer.

The Eucharist at this period was celebrated by the whole Church, or, as we might more truly say, by Christ himself acting in and through the whole of his churchly body. Each order concelebrated with the others in its own way. The bread and wine for the sacrifice were brought by the people. They were dealt with by the deacons, who prepared sufficient for the service before the eucharistic prayer, and distributed the consecrated bread and wine at Communion. The bishop as the presiding member of the community, the father of the family, uttered the prayer of thanksgiving in the name of the whole Church. Round him at the altar were the presbyters, the council of elders who assisted him in the government of the church.

The People's Gifts of Bread and Wine

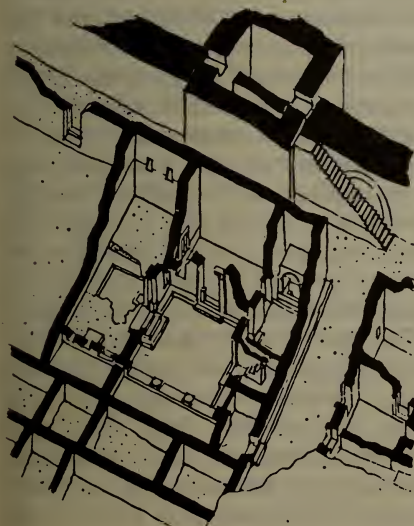
One small but significant variation in practice must be noted here. The people, both in East and West, brought the bread and wine for the Eucharist to church with them. What did they do with them? When the evidence becomes clear, a divergence between Western and Eastern practice has become established. In the West, they brought their gifts to the chancel barrier after the readings, sermon and prayers, where they were collected by the deacons. Sufficient were then set aside and placed on the altar for the Eucharist itself. But it seems that in the East they handed in their offerings on their way into church, either at a table near the door, or in a small room specially provided near the entrance. A mid-third-century document from Syria, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, prescribes: 'But of the deacons, let one stand always by the oblations of the Eucharist: and let another stand without by the door and observe them that come in; and afterwards, when you offer, let them minister together in the church' (*Didascalia*, ed. Connolly, p. 120).

This apparently unimportant variation in church custom was to have enormous significance in the development of the Byzantine Liturgy. For after the Ministry of the Word the deacons carried to the altar such of the bread and wine as was needed for consecration and Communion. While in the third century, and

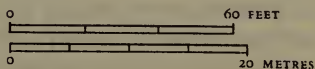
for two centuries more in Constantinople, this was a purely practical action effected in silence and without ceremony, it was to become in time the most splendid moment of the whole Liturgy, dignified with as much pomp as the Church could muster, and invested with such significance that it became the focal point of popular devotion.

The Setting of the Eucharist

Meanwhile, in the third century, the Church continued to meet in private houses: flats in large apartment blocks in Rome and the big cities, small houses built around a small central courtyard elsewhere. The Church was still illegal and could not own property corporately. Nevertheless in the course of the third century Christians in some places were building themselves special meeting halls. That in Nikomedia was so large and impressive that it provoked complaints from non-Christian citizens. More frequently the Christian community acquired a house, in the name perhaps of its bishop or one of its members, and adapted it for its various needs: social, charitable, educational, and liturgical. Such a house-church was acquired by the congregation in Dura-Europos in Mesopotamia around 231. One



Christian community house at Dura-Europos (Salhiyeh) in Mesopotamia. Built soon after 200, it was later converted for use by the Christian community. On the left is a large meeting-room, made out of two original rooms, probably used for the Eucharist. On the right is the baptistry.



room was turned into a baptistry, while two others were run together to provide a room large enough for a eucharistic gathering of some fifty or sixty people. At its east end was a dais for the bishop. Although the baptistry was decorated with frescoes, the main room was plain.

Even if worship took place in a domestic setting, it was not necessarily lacking in a certain splendour. Paul, Bishop of Samosata in the sixties of the third century, had a lofty throne erected on a dais in the meeting-hall. Attached to it was an audience chamber. When he entered the room for services he was acclaimed by the congregation like a Roman magistrate. Paul's pretensions were thoroughly disapproved of by his episcopal brothers, though, as it turned out, he was only anticipating the shape of things to come. The congregation at Cirta, a small town in North Africa, met in an ordinary house. But it possessed a rich collection of gold and silver vessels, and bronze lamps and candlesticks. Despite occasional persecutions the Church was growing rapidly in strength throughout the third century, laying the foundation for its remarkable expansion in the next.

→ *The Birth of Iconography*

From the third century comes the first evidence of Christian iconography. The house-church at Dura contains the earliest frescoes known in a Christian building, while earlier in the century frescoes were used to decorate the catacombs in Rome used for Christian burial. The catacomb paintings make use of themes appropriate to funerary art. The conventional image of the Good Shepherd, an expression of philanthropy, represents Christ. The figure standing with arms raised in prayer, known as the orant, represents the pious soul. Christ and the apostles were shown as fishermen: and a fish was the recognized early Christian symbol for Christ himself, since the Greek word for fish, *ichthys*, was spelled by the initial letters of the phrase, Jesus Christ Son of God and Saviour (*Iesous Christos Theou Yiou Soter*). Sometimes the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist were depicted, often in a rather allusive manner. Certain scenes from Old and New Testament Scriptures are found: Jonah and the whale, Daniel in the lions' den, Noah and the ark, Abraham and Isaac, the raising of Lazarus, and the adoration of the Magi. The latter was shorthand for the whole of the incarnation and redemption, and counterbalanced the representation of Adam and Eve, standing for the state of sin from which we need deliverance. Most of the

scenes depict the salvation of individuals in response to their faith and prayer, and correspond to the prayers made for the dead: in the past God has saved these individuals, may he now save those who have died. Other images are less easy to interpret. There recurs the conventional image of the mother and child. But it is not clear whether this always represents Mary and the child Jesus.

The iconography of the catacombs arose in a liturgical setting, that of prayer for the dead. The frescoes at Dura also relate to the liturgy, this time of baptism. Behind the font, which is placed beneath an arched canopy, are Adam and Eve, and, much larger, the Good Shepherd and his flock. They symbolize original sin and the redemption wrought by Christ. The surviving frescoes include the Samaritan woman at the well, Christ walking on the water, the raising of Lazarus, and the resurrection of Christ, shown by means of the three women at the tomb. The healing of the paralytic is there, and so is David's victory over Goliath. These all point to the victory over evil and the new life and health which baptism confers.

There are no instances known from the third century of Christian decoration of the eucharistic hall. But the images found in the catacombs and at Dura make it clear that the iconography which was later to play so important a part in the decoration of Christian churches, especially in the Byzantine tradition, had its roots in the Hellenistic art of the third century, adapted to express fundamental Christian themes.

One other aspect of late classical art was to become of great importance in the Eastern Christian tradition, both in private devotion and in corporate worship, and that was portraiture. It is quite probable that Christians began painting portraits of distinguished and venerated members of the Church very early on. The Apocryphal Acts of John tell of a portrait of the Apostle which one of his disciples, Lycomedes, commissioned from an artist friend. Lycomedes put it in his bedroom, and adorned it with flowers. John is said to have disapproved. But Lycomedes found it perfectly natural to venerate the portrait of one who had become his spiritual benefactor. The fourth-century historian Eusebius tells of a statue said to be that of Christ which existed in Palestine, and did not think it strange. He had heard too of portraits of Peter and Paul.

Till the fourth century portraits of Christ were rare. The earliest representations seem to have been of the apostles, especially of Peter and Paul, though Christ was shown in scenes

from the Gospels. Towards the end of the third century there appeared a kind of collective portrait of Christ seated among the apostles, an image based on a common classical form depicting the teacher and his disciples, or a group of learned men gathered round their leader.

There is little doubt that Christians followed contemporary practice in having funerary portraits painted of distinguished church members. These portraits showed the bust of the person, facing forward, often enclosed within a medallion. There may have been some reserve on the part of the church leaders towards these images in the early centuries, for fear of idolatry. But when the pagan ancestor cult was declared illegal at the beginning of the fifth century such portraits of the saints survived to become the main source of the portable icon. Well before that, and perhaps as early as the third century, Christian images were venerated by being garlanded with flowers and having lights burnt in front of them.

The Interpretation of the Eucharist

To the third century, if not earlier, may be traced the roots of that symbolic interpretation of the Liturgy which was to become an integral part of the Byzantine and Orthodox tradition. The third-century Alexandrian theologian Origen, building upon an earlier tradition, developed a theology of the Christian mystery which profoundly influenced subsequent Eastern theology. The mystery is the reality of salvation, made present in a visible sign which both reveals and conceals it. Origen applies this sacramental principle to the whole of the Christian economy. Christ himself is the fundamental Christian mystery, in whom God and man are united, so that the divinity is both concealed by the humanity, yet revealed by it to those who have eyes to see. Those who have faith see the humanity, but believe in the God who indwells it.

The mystery who is Christ is presented to us in the Scriptures, the Church, and the sacraments. In all three the literal, outward and apparent reality conceals an inner spiritual reality. We must learn to see in the letter of Scripture the spirit, in the Christian community the incarnate Word, and in her visible rites and ceremonies the saving activity of God. So the eucharistic banquet is a symbol of the union of the soul with the divine Word of God, and prefigures the perfect union to which we look forward at the end of time. But the different aspects of the rite also have symbolic value, as well as the whole. The altar, for instance, is

the symbol of our interior worship: the smoke of the incense represents the prayers offered by a pure conscience. The bishop is the symbol of Jesus, the priests are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the apostles: the deacons are the seven archangels of God. Bowing the knee symbolizes inner humility and obedience: the kiss of peace expresses genuine love. For Origen the Christian rite fulfils its prefigurations in the Old Testament, expresses the spiritual worship we are meant to offer now, and is the image and anticipation of the worship of heaven. But all this requires that those taking part in the rite be initiated into its true significance, which does not lie on the surface.

Origen's teaching about the Christian mystery and the Liturgy as one means by which it may be apprehended is the soil from which grew one strand in the Byzantine tradition of liturgical interpretation and initiation. Developed by Dionysius the Areopagite in the fifth century and Maximus the Confessor in the seventh, it was taken up and given its final form in the fifteenth century by Symeon of Thessalonike.

3 *The Fourth Century*

Doctrine and Worship

In 313 Constantine issued the edict of tolerance which transformed the situation of Christians in the Roman Empire. From now on the Church was under imperial patronage, and in the East Constantine, though not baptized until the end of his life, came to be venerated as equal of the apostles. Representations of the Emperor, and of his mother Helena, together with the cross she found in Jerusalem, are often found in the decorative scheme of later Byzantine churches. Favoured by Constantine at the beginning of the century, Christianity became the official religion of the Empire towards its end, under Theodosius I.

Imperial patronage had immediate and profound consequences for the Church, not least in its worship. The Emperor's influence soon made itself felt, even in the domain of doctrine. The fourth century was one of fierce doctrinal conflicts within the Church. Early in the century the Alexandrian presbyter Arius raised a storm that was to rage for half a century and disturb Christendom for far longer by teaching that the Son was not God as the Father was God, but was a creature, albeit the first and highest of all created beings. A good deal of early Christian writing did imply the subordination of the Son to the Father. But once the explicit affirmation of his inferiority had been made, it was seen to strike at the heart of Christian faith in salvation through Christ. If it was not God who was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, then we are not saved. While the Arians rallied round appropriate slogans such as 'There was when he (the Son) was not', the defenders of what was to be defined as orthodox doctrine were led by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, who adopted the term '*homoousios*', 'of one substance', as the formula best suited to describe the relationship of the Son to the Father and to defend biblical faith in philosophical terms.

The Emperor could not allow the Church which he intended to be a unifying force within the Empire to be riven by doctrinal disputes. He convoked a Council of all the bishops of the Empire at Nicaea in 325 and presided over its deliberations. Arius was

condemned, and Christ pronounced to be 'of one substance' with the Father.

But the argument went on, and in the reaction against the adoption of the novel, non-biblical term *homoousios* the Arians seemed likely to win the day. Not until the 360s did it become clear that the Nicene party would succeed in their defence of the decision of 325. By then fresh disputes were raging over the status of the Holy Spirit, whom extreme Arians were treating as a created being, subordinate to both Father and Son. It was the three Cappadocian fathers, Basil the Great, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus, whose trinitarian teaching was approved at the Council of Constantinople in 381, clearly defining orthodox Christian belief. God is one *ousia*, or 'substance', and three *hypostaseis*, or 'persons': the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God: yet there are not three Gods, but one God. It was an affirmation of faith demanded by the biblical revelation and the Christian experience of God.

These trinitarian disputes left their permanent mark on Eastern worship, particularly in the doxologies with which liturgical prayers concluded. The early Christian tradition had been to pray to the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. But this tradition had been cited by the Arians in support of their teaching that the Son was subordinate to the Father. 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit' became the appropriate doxology to express and safeguard orthodox doctrine. 'To you we ascribe glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and for ever and to the ages of ages' became the characteristic ending of Byzantine liturgical prayers, even when, as in the case of the Lord's Prayer, it was not appropriate. For the God to whom the Church continued to pray corporately in the Liturgy was God the Father, as the eucharistic prayer and other older prayers made clear.

The Rise of Constantinople

In 330 Constantine transferred his capital to the small town of Byzantium. Situated on the European shore of the Bosphorus and occupying an easily defended position, it was the ideal site for the capital of an Empire which extended from Scotland to Egypt, from North Africa to the Danube, from the Atlantic to Mesopotamia. Renamed Constantinople, the New Rome was rapidly rebuilt on a scale suited to its function, and its bishop, from being

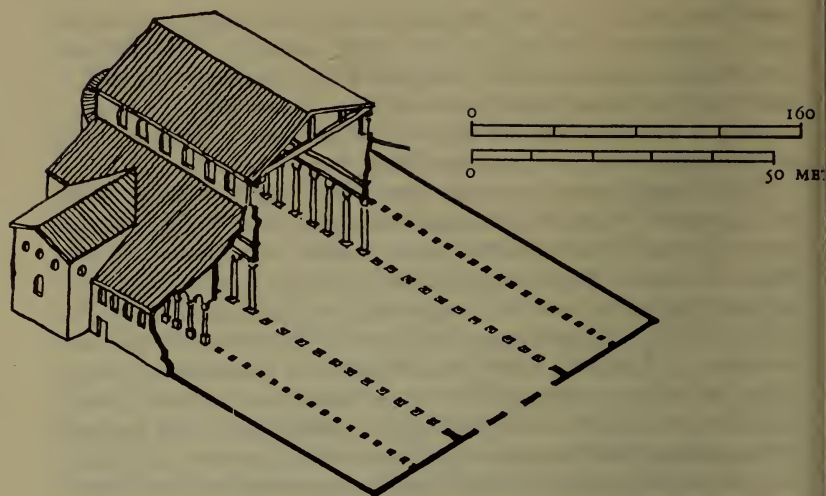
a suffragan of the see of Heraklea, became overnight one of the most important bishops in the whole Church. The Second Ecumenical Council of 381 recognized the see of New Rome as second after that of Old Rome; and by the middle of the fifth century it had as its proper diocese Asia Minor, Thrace, and the coastal areas to the north of the Black Sea.

By the fourth century certain important Churches had come to be centres of liturgical influence for their surrounding neighbours. Rome, Alexandria and Antioch were already well established. Jerusalem rose to rapid prominence as a result of the keen interest shown in the Holy Land and its Christian sites by the imperial family. Byzantium had been within the ecclesiastical province of Antioch, whence it derived its eucharistic liturgy either directly or by way of Pontus and Cappadocia. In the fourth and fifth centuries the links between Constantinople and Antioch were further strengthened by the translation of several bishops of Antioch to the capital. But the New Rome naturally became itself a centre of ecclesiastical and liturgical influence, and the rite of the Great Church of the Holy Wisdom, begun by Constantine and completed only after his death, gradually spread further afield, to become by the end of the twelfth century virtually the only rite of the Orthodox Churches.

The Setting of the Liturgy

If Christians had already shown a tendency to erect buildings of impressive size for their worship, the Peace of the Church enabled a rapid and remarkable growth in the number and magnificence of the churches built all over the Empire. For those built in its capitals and leading cities, and for those which rose over the holy places in Palestine, the imperial treasury was open, and all the resources of architects, masons and artists available.

The design most often followed was that of the basilica, a large rectangular hall. Usually it had side aisles separated from the central space by rows of columns, and an apse at one end. Such halls were used for a variety of purposes, and they were well enough suited to the needs of the Church's worship in the new era. So characteristic were they that the Latin word *basilica* gave the Romanian language the word *biserica*, meaning both church building and Christian community. They could accommodate easily the rapidly swelling congregations, which in the big cities might number many thousands. They provided, in the apse,



Isometric reconstruction of the Lateran Basilica, the cathedral of Rome, as in 320.

suitably dignified seating for the bishop, who rapidly acquired the status of senior imperial official. Surrounded by his presbyters, he presided over liturgical gatherings as a magistrate over the lawcourts. Within the apse, or some way in front of it, stood the holy table, and the whole space of the sanctuary was protected from the crowds by chancel barriers: waist- or chest-high stone slabs supported by low pillars, such as protected the Emperor or magistrates in similar situations. The people gathered in the nave and aisles, which were often of vast proportions, and adorned with marble columns and marble sheathing on the walls and pillars. The lavish use of marble was complemented by mosaic decoration. If the exterior appearance of such churches was plain, the interior was impressively rich, and designedly so: for the Church was the Church of the Empire, and must worship accordingly.

Imperial Influence on Iconography

Curiously, there seems to have been no immediate flourishing of Christian iconography after the Edict of Toleration. The first initiatives came from the imperial palace rather than from the

leaders of the Church. Constantius had the monogram of Christ, the Chi-Rho symbol, placed on military standards and helmets, so putting the army and the state under divine protection. Using a formula employed in antiquity for depicting gods, the Emperor caused representations of himself to be put on coins and medals. He was shown seated on a throne in majesty, while from above the hand of God came towards him, blessing or crowning him. This image expressed the Byzantine theology of empire: the earthly state was a reflection of the divine Kingdom, and its emperor ruled by divine authority as the earthly image of the Lord of the Universe.

The palace art of the fourth century exercised a decisive influence on the development of Christian iconography. It was the model for representations of Christ enthroned as ruler of the universe, surrounded by angels and saints. As the emperor enthroned gave to the high officials of the empire the scroll containing their authorization, so Christ gave the new Law to Peter. Such images expressive of the power of Christ were often placed in the semi-dome of the apse in basilican churches.

From imperial art too came that rigidity of expression and immobility which characterized much later Christian representation. They were held to be essential characteristics of the emperor and his officials, elevated as they were above ordinary human weakness and aided by divine grace. Martyrs came to be shown wearing court dress, a cloak fastened on the shoulder by a clasp, and with a tablion, the square of material denoting honourable rank, at their side. Christ presided over the assembly of the apostles as the emperor presided over a council in the Sacred Palace. He sat enthroned with them at the last judgement as the tribunal sat in the law courts. Even such scenes as the adoration of the Magi and the entry into Jerusalem betrayed the influence of imperial iconography in their manner of representation: the Magi offered gifts to Christ as princes might offer presents to the emperor in a triumph, and Christ entered the holy city as the emperor might enter a captured town.

The style of official imperial portraits, too, contributed to the formation of Christian iconographic portraiture. Neither were portraits in the strict sense. They showed their subjects in such a way as to make clear his or her official status. The portrait of an emperor was precisely that, rather than the portrait of an individual who held the imperial office. Christian iconographic portraiture did, it is true, come to attribute certain consistent

features to individual saints: but in the nature of the case these were not true portraits, but variations on a particular manner of representing official people. Following antique custom, such portraits were often enclosed within a circular medallion.

In art as in architecture imperial patronage made an important contribution to the formation of the Christian tradition. In the fourth century it seems to have influenced the choice of themes as well as their manner of presentation. But the stylistic influence remained even when later the Church took the initiative in developing fresh themes.

The Development of the Hierarchy

The Church had from the beginning been a structured society, although there had been a relatively short period – roughly till the end of the first century – when there was a variety of ministries, some local and some itinerant. The bishops had inherited at least some of the functions of the apostles in the government of the local church, in which they were assisted by the presbyterate. Only gradually did the presbyters acquire sacramental functions, as the Church spread, and they were required to look after separate congregations that sprang up within the territory of the bishop's diocese. In his sacramental and liturgical functions the bishop was assisted by the deacons, who often had responsibility for the charitable work of the local church.

We have already seen Paul of Samosata arrogating to himself the trappings of secular dignity. With the public recognition of the Church in the fourth century all the bishops found themselves enjoying the status of senior imperial officials. They soon came to be preceded, like their elder colleagues, by lights and incense when they made their official way to church. Like them, too, they wore the dress of the Roman upper classes, made obligatory for imperial officials by Theodosius I. Over the *linea*, the undergarment, they wore the *tunica*, and on top of that the *casula*. These garments developed into the *alb* or *sticharion*, the deacon's *tunicle*, and the *chasuble* or *phelonion*. But in the fourth century the clergy were indistinguishable in their dress from any decently attired Roman official. They certainly wore their best clothes when they presided over the Christian assembly: and some took to wearing a *pallium*, as a badge of office, and even a girdle, in origin part of military as distinct from civil dress.

But many bishops were opposed for a while to the display of

outward marks of dignity. Celestine I, Bishop of Rome in the early fifth century, insisted that it was by holiness rather than special adornment that bishops should be distinguished. Yet although the development of ecclesiastical vestments was still in the future, clothes of special quality were coming to be thought appropriate for use in church in the fourth century. Constantine is said to have given a 'splendid garment' for use in Jerusalem, and towards the end of the century the *Apostolic Constitutions* directs the bishop to put on a splendid vestment before beginning the eucharistic prayer.

But civil preferment was not the only factor which enhanced the status of the bishop at this time. By the fourth century the bishop was commonly called the high priest, and presbyters priests. A growing tendency to think of Christianity in Old Testament terms further encouraged a distinction between priesthood and people. Under the Old Covenant only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies: so, under the New, only the priests could enter the sanctuary to minister at the altar. The royal priesthood of the whole people of God faded before the growing priestly splendour of bishop and presbyter. They were invested with a holiness denied those who had not been ordained. The chancel barriers which protected the new Christian magistrate in his apse also served to separate the ordinary members of the church from those permitted to enter the new Christian holy of holies, the sanctuary. This distinction was reinforced by new developments in eucharistic theology and piety.

Eucharistic Theology and Piety

About the middle of the fourth century Cyril of Jerusalem, or perhaps, later, his successor, John, composed the catechetical lectures given to those preparing for baptism. The last five lectures were delivered after the candidates had been baptized, chrismated, and had taken part for the first time in the Eucharist. They explained the significance of the rites of initiation through which the newly-baptized had recently passed. The fourth and fifth of these *Mystagogical Catecheses* deal with the Eucharist. They are the first evidence we possess of fourth-century eucharistic theology and devotion, and they reveal several characteristics significantly different from what we know from previous centuries. From Cyril's description of the rite in mid-fourth-century Jerusalem it emerges that the Eucharist was quite definitely regarded as a

sacrifice. But it was less a sacrifice of thanksgiving than one of propitiation. The eucharistic prayer seems to have consisted of a thanksgiving for creation concluded by the Sanctus, in which the Church on earth is united with the heavenly hosts above. Cyril describes what follows in these words:

Then having sanctified ourselves by these spiritual hymns, we call upon the merciful God to send forth his Holy Spirit upon the gifts lying before him: that he may make the bread the Body of Christ, and the wine the Blood of Christ, for whatever the Holy Spirit has touched is sanctified and changed. Then after the spiritual sacrifice is perfected, the bloodless service upon that sacrifice of propitiation, we entreat God for the common peace of the Church, for the tranquillity of the world, for kings, for soldiers and allies, for the sick, for the afflicted; and in a word for all who stand in need of succour we all supplicate and offer this sacrifice. Then we commemorate also those who have fallen asleep before us, first patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, that at their prayers and intervention God would receive our petition. Afterwards also on behalf of the holy fathers and bishops who have fallen asleep before us, and in a word of all who in past years have fallen asleep among us, believing that it will be a very great advantage to the souls, for whom the supplication is put up, while that holy and most awful sacrifice is presented (*Mystagogical Catechesis* 5.7, 8, 9).

On the face of it, the eucharistic prayer described by Cyril consists of a brief thanksgiving for creation, an invocation of the Holy Spirit, or epiclesis, on the gifts, and a lengthy and comprehensive intercession. To some historians of Christian worship such a prayer, containing no institution narrative and no thanksgiving for redemption, has seemed so improbable that they have supposed Cyril to be mentioning only the salient features of the prayer. However that may be, what is significant for the development of eucharistic theology and piety is that he mentions only what he does. The chief interest of the mid-fourth-century Church in Jerusalem was in offering a propitiatory sacrifice that would do good to those for whom the prayer was made in as close association as possible with the sacrifice. Several features of Cyril's description of the service must be noticed.

First, there is a new way of speaking of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The Church of the first three centuries was clear that Christ was present at its celebration, as the active invisible

celebrant. For Cyril he is present rather as the passive victim. Christians in the early centuries did not doubt that in Communion they received the Body and Blood of Christ, the bread of eternal life and the cup of everlasting salvation. But Cyril speaks of the consecration of the elements as bringing about a change of an almost chemical kind: he cites the changing of water into wine at Cana in Galilee as an example of the kind of change effected in the Eucharist. The East anticipated the medieval Western doctrine of the real presence by many hundreds of years.

This change is brought about by the Holy Spirit. Cyril here reflects the fully-developed theology of the Third Person of the Trinity which emerged in the fourth century in the course of theological argument and was proclaimed as the orthodox doctrine of the Church in 381 at the Council of Constantinople. Cyril is quite clear that 'whatsoever the Holy Spirit touches is sanctified and changed'. In the Eucharist this doctrine received expression in the invocation, or epiclesis, of the Holy Spirit in the eucharistic prayer. Cyril is the first witness to this fully-developed epiclesis which became characteristic of Eastern eucharistic prayers. The West, by contrast, did not adopt the new fashion, and the eucharistic prayer of the Roman Mass continued to pray for consecration in an older way, by asking God to accept the gifts at his heavenly altar. Nicholas Cabasilas, in the fourteenth century, was to point to the Roman prayer as equivalent in function to the Eastern epiclesis: but it reflected an older and rather different view of the Eucharist. This older view was not lost from the Byzantine Liturgy: it continued to be expressed in the litany after the eucharistic prayer and elsewhere.

If the epiclesis in Cyril's prayer reflects a new theology of consecration, the intercession expresses a new understanding of the purpose of consecration. The Holy Spirit is invoked to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ so that in the presence of the divine victim the Church may intercede for herself and the world, the living and the dead. It is significant that Cyril can speak of the sacrifice as accomplished as soon as the epiclesis has been uttered: Communion is no longer essential to the rite. The intercession had previously followed the Ministry of the Word. There may have been a certain element of petition in the earlier eucharistic prayer, as there was in the Jewish blessing. But a comprehensive intercession was certainly a new departure in the fourth century, and owed its inclusion in the prayer to the new emphasis on propitiation. It must be noticed

how in this view of the Eucharist the theology of the New Testament is reversed. St Paul speaks for the whole of the New Testament in affirming that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. But in Cyril's teaching it is not we who are reconciled with God, but God who is propitiated by the sacrifice of Christ which we offer, and is so inclined to hear our supplications. It is significant that from the fourth century the eucharistic prayer is called in the East the anaphora, the prayer which offers the sacrifice. The West called its prayer the canon: short for *canon gratiarum actionis*, the fixed way of giving thanks. But in neither East nor West was thanksgiving the dominant note it had been in the second and third centuries.

The new development in the understanding of consecration found expression in the people's devotional use of the sacrament. Cyril's description of Communion is revealing:

Approaching therefore come not with your wrists extended or your fingers open: but make your left hand as if a throne for your right, which is on the eve of receiving the king. And having hallowed your palm, receive the Body of Christ, saying after it, Amen. Then after you have with carefulness hallowed your eyes by the touch of the holy Body, partake thereof, giving heed lest you lose any of it; for what you lose is a loss to you as it were from one of your own members. For tell me, if any one gave you gold dust, would you not with all precaution keep it fast, being on your guard against losing any of it, and suffering loss? How much more cautiously then will you observe that not a crumb falls from you of what is more precious than gold and precious stones? Then, after having partaken of the Body of Christ, approach also to the cup of his Blood; not stretching forth your hands, but bending and saying in the way of worship and reverence, Amen, be hallowed by partaking also of the Blood of Christ. And while the moisture is still upon your lips, touching it with your hands, hallow both your eyes and brow and other senses. Then wait for the prayer, and give thanks unto God, who has accounted you worthy of so great mysteries (*Mystagogical Catachesis* 5.21, 22).

These recommended communion devotions imply a holiness attaching to the consecrated elements that is almost physical in nature: the mere touch of the sacrament has power to sanctify. But if it is an almost material holiness, it is also a holiness which is terrifying. The word used by Cyril and usually translated 'awful'

means literally 'that which makes the hair stand on end'. The Eucharist is terrifying: only 'having sanctified ourselves by these spiritual hymns' can we proceed to call on God to send his Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine. This testifies to a significant change in the way the Eucharist is understood. St Paul had emphasized how awesome it was to receive the sacrament, and how necessary was proper preparation. But Cyril used the language of awe and fear for the sacrament in itself: merely to be in its presence is cause for fear and trembling. No wonder that the celebration of the mysteries became more and more the preserve of the priests, whom ordination enabled to invoke the Spirit and stand in the presence of the sacrifice. The laity could only behold in reverence and fear.

The differentiation of clergy from laity was still further emphasized by the decline in lay participation in the sacrament which began in the latter part of the fourth century. St Ambrose, in his catechetical lectures to the newly baptized in Milan, probably in the 380s, urged them not to imitate the Greeks, who received the sacrament only once a year. Perhaps the many conversions to the new religion of the Empire somewhat cooled the fervour of the average Christian, although admission to the Church still required a thorough testing and preparation of candidates for initiation. But the new teaching of Cyril and the growth of the ascetic movement combined to discourage frequent communion. Preparation for communion, it was urged, should include abstinence from sexual intercourse: one aspect of the increasing reversion within the Church of the New Covenant to the ritual holiness demanded under the Old. Cyril points to the showbread of the Old Testament as a prefiguration of the bread of the Eucharist: and that could only be eaten by those whose 'vessels were holy' (1 Samuel 21.4, 5). The result of such tendencies was to keep the laity away from communion except on rare occasions. In the conservative West frequent communion survived for several centuries more. In the East lay communion went into a decline from which it has scarcely begun to recover.

The trend in eucharistic theology and piety reflected in Cyril of Jerusalem profoundly affected the worship of the Byzantine Church. The whole-hearted enthusiasm with which Jerusalem seems to have adopted new ideas and practices may not have been fully shared by other churches. But the liturgical practice of Jerusalem and the theology which it expressed were absorbed into the Eastern tradition, making a prominent contribution to its

development. The language of fear with regard to the sacrament appears again in the teaching of St John Chrysostom, and is reflected in the Byzantine Liturgy: while the characteristic features of the eucharistic prayer in Jerusalem appear in the first Eastern eucharistic rite which has survived, that of the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

The Liturgy of the Eighth Book of the *Apostolic Constitutions*

The *Apostolic Constitutions* is a handbook of church teaching and practice dating from the last quarter of the fourth century. Based on earlier works of a similar kind, it claims to be the ordinance of the apostles transmitted to the Church by Clement of Rome. The Liturgy contained in the eighth book is therefore often called the Clementine Liturgy. The earliest complete text of a eucharistic rite to have survived, it represents in general the usage of the Church of Antioch, although it was perhaps never actually used. The compiler of the book was somewhat unorthodox, though not positively Arian. 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 representing the rite of Antioch in the late fourth century, from which that of Constantinople ultimately derived.

The number of resemblances it contains to the developed Byzantine Liturgy, whose first surviving text dates only from the end of the eighth century or the beginning of the ninth, is striking; and it is worth while looking closely, in order to have an impression of the shape of the Eucharist at Constantinople at the beginning of its independent development as the rite of the Eastern capital. Within the scheme of the *Apostolic Constitutions* the Clementine Liturgy is that celebrated by a newly-consecrated bishop.

The congregation gathered in a church that was pointed towards the east, rectangular in shape, and with sacristies on either side at the east. The people were carefully segregated, men on one side, women on the other. The elderly had seats, the younger people too, if there was room. Children had to be kept in order by their parents. It was the task of the deacons to make sure that people went to their proper place and behaved themselves.

The Liturgy began after the bishop's enthronement with

scripture readings. The rubric speaks of the Law, the Prophets, the Epistles, the Acts and the Gospels. It is not clear whether passages from each were read on every occasion. In a summary description of the Eucharist in the second book the reader is said to stand on some high place in the midst: no doubt an ambo, or pulpitum, placed in the centre of the nave. The second book also mentions the Psalms of David, which from an early time were sung in between the readings, and specifies that the Gospel should be read by a deacon or presbyter. After the readings came the sermon, or sermons. The Clementine Liturgy says that the bishop preaches after he has greeted the church with the Grace. The second book indicates that he preached last, after the presbyters had had their turn. He preached sitting, from his throne, the symbol of his teaching authority as well as of his government of the Church.

There followed the dismissal of all those groups not entitled to take part in the Eucharist itself. The Clementine Liturgy reflects the fourth-century organization of the Church, which, in addition to those who were baptized and communicant members, included catechumens being prepared for baptism, energumens believed to be possessed by unclean spirits, illuminati in the final stages of preparation for initiation, and penitents excluded from communion while they did penance for grave sins. Each of these groups was dismissed in a similar way. They were bidden to pray by the deacon, while he led the faithful in a litany of supplication for them. After the prayers of the church on their behalf they rose from their knees and bowed their heads while the bishop prayed over them. The deacon then dismissed them.

When only the faithful were left they were invited again to pray, this time in a comprehensive litany for the whole Church. To each petition in this and every other litany in the rite the people responded, Kyrie eleison, Lord have mercy. The litany was concluded by a prayer for the people said by the bishop. This form of corporate prayer was to become characteristic of the Byzantine rite. It appears first in the fourth century. An older way of making corporate intercession survived in the Roman rite in the Solemn Prayers of Good Friday. There the people were bidden to pray for a particular category of persons. The deacon instructed them to kneel and silent prayer was made. He then gave the command to arise, and the priest recited a short collect, in which the silent prayers of the faithful were gathered together. This ancient way of praying left its traces in other rites too. They

may even be detected in some of the petitions of the Litany of the Faithful in the Clementine Liturgy, which have a composite form: they begin 'Let us pray for . . .' and continue 'that the Lord may . . .' These two parts may represent respectively the bidding and the concluding prayer of the ancient form: the silent prayer has disappeared, the two parts have coalesced to form one petition, and the people, instead of praying in silence, shout out Kyrie eleison at its conclusion. In origin this seems to have been a non-Christian exclamation, similar to the old English 'God bless my soul!'

After the prayers of the faithful the bishop greeted the church: The peace of God be with you all. The people replied: And with your spirit. The kiss of peace was then exchanged. By this time the kiss had come to be linked with the Eucharist itself, rather than with the end of the Ministry of the Word. Cyril of Jerusalem mentions it immediately before the eucharistic prayer, and explains its meaning by referring to Matthew 5.23: 'If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and go your way, first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift'. But the mutual charity and reconciliation symbolized by the kiss of peace was strictly controlled by the Clementine Liturgy and subsequent practice: the clergy saluted the bishop, the laymen the laymen, and the women the women.

Preparations were then made for the celebration of the sacrament. The rubric in the Clementine Liturgy provides an interesting insight into some aspects of fourth-century worship:

Let the children stand near the bema (sanctuary) and let one of the deacons preside over them so that they be not disorderly. And let other deacons walk about and observe the men and the women, so that there may be no disturbance, and that none may nod or whisper or sleep. And let the deacons stand at the men's door, and the subdeacons at the women's door, so that none may go out, and the door may not be opened, not even by the faithful, during the time of the anaphora.

Meanwhile one of the subdeacons provides the priests with the means of washing their hands. The lavabo is first mentioned by Cyril, though before the kiss of peace. It was one of the earliest symbolic additions to the service. Jews customarily washed their hands before prayer, and Christians seem to have continued the practice: fountains were often provided at the entrance to

churches. But this lavabo seems to be a specifically clerical rite. Both Cyril and the Clementine Liturgy say it symbolizes the spiritual purity which should characterize the priests ministering at the altar.

The deacon then again dismisses those not entitled to remain: perhaps as a final precaution, since they should already have left. He summons the faithful to draw near, bids mothers take charge of their children, warns those in uncharity or hypocrisy and concludes: 'Let us with fear and trembling stand upright before the Lord to offer.'

The deacons then bring the gifts to the bishop at the altar. There is no mention of where they come from or how they were provided. But it is probable that the people had brought bread and wine to church with them, and had left them, perhaps in one of the two sacristies which flanked the east end of the building. It has been observed that the deacon's admonitions would come more logically after the bringing in of the bread and wine. But liturgy is not always logical: though it is quite possible that the compiler of the *Apostolic Constitutions* has here put his sources together clumsily.

The rubric preceding the anaphora sets the scene for the eucharistic prayer:

And let the priests stand on his (the bishop's) right and on his left, as disciples standing by a teacher. But let two deacons on either side of the altar hold a fan of thin tissue or of peacock's feathers, and let them gently ward off the small flying creatures, so that they may not approach the cups.

The presbyters still have their proper place as the real Clement of Rome described it at the end of the first century:

Then let the high priest (the bishop), after praying by himself together with the priests, and putting on a splendid vestment, and standing at the altar, and making the sign of the cross with his hand upon his forehead say: 'The grace of the Almighty God, and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.'

In the fourth century all the prayers of the Liturgy were public prayers. It was no doubt natural for the clergy to pray in preparation for the Eucharist: but their prayer was silent and informal. St Paul's prayer at the end of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians became the characteristic introduction to Eastern

anaphoras. In the Clementine Liturgy it was followed by the exhortation: 'Lift up your minds' and the response: 'We lift them up to the Lord'; and the injunction: 'Let us give thanks to the Lord', with the people's reply: 'It is meet and right'.

The anaphora of the Clementine Liturgy is of great length and could hardly have been composed for use. But its structure is of great interest. It begins with an extended thanksgiving to God for his own being, and for the creation which he brought into being through his only-begotten Son. A detailed description of the natural order based on Genesis 1 and 2 is followed by an equally detailed account of God's work in redemption up to the collapse of the walls of Jericho. Here the thanksgiving breaks off to conclude with a mention of all the hosts of heaven, leading into the Sanctus.

The prayer continues with praise for God's holiness, and that of his Son, and with a thanksgiving for the work of the incarnate Christ as far as his ascension. It then moves on to the formal commemoration of the passion and the offering of the gifts: 'Wherefore we, having in remembrance the things which he for our sakes endured, give thanks to you, O God Almighty, not such as are due but such as we can, and fulfil his injunction.' The account of the institution at the Last Supper follows. Then, 'Therefore having in remembrance his passion and death and resurrection and his return into heaven, and his future second advent in which he shall come to judge the quick and the dead, and to give to every man according to his works, we offer unto you our King and our God, according to his injunction, this bread and this cup, giving thanks unto you through him that you have counted us worthy to stand before you and to sacrifice unto you'. God is asked to look graciously on the gifts lying before him and to be well pleased with them. For this part of the prayer the compiler of the *Apostolic Constitutions* drew upon the early third-century *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus of Rome.

Up to this point the prayer, eccentric though it be in the detailed nature of its thanksgiving for creation, represents the understanding of the Eucharist which seems to have predominated in the first three centuries. In the verbal thanksgiving of the Church for creation, redemption, and its own royal priesthood is enfolded the thank-offering of the bread and wine in accordance with Christ's command.

But in what follows the influence of the newer tradition first seen in Cyril of Jerusalem is dominant. For the anaphora goes on

to ask God to 'send down upon this sacrifice your Holy Spirit, the witness of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, that he may declare (or make) this bread the Body of your Christ, and this cup the Blood of your Christ, that they who partake thereof may be strengthened in godliness, may receive remission of their sins, may be filled with the Holy Spirit, may become worthy of your Christ, and may obtain eternal life, you being reconciled unto them, O Master Almighty'.

There follows a comprehensive intercession for the Church and the episcopate, for the celebrant himself and all the clergy, for the emperor and the civil and military authorities, for the departed, the congregation present, the city, persecutors, the catechumens, energumens and penitents, for seasonable weather and the fruits of the earth, and for those reasonably absent. The whole anaphora concludes with a trinitarian doxology and the Amen of the people.

If the first part of the prayer reflects the traditional emphasis of the Eucharist in offering the sacrifice of praise, the latter part reflects the newer interest of the fourth century in offering a propitiatory sacrifice. In the Clementine Liturgy the newer tradition has already been combined with the older, and the resulting pattern of the eucharistic prayer became that of all subsequent Eastern anaphoras.

The bishop greeted the people with: 'The peace of God be with you all', and the deacon proclaimed a series of petitions, which summed up the contents of the intercession in the anaphora. But the first is of special interest: 'Let us pray for the gift which is offered to the Lord God, that the good God may, through the mediation of his Christ, receive it upon his heavenly altar for a sweet-smelling savour.' It is in substance the same petition made in the old Latin Canon of the Mass in the paragraph beginning 'Supplices te'. Reflecting an older theology of consecration, it is curiously juxtaposed with the newer theology of consecration by the invocation of the Holy Spirit. It soon came to be understood as a petition for the acceptance of the consecrated gifts, rather than as a petition for consecration.

The older and newer concepts of the Eucharist, which both contributed to the shape of the Eastern anaphora, continued to coexist in Byzantine eucharistic theology. Theologians spoke of Christ, now as the invisible celebrant of the Liturgy, offering the sacrifice of all the Church, now as the passive victim offered by the Church to God in order to propitiate him. The later prayer of

the Great Entrance combined them verbally when it said of Christ: 'For it is you who offer and are offered.'

The litany after the anaphora ends with the bishop's prayer for worthy Communion of clergy and people. The Lord's Prayer was not said. It was introduced into the Eucharist as a preparation for Communion in the course of the fourth century. Although it was in the rite of Jerusalem when Cyril gave his catechetical lectures, it had evidently not yet been adopted in Antioch. By the early fifth century St Augustine could say that it was used in practically every church.

After the litany the deacon called out: 'Let us attend'. The bishop invited the people to Communion with the words: 'The holy things for the holy people'. This too first appears in the Jerusalem rite. The people's response began with the 'There is one holy, one Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father' familiar in the later Byzantine rite, but went on to elaborate it.

Communion was given to the clergy and people in due order with the words 'The Body of Christ' and 'The Blood of Christ', to which the communicant said 'Amen'. During Communion Psalm 33 was said. After Communion any of the remaining consecrated gifts were taken to the sacristy. The deacon invited the people to thank God for having been granted to participate in the holy mysteries, and the bishop gave thanks in the name of all, in a prayer which was also a general supplication. The deacon then instructed the people to bow their heads, while the bishop prayed for them, so giving them God's blessing. They were then dismissed by the deacon.

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 which 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, as well as containing a number of features which are

closely paralleled in the rite of the capital when clear evidence for its form and details appears. It offers us an adequate starting-point for tracing the specific development of Byzantine eucharistic worship.

4 *The Eucharist at Constantinople in the time of John Chrysostom*

John the 'golden-mouthed' won his reputation as a preacher during his years as a priest at Antioch, 386-98. In the latter years he was chosen unwillingly to be Bishop of Constantinople. For six years he presided over the church in the capital, endeavouring to reform its life and morals. The hostility of the Empress Eudoxia and of Theophilus of Alexandria caused him to be deposed in 404, and he died in exile three years later. In his own day he was associated with liturgical reform, and Byzantine and later Orthodox tradition came to link his name inseparably with one of the two eucharistic rites of the Byzantine Church. From his sermons preached in the capital we can form some impression of the Eucharist there in his time, while scattered literary references and the results of archaeological investigations enable us to place the Liturgy in its architectural setting.

The Churches of Constantinople

Chrysostom no doubt officiated in each of the several large churches with which the city had been adorned since 330. In addition to the original Hagia Sophia, the Great Church begun by Constantine and completed by Constantius in 360, which served as the cathedral, there existed the High Church, Hagia Irene, close by, and the Church of the Apostles, the former enlarged and beautified by Constantine, the latter built by him.

These churches were all basilicas, and although none has survived, we can be reasonably certain of their chief features. Worshippers entered first through an imposing portico, whose doorway might be hung with rich curtains. They found themselves in an atrium, or forecourt, surrounded on three sides by a columned arcade. In the middle was a fountain where the faithful could wash their hands on their way into church, as much in

preparation for prayer as for receiving the sacrament. The atrium was also where the poor gathered in the hope of receiving alms from the churchgoers.

The church itself was entered by way of the narthex, or porch, on the fourth side of the atrium. Several doors led into the narthex, where people could gather before the service began. Whether or not they entered the church before the bishop arrived is not clear. Certainly in the first half of the seventh century the congregation seems to have gathered outside the church, and to have entered it only after the bishop had made his ceremonial entrance. The larger churches of the city all seem to have had doors at the east end, on either side of the apse, as well as at the west end, and often in the north and south sides too. The central doors leading from the narthex into the nave were known as the royal doors, and it was through them that the Emperor entered with the Patriarch into the church on those occasions when he took part formally in the Liturgy.

The nave was rectangular, and might have two or four side aisles, separated from the central part of the church by rows of columns. Usually there were galleries above the aisles, and above the narthex too. Access to these was by way of a stair or ramp approached usually from outside the church. The churches of Constantinople were characterized by a sense of openness. The aisles were not separated from the nave by barriers, nor, as has sometimes been supposed, by curtains. Men and women were separated in church, the women occupying the north side, the men the south. It has often been held that the women used the galleries, but it seems more probable that, although they might do so, they were not excluded from the nave or aisles. Later, if not in Chrysostom's time, space was reserved in the gallery for the Empress and her suite, and sometimes the Emperor took part in the Liturgy from his special place in the gallery.

From the seventh century at any rate the gallery was commonly called the catechumenon. Perhaps this points to one of its principal uses. It is not clear whether or not the catechumens and other special groups distinguished from the main body of believers had a place of their own assigned to them in church. It would certainly have been appropriate for the catechumens, unable to receive Communion, to have been in the gallery which was cut off from the nave once the outside doors of the church had been closed. In Chrysostom's time the catechumenate was still a living institution. As it declined and finally, after the

seventh century, disappeared, the gallery was put to other uses. Oratories for private prayer were made there, and later they contained a variety of rooms for imperial use. From time to time efforts were made to prevent lovers making profane use of them.

At the east end of the basilica the sanctuary, the place for the bishop and his clergy, occupied the semicircular apse and sometimes extended into the front part of the nave. It was enclosed by a low chancel barrier. There was an entrance in the middle, and usually, if the sanctuary extended beyond the chord of the apse, on the north and south sides too. The short pillars supporting the chancel slabs might be surmounted by small columns, on which rested an architrave, a decorative beam. There is no reason to suppose that in Constantinople this screen was not left open, so that the congregation had a clear view of the sanctuary. Within it stood the altar table, of stone or precious metal, and with rich coverings. It was often enhanced by a ciborium above it, a dome resting on four columns, made of stone or precious metal. Again, there seems no good reason to think that the altar was at any time during the Liturgy screened from view by curtains hung between the columns of the ciborium, although this may have been the case elsewhere, and has often been thought to have been so in Constantinople. Beneath the altar, in at least two fifth-century churches, there was a small vault for relics, to which a flight of steps gave access immediately behind the altar.

Behind the altar rose the bishop's throne, set against the wall of the apse. On either side ran the bench for the clergy. In Constantinople it was at the top of a number of steps, so that the bishop could both see and be seen above the altar. It was from his throne, or cathedra, in the apse that the bishop usually preached, seated, although Chrysostom often preached from the ambo in the middle of the nave, in order to be better heard.

In the churches of the city the ambo stood roughly in the middle of the nave. It consisted of a raised platform enclosed with a parapet of stone slabs, to which two flights of steps gave access. It was connected with the sanctuary by a protected way called the solea: a narrow passage bordered by stone slabs set into pillars in the same way as the sanctuary barrier. It might connect immediately with the sanctuary, or there might be a gap between the two. In either case the solea enabled unhindered passage through a crowded church between sanctuary and ambo.

The Celebration of the Eucharist

It was in this setting that Chrysostom presided over the celebration of the Eucharist. He entered with his attendant clergy through the central, royal, doors leading from the narthex into the nave. He was preceded by lights and incense, and by a deacon carrying the book of the Gospels. When the procession reached the sanctuary the Gospels were placed on the altar as a symbol of Christ, the Word of God, and the clergy went to their respective places. The bishop gave the greeting: 'Peace be with you all', to which the people responded: 'And with your spirit'. He then ascended the throne for the readings. From Chrysostom's sermons it is clear that there was often a great deal of noise in the church at the beginning of the service, and it might take some time before anything like silence was achieved.

The bishop's greeting was the signal for the scripture readings to begin. They were three in number, and were read from the ambo. A deacon first called out: 'Let us attend', an appeal that was by no means a formality. The reader announced the book from which the prophetic reading was taken and began: 'Thus says the Lord'. The second reading was taken from an Epistle, and was presumably preceded by a similar call for silence. For the Gospel everyone stood: presumably during the first two readings those who could sit or squatted. Chrysostom implies that a reader also read the Gospel, although elsewhere it was becoming the custom that the Gospel, as the most important of the readings, should be read by a deacon or priest. Later it was normally read in Constantinople too by a deacon, except on Easter Day, when it was read by the bishop himself. It is probable that between the readings a responsorial psalm was sung, with a refrain sung by the congregation between the verses.

In several of his sermons Chrysostom reproached his congregation for their lack of attention during the readings. People, it seems, complained that there was no point in listening, the readings were always the same. He reminded them that it is God himself who speaks to us through the prophet and the apostle, and still more through the Gospel.

He seems to have had no such problem with his homily or sermon. In fact he reproached those who saw no point in coming to church unless there was to be a sermon. In practice there were often several sermons at the Eucharist at this time. Even though Chrysostom himself occasionally preached for two hours, his

sermon came sometimes after that of one or more bishops or priests. He always preached last as the senior bishop. The homily was preceded by the bishop's greeting, 'Peace be with you all', and its response. It was usually delivered from the throne in the apse, the bishop seated, the people standing. When Chrysostom preached from the ambo, a chair was no doubt placed for him there. The custom of preaching or teaching from a chair was in all probability continued from Jewish practice in the synagogue. Jesus is said to have sat down to teach, and early Christian art showed him seated in the midst of his disciples, teaching. In the early Church continuity of apostolic teaching from the same chair was an important aspect of apostolic succession.

Not even a preacher of Chrysostom's eloquence was always heard attentively. He had cause to complain of those who cracked jokes and laughed during the sermon, and did not stop laughing even when the prayers began. On the other hand his sermons, like those of other popular preachers, were often interrupted by applause. The prayers took the form of litanies of the kind we have noticed in the Clementine Liturgy. In all probability the catechumens were first prayed for and dismissed, and then the penitents. The latter certainly formed a recognizable group in the Church, for Chrysostom remarked that people were often more ashamed of being recognized as sinners than of having committed the sin itself. When the catechumens were dismissed, Chrysostom noted with disapproval that some of the faithful seized the opportunity to leave with them, so refusing to take their part in the mysteries that were about to begin. There is no evidence as to whether or not those classified as possessed by unclean spirits formed a distinct group at Constantinople for whom prayer was made at the Eucharist before they were dismissed. Once those groups whom ecclesiastical discipline did not permit to take part in the Eucharist itself had left, the faithful were again called to prayer on their knees. Biddings were included for the empire, for the Church spread out to the ends of the earth, for peace, and for those in any kind of trouble. Probably these themes, enumerated by Chrysostom, were amplified in a larger number of biddings, to which the people responded: *Kyrie eleison*. Chrysostom stressed the greater efficacy of corporate prayer by comparison with individual, and insisted that in intercessory prayer the whole Church was united: there was here no distinction between clergy and laity. He may well have found it expedient to underline a unity which was

already being undermined by church architecture, liturgical and devotional practices, and even theology.

It was now time for the bread and wine to be brought in for the Eucharist. In preparation for this the bishop once more greeted the people: 'Peace be with you all'. When they had made the usual response the deacon exhorted them to 'Greet one another with a holy kiss'. The congregation at Constantinople may well have done so in the way prescribed by the Clementine Liturgy.

There was no singing at this point in the service at this time, so that there was a perhaps considerable pause in the proceedings while the deacons brought in the gifts. It requires a good deal of imagination to realize this in view of the splendour which later came to attend what the Byzantine Liturgy knew as the Great Entrance. But there can be no doubt that the bread and wine were at this time in Constantinople brought in with little ceremony; Chrysostom does not even mention their appearance in his sermons.

The elements had most probably been brought to church by the people. As we have seen, the practice in the East was for them to be deposited somewhere on the way in to church. So far at least as the Great Church in Constantinople is concerned, it is tempting to suppose that they were left in the small round edifice at the north-east corner of Hagia Sofia, which quite probably dates from the time of the first church begun by Constantine.

Known as the *skeuophylakion*, because the sacred vessels were kept there, it originally had two doors, directly opposite each other, which would have made it easy for the people to pass through, leaving their gifts on the way. It was certainly there that later the preparation of the bread and wine took place before they were brought in at the Great Entrance. However that may be, it is reasonably clear that in Chrysostom's time the gifts were brought in by the deacons from wherever they had been left by the people, and that this transfer was effected in a simple manner. The final stage of their path was probably the solea connecting the ambo with the sanctuary.

The simplicity of this purely practical action, accompanied by neither chant nor ceremonial, is striking not only by comparison with what it later became in the Byzantine Liturgy, but with what it had already become elsewhere. There is a famous description of the entry of the gifts in the *Mystagogical Catecheses* of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Theodore had been a presbyter at Antioch for ten years before becoming Bishop of Mopsuestia, in southern Asia Minor, in 392. Since Chrysostom's sermons preached at Antioch

make no mention of the kind of ceremonial described by Theodore, nor of the significance the latter attaches to it, it is probable that the *Catecheses* reflect liturgical practice at Mopsuestia. Because of its importance the passage is worth quoting extensively, though with some abbreviation:

It is the deacons who bring out this oblation . . . which they arrange and place on the awe-inspiring altar, a vision . . . awe-inspiring even to the onlookers. By means of the symbols we must see Christ, who is now being led out and going forth to his passion, and who, in another moment, is laid out for us on the altar . . . And when the offering that is about to be presented is brought out in the sacred vessels, the patens and chalices, you must think that Christ the Lord is coming out, led to his passion . . . by the invisible host of ministers . . . who were also present when the passion of salvation was being accomplished . . . And when they bring it out, they place it on the holy altar to represent fully the passion. Thus we may think of him placed on the altar as if henceforth in a sort of sepulchre, and as having already undergone the passion. That is why the deacons who spread linens on the altar represent by this the figure of the linen clothes of the burial . . . (And afterwards) they stand on both sides and fan the air (*aer*) above the holy Body so that nothing will fall on it. They show by this ritual the greatness of the Body lying there . . . which is holy, awe-inspiring and far from all corruption . . . a Body that will soon rise to an immortal nature . . . It is evident that there were angels beside the tomb, seated on the stone, and now too should one not depict as in an image the similitude of this angelic liturgy? . . . (The deacons) stand around and wave their fans . . . because the Body lying there is truly Lord by its union with the divine nature. It is with great fear that it must be laid out, viewed and guarded. These things take place in complete silence because, although the Liturgy has not yet begun, still it is fitting to watch the bringing out and depositing of such a great and wonderful object in recollection and fear and a silent and quiet prayer, without saying anything . . . and when we see the oblation on the altar as if it were being placed in a kind of sepulchre after death, a great silence falls on those present. Because that which is taking place is awe-inspiring, they must look on it in recollection and fear, since it is suitable that now by the Liturgy . . . Christ our Lord rise, announcing to all the

participation in ineffable benefits. We remember therefore the death of the Lord in the oblation because it makes manifest the resurrection and the ineffable benefits. (Cf. Taft, *The Great Entrance*, p. 35.)

Wherever, and for whatever reasons – both are unknown – this interpretation of the entry of the bread and wine was conceived, it was to have a profound influence in the development of the Byzantine Liturgy. It lays great stress on the procession itself, rather than on its objective, and makes it a focus of popular devotion. In making the bread and wine in the procession symbols of Christ going to his death, and on the altar symbols of his dead body, it implies that they are already in some sense sacramental, and so prepares the way for the development of the Byzantine rite of the Prothesis, in which the preparation of the elements in the sacristy before the Liturgy begins represents the passion and death of the Lord. This in turn opens the way to an interpretation of the Eucharist itself as a commemoration of his resurrection. All this was to have far-reaching consequences for the ceremonial development of the Byzantine Liturgy, for the development of its prayers, for the devotional attitude of those taking part in it, and for the iconographic decoration of the churches in which it was celebrated.

But meanwhile, in the Liturgy of early fifth-century Constantinople, the bringing in of the bread and wine retained its original simplicity and practical character. The bishop received them at the altar, and with his clergy prepared to recite the anaphora. First he, and the presbyters with him, washed their hands. Perhaps he also recited a prayer as part of his approach to the altar. We have seen how, in the Clementine Liturgy, the bishop prays by himself, together with the priests, before beginning the eucharistic prayer. Such natural private devotions of the clergy soon became formalized in set prayers incorporated into the Liturgy. The prayers recited in the modern Liturgy appear in the Codex Barberini of the late eighth or early ninth century. There they are called respectively 'The prayer of the proskomidia of St Basil after the people have finished the mystic hymn' and 'The prayer of the proskomidia of St John Chrysostom after the holy gifts have been put on the holy table and after the people have finished the mystic hymn'.

They are prayers of preparation for those about to offer the gifts in the anaphora, which in the fifth century followed imme-

diately, and to which the word 'proskomidia' in the title of the prayers refers. In early Byzantine usage 'proskomidia' denotes the eucharistic prayer, and not the later preliminary preparation of the bread and wine. These are not offertory prayers in the later Western sense, anticipating the anaphora by offering the gifts and asking God to bless them: they are prayers for the officiants, asking God to make them worthy to offer the gifts. The prayer attributed to St John Chrysostom could well be his own composition. That attributed to St Basil seems to be a later, composite prayer. Its first paragraph is a prayer for the officiants, its second has more the character of an offertory prayer.

On which side of the altar did the bishop stand? Traditional Orthodox practice has the celebrant stand at the west side of the altar, facing east, with his back to the people. It is clear that this must have been the case in Constantinople in the fifth century, at least in the two churches where a flight of steps lead from the east side of the altar down into a small crypt where relics were kept. Elsewhere it would certainly have been possible for him to stand at the east side facing the people.

The Eucharistic Prayer

The prayer of preparation finished, the bishop began the anaphora. The introductory dialogue at Constantinople in Chrysostom's time seems to have been the same as in the Clementine Liturgy. The bishop's exhortation after 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .' was 'Lift up your minds'. Later it came to be 'Lift up your hearts'. This was the form used in Jerusalem by the latter half of the fourth century, and in the West. In the East the two forms were for some time in competition. In the Liturgy of St James and the Liturgy of the Syrian Jacobites they were combined: 'Lift up your hearts and minds'. In Byzantium by the seventh century 'hearts' had prevailed over 'minds'.

What prayer followed the introductory dialogue? The Codex Barberini contains two Eucharistic liturgies, one ascribed to St Basil, the other without ascription, but containing three prayers ascribed to St John Chrysostom: the prayer for the catechumens, the prayer of the proskomidia, and the final prayer said behind the ambo. It is in fact the Liturgy which came later to be known as that of St John Chrysostom. Of the two Liturgies, that of St Basil is given first, and was at that time the most commonly used.

The anaphora of St Basil is very probably the work of Basil

himself. In his panegyric of Basil, delivered in Caesarea of Cappadocia in 381, Gregory of Nazianzus includes in the great bishop's works the 'reorganization of the Liturgy'. The Belgian scholar Dom Bernard Capelle made a close study of the anaphora of St Basil, comparing it with an Egyptian anaphora also ascribed to him and with Basil's theological writings. He concluded that there was very good reason to suppose that the prayer is in fact his work. Reshaping an existing anaphora, Basil incorporated into his revision his own carefully formulated theological ideas. His anaphora reflects the fully developed trinitarian thought of the latter part of the fourth century, which is henceforth firmly established in the Byzantine liturgical tradition. The Eastern part of the church was far bolder than the Western in allowing its worship to be influenced by current theological thought. In particular the Byzantine Liturgy embodied the view of late fourth-century trinitarian theology that it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies and consecrates.

If the anaphora of St Basil was the one he himself used in Caesarea, it is not difficult to see how it could have been adopted in Constantinople. The capital was not yet the dominant liturgical centre it was to become, and was open to liturgical influences from outside. The tradition of worship was by no means yet fixed, and the various local traditions interpenetrated one another readily. From 379 to 381 Gregory of Nazianzus, a great friend of Basil's, was Bishop of Constantinople. What more natural than that he should have used there the anaphora used by his friend in Caesarea? The prestige enjoyed by Basil would have made its introduction into the Great Church no difficult matter. His may well then have been the prayer which Chrysostom found in use when he came to Constantinople in 397.

Tradition ascribes to Chrysostom the composition of an anaphora of his own. Liturgical scholarship has by and large discounted this tradition, not least because Chrysostom's name is not firmly linked with the Liturgy now known as his until relatively late. In the Codex Barberini only three prayers are directly ascribed to him. But the question of his authorship of the anaphora has been reopened by Bishop George Wagner. He has compared the content and style of the prayer with Chrysostom's other writings, and concluded that the argument against its authenticity, which is chiefly based on the absence of evidence, is more than balanced by the presence of Chrysostom's own ideas and expressions. Moreover, the title of the prayer 'The prayer of

the proskomidia of St John Chrysostom' in the Codex Barberini may well be taken to refer to the anaphora which it immediately preceded as well as to the prayer of preparation itself.

It is of course the case with the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom as with that of St Basil that even if the anaphoras and certain other prayers are held to be by Chrysostom and Basil themselves, other prayers and formulae even in the earliest text of the Liturgies cannot belong to their time. Some are known to have been added later, and others certainly belong to later stages of liturgical development.

Perhaps then worshippers in the Great Church during Chrysostom's episcopate heard the anaphora composed, like Basil's on the basis of existing tradition, by the Archbishop himself. Its use was no doubt discontinued at least for a time after Chrysostom's condemnation, and may have been superseded in the episcopate of Nestorius, whose own anaphora some think was composed in Constantinople. Thereafter for many centuries it took second place to the anaphora of St Basil. The early fifth century was a time when liturgical traditions were still sufficiently fluid for new prayers to be composed and incorporated into a tradition of worship which was not to become rigidly prescribed for several centuries.

In view of subsequent developments it is important to realize that the anaphora was said, or chanted aloud. Not only by reason of its length – especially if Basil's prayer was in use at this time – but by reason of its being virtually the only prayer in the celebration of the sacrament, it dominated the rite, and was its chief verbal explanation. At the beginning of the fifth century the eucharistic liturgy still preserved its original shape and proportions.

The Diptychs

Included in the anaphora were the diptychs of the living and the dead, so called because the lists of names commemorated in the Liturgy were inscribed on two hinged plates, which could be folded together when not in use, and which were kept with the sacred vessels in the skeuophylakion. Considerable significance was already attached to the diptychs in the popular mind, and they were to become still more important in the following centuries. The commemoration of the dead is first attested by Cyril of Jerusalem, and soon spread widely in the East. That of

the living was soon added. In some churches they were read out before the anaphora began, but there is no reason to think that at Constantinople they were read elsewhere than in the course of the intercession within the anaphora. The names in both sets of diptychs were ranged in hierarchical order, the clergy first, then the laity. The contents of the diptychs had become by the early fifth century a matter of great popular interest, and the inclusion or exclusion of a particular name could arouse fierce passions among the congregation.

At the beginning of the fifth century the diptychs were chiefly of interest as showing with which churches or individuals any given church was in communion. A case in point was that of Chrysostom himself, after his death in 407. After his deposition in 404 many of his supporters in Constantinople refused to enter into communion with his successor Atticus. The latter succeeded in healing this temporary schism, but then the Johannites complained that John's name was not included in the diptychs of the dead. Feeling ran high when it was learnt that his name had been inserted in the diptychs in Antioch, and Atticus, with the Emperor's consent, bowed to popular pressure and put John's name into those of the Great Church.

The diptychs were soon to become a test of orthodoxy. In the doctrinal controversies and consequent schisms, which consumed all too much Christian energy in the next century or two, individual bishops and churches went in and out of communion with one another. The diptychs revealed who was considered orthodox, and who was in communion with whom. At the time of the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon in 451 Bishop Anatolius of Constantinople was strongly urged by Bishop Leo of Rome to exclude from the diptychs the names of Dioscorus of Alexandria, Juvenal of Jerusalem and Eustathius of Berytus, who had been the leaders in the so-called Robber Synod of Ephesus in 449. One bishop might strike out his predecessor, only to have him reinstated by his successor. Constantinople might for a time refuse to commemorate the Bishop of Rome, and vice versa.

It seems that in the East the names on the diptychs were largely, if not exclusively, those of official persons with ecclesiastical significance. It was bishops and emperors, whether living or departed, whose names were read out. In the sixth century the use of diptychs as badges of orthodoxy led to the proposal that the Ecumenical Councils should be commemorated in them. It seems that this was first suggested at the Council of Constantinople in

518, with a view to healing a schism between Old Rome and New. The entry of the first four Ecumenical Councils into the diptychs of Constantinople was greeted with wild enthusiasm by the people of the City.

Holy Communion, Thanksgiving and Dismissal

When the people had responded to the eucharistic prayer with their 'Amen', the bishop blessed them with the words: 'Grace and peace be with you'. They replied: 'And with your spirit'. A diaconal litany may well have followed, as in the Clementine Liturgy. The present litany was certainly in the Byzantine rite by the eighth century. The Lord's Prayer, absent from the Clementine rite, had already found its way into that of Constantinople: the first of many communion devotions which were to fill out the simplicity of the early Eucharist at this point.

The bishop invited the people to Communion in the same way as in Jerusalem and the Clementine rite. Raising his hands in a traditional gesture asking for attention he proclaimed: 'Holy things for holy people', and they replied: 'One is holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father'. At this time the consecrated gifts themselves were not lifted up. Those in the sanctuary received first, though Chrysostom was at pains to point out that all members of the church are equal when it comes to communicating. The faithful then came forward to receive. The consecrated bread and wine were administered separately, the bread being placed on the right hand, beneath which the left was held. The words of administration were probably 'The Body of Christ', 'The Blood of Christ', to which the communicant replied 'Amen'. We do not know whether the communion devotions recommended by Cyril of Jerusalem had spread to the capital. It is probable that a psalm was sung during Communion.

It is clear from Chrysostom's sermons at Antioch that communion time was far from peaceful, and the same may well have been the case in Constantinople. The doors of the church, closed after the dismissal of the catechumens and penitents, were, it seems, opened immediately Communion began. Not a few took the opportunity of leaving the church, without waiting for the prayer after Communion and the formal dismissal. Since they may well have been in church for some hours, this was not altogether surprising. But there was a more serious reason why some departed. The habit of communicating only once a year was

spreading, and those who had no intention of receiving saw no reason why they should stand for some considerable time while the rest partook of the holy gifts.

Consequences of the Decline in Communion

It is one of the more remarkable facts of Christian history that for most of its existence most members of the Church have communicated only rarely, and have sometimes had to be compelled to receive even once a year. In the first three centuries it was out of the question to take part in the celebration of the Eucharist and not to communicate: for Communion was the climax and goal of the service. Regular reception of Communion was the means whereby those incorporated into Christ by baptism were kept in his Body the Church. So important was it that in the second century deacons took Communion from the church gathered for the celebration to the faithful who for good reason were unable to be present themselves.

We have seen the reasons why this attitude to the Eucharist and Communion broke down in the latter part of the fourth century. But the decline in Communion had profound consequences for the liturgy of the Eucharist. In the first three centuries the distribution of Communion formed an important part of the service, and took as long as, if not longer than, the eucharistic prayer. It was also the part of the service in which the people were most fully and actively involved. They had their responses to sing in the psalmody and the litanies. But for most of the service they were listeners, though, it is to be hoped, prayerful ones.

Once the people as a whole ceased to communicate regularly, the balance of the service shifted. Communion occupied a decreasingly prominent part in the rite, and the need to provide the elements also dwindled. The laity became increasingly passive spectators of a service performed by others. The situation was not improved when Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom and others spoke of the eucharistic sacrifice being accomplished at the end of the anaphora. Communion might follow, but it had come to seem less than integral to the rite.

Without Communion, what was the point of celebrating the Eucharist? Cyril of Jerusalem had emphasized the effectiveness of prayer in the presence of the sacrament, in which was present nothing less than Christ, the victim slain for our salvation. That was why his eucharistic prayer included, after the consecratory

epiclesis, a comprehensive intercession for the Church and the world, the living and the dead. Chrysostom took the same view, and this teaching became an integral part of Byzantine and Orthodox doctrine.

But that by itself is not sufficient reason for going to church on Sunday. Further attraction was perhaps provided by the growing splendour of the entry of the bread and wine, and the new significance which Theodore of Mopsuestia and others were coming to attach to it. It may be wondered whether the symbolic interpretation of the Liturgy was not at least in part encouraged by the decline in Communion. It mattered less that people did not receive the Eucharist if they could contemplate in the Liturgy the unfolding story of the life of Christ, or the stages of the soul's ascent to God.

The Understanding of the Eucharist in the Time of Chrysostom

How did the worshippers in the Great Church of the Holy Wisdom understand the Liturgy presided over by John Chrysostom as Archbishop of Constantinople?

Their understanding was first of all shaped by the prayers of the rite, and in particular by the anaphora. If they listened attentively week by week, whether to the anaphora of St Basil, or to that composed by the Archbishop himself, or to any other eucharistic prayer of similar type, they knew that they were engaged in offering a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God for all his mighty acts in creation and redemption, and above all for the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, and his coming again in glory. They knew, too, that these saving events were commemorated by the offering of the bread and wine, which through the invocation of the Holy Spirit on them as well as on the worshippers become the Body and Blood of Christ, which they received for the remission of sins and eternal life in God's Kingdom. United with the Mother of God and all the saints they interceded for the living and the departed, and knew themselves to be partakers in the mystical banquet which anticipated the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation.

But the prayers of the Liturgy were not the only formative influence on their understanding of the rite. When they became Christians they attended the bishop's catechetical lectures. These included lectures on the rites of initiation, baptism, chrismation

and the Eucharist, such as Cyril of Jerusalem gave. The latter are only the earliest to have survived of a number of similar expositions of the central rites of the Church. Their very existence testifies to the felt need for a fuller explanation of the meaning of baptism and the Eucharist than the prayers used in the course of their celebration provided. Chrysostom himself composed such lectures. In his sermons, too, he conveyed to his hearers an understanding of the Liturgy, which was perhaps more influential than the rite itself in shaping their approach to it.

Chrysostom regularly speaks of the Eucharist as a mystery. In St Paul's writings 'mystery' meant the whole plan of God for our salvation. It has been made known above all in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The concept of mystery later came to be applied to those sacramental actions within the Church which both represented Christ's saving acts, and gave Christians a share in the redemption they had accomplished. Both baptism and the Eucharist were termed mysteries.

Following Origen, Chrysostom calls it a mystery when 'we see one thing and believe another'. What is seen, heard and touched in the Eucharist can be understood by the senses and known by natural reason. But the spiritual, heavenly realities concealed in it can be grasped only by faith and the enlightenment given by the Holy Spirit. The sacrament is a sign of a reality greater than itself, which is nevertheless made present and available in the sign.

Chrysostom frequently speaks of the Eucharist as 'the mysteries' in the plural. Not only does he follow Cyril in qualifying them as fearful and awful, but he so describes also different parts of the service, the altar, and the hour in which the mysteries are celebrated. Merely to be present is reason for being afraid. Through Chrysostom Cyril's language passed into the Byzantine liturgical and devotional tradition. But Chrysostom was not altogether typical of the period. The Jerusalem Liturgy of St James uses such language freely, and it is found to a lesser extent in the Byzantine Liturgies of Basil and Chrysostom. But the Cappadocian Fathers do not use it, nor is it to be found in the Clementine Liturgy.

In his teaching about the Eucharist Chrysostom makes use of traditional typology, which saw the events of the new covenant prefigured in the old. In the New Testament itself Christ's death and resurrection are seen as the fulfilment of the Exodus. What God did for the Israelites when he led them out of slavery into the

promised land pointed forward to that greater Exodus, when through the blood of the true paschal Lamb he brought the whole human race out of slavery to sin into the liberty of his children. The saving acts of Christ are themselves made present in the sacraments, which both enable each generation to appropriate God's salvation, and point forward to its consummation at the end of time. Chrysostom taught his congregation to see the Eucharist prefigured in the sacrifice of Melchisedech, who brought gifts of bread and wine to be offered to God; in the paschal lamb, whose blood daubed on their doorposts saved the Israelites when the first-born of Egypt were slain; in the manna, by which they were sustained in the wilderness; and in the Jewish sacrifices offered under the old covenant.

Chrysostom lays particular stress on the Eucharist as the 'anamnesis' of the many things God has done for us, and especially of the sacrifice of the cross. He urges his congregation to realize that at the Eucharist they are truly in the Upper Room. It is Christ who presides, as at the Last Supper; and when the priest gives them Communion, they must understand it to be the hand of Christ himself which reaches out to them. The Eucharist is an imitation of the death of Christ, and a participation in it. He even uses the Liturgy in this sense to refute heretics who doubt the sacrificial death of Christ: let them be referred to the mysteries, where that sacrifice is present. The incarnation too is present: those who come to the Eucharist in faith will see the Lord lying in the manger, represented by the altar, not wrapped in swaddling clothes but surrounded by the Holy Spirit. He teaches his people to understand the Eucharist as a participation in the worship of heaven. The angels, who are always present in the church, are especially there when the Liturgy is being celebrated.

If Chrysostom makes use of accepted typology, he also employs allegory in explaining the meaning of the Eucharist. The distinction between these two kinds of explanation is important to note in view of later developments in the Byzantine tradition of liturgical interpretation. Typology seeks to explain the meaning of an event in the story of God's dealings with mankind by relating it to another event whose inner meaning is fundamentally similar. So the redemption achieved by Jesus Christ can be seen as fulfilling the Exodus, and the Eucharist can be seen as actualizing the work of Christ, and pointing forward to the final accompaniment of that salvation for the whole of creation towards

which God has consistently been working in human history. Typology is concerned with events as entities.

Allegory is concerned rather with the details of events or things, and its interpretation of them can be unrelated to any fundamental similarity of meaning. Its symbolism tends to be arbitrary. There is a hint of this kind of approach when Chrysostom says that the altar represents the manger at Bethlehem. The mystery of Christ present in the Eucharist is beginning to be broken down into its various aspects. Chrysostom says that the incarnation of Christ is made present as well as the passion. When we set that beside Theodore of Mopsuestia's interpretation of the Liturgy, we see the first stage of the tendency to associate different parts of the rite with different moments in the life of Christ.

Symbolic interpretation did not confine itself to the rite itself. Chrysostom relates the altar to the manger. His enthusiastic admirer, Isidore of Pelusium, who may also have been his pupil and who died in 435, explains in one of his letters the meaning of the eileton, or corporal, the deacon's stole and the bishop's omophorion. The interpretation given in the following passages passed into the Byzantine tradition of liturgical explanation:

The unfolding of the pure eileton under the holy oblations signifies the ministry of Joseph of Arimathea. He wrapped the body of the Lord in a linen cloth and laid it in a tomb whence came resurrection for all our race. In the same way we consecrate the bread which has been offered on the eileton and we find there with certainty the Body of the Lord, the source of that immortality which Jesus, laid in the tomb by Joseph, has bestowed on us by his resurrection (*Letter* 1.123).

The orarion with which the deacons accomplish their ministry in the sanctuary recalls the humility of the Lord, who washed the feet of his disciples and wiped them. The omophorion of the bishop is made of wool and not of linen: for it signifies the fleece of the lost sheep for which the Lord sought and which he placed on his shoulders. The bishop, in fact, is a figure of Christ. He fulfils his functions, and shows us by his vestment that he is imitating the good and great shepherd, who offered to bear himself the infirmities of his flock (*Letter* 1.136).

The source of allegorical interpretation of the Liturgy seems to have been in the region of Antioch. The first such systematic

explanation is that of Theodore of Mopsuestia in his *Catechetical Homilies*. While he uses typology in his exegesis of Scripture, he does not attempt to relate the Eucharist to any Old Testament prefiguration. For him the Liturgy is the image of heavenly realities, and the memorial of the historical life of Jesus.

Explaining the Eucharist as the memorial of the life of Jesus, Theodore concentrates on his death and resurrection. He relates the different aspects of those events to successive stages in the rite. The procession accompanying the entry of the bread and wine represents Christ's going forth to his sacrificial death. The deacons are the angels who supported him during his passion. The placing of the bread and wine on the altar recall the deposition of Christ's body in the tomb. The silence of the people during the anaphora represents the silence of the stunned disciples, or that of the angels, waiting for the resurrection. The coming of the Holy Spirit in response to the epiclesis symbolizes the return of Christ's spirit to his body. The breaking of the bread recalls the resurrection appearances of Jesus.

This breakdown of the eucharistic memorial, or anamnesis, of Jesus' saving passion into a detailed commemoration of its successive stages reflects a similar breakdown of its yearly celebration in the Paschal feast. Until the fourth century the death and resurrection of Jesus were celebrated together on one day at Easter. The celebration was less a commemoration of a past event than a participation in the present reality of redemption. Through the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, celebrated in the course of the Easter Vigil, the death of Jesus and his resurrection to eternal life were reproduced in the sacramental death in the font of the members of his Body, the Church, and their participation in his risen life. Holy Week as a detailed commemoration of the events of the last week of Jesus' life came into being towards the end of the fourth century in Jerusalem. Perhaps it was Cyril of Jerusalem himself who devised the pattern of processions and services which enabled pilgrims as well as local Christians to commemorate these events in the places and at the times at which they had happened. The single comprehensive celebration of the first three centuries became a series of dramatic services commemorating the successive stages of Christ's suffering, death, burial and resurrection. They are described in detail by Egeria, who visited the Holy Land as a pilgrim from the west in the early 380s. The background to their emergence was the new interest in the details of the earthly life of

Jesus, associated with the Empress Helena's visit to the Holy Land in 326 and her son Constantine's lavish building programme, which covered the principal holy sites with magnificent churches.

By the end of the fourth century the eucharistic memorial of Jesus, like the Paschal celebration, was beginning to be understood less in a sacramental, and more in a dramatic, historical way. This tendency was strengthened as this particular tradition of interpretation developed. It had a profound influence on every aspect of Byzantine eucharistic worship: it was given expression in prayers added to the rite; it inspired a wealth of ceremonial development; it helped to shape the late Byzantine iconographic scheme of church decoration; and it had a lasting effect on Orthodox eucharistic piety.