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Liturgy of the Byzantine Rite

Damaskinos Olkinuora

The present entry deals with the Byzantine rite, a term employed here in its broad meaning to refer to the liturgical tradition of Eastern Chalcedonian Christians. These are Eastern Orthodox and various Eastern rite Catholics, who share a common liturgical tradition shaped in the Eastern parts of Christian world among those in communion with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. After a brief exploration of its historical development in the two main centres of Byzantine liturgical life – Palestine and Constantinople – the current structure of the received tradition of the Byzantine rite is described. Special attention will be given to the three eucharistic liturgies in contemporary use of Basil the Great and John Chrysostom, and the 'liturgy' of the pre-sanctified gifts. Finally, some theological considerations of the character of the Byzantine rite shall be provided, based mainly on historical Byzantine liturgical commentaries. Sacraments – called 'mysteries' in the Byzantine tradition – are treated only briefly.

Keywords: Liturgy, Hymnography, Orthodox, Tradition, Church calendar, Rites, Eucharist

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1 Definition of the Byzantine rite

It seems that during the first centuries of the early Christian church, various local liturgical traditions were in use. This prehistory of Eastern liturgy must be passed over for two reasons: firstly, not much is known of these liturgies and, second, their examination would fall beyond the scope of this article. What is of more interest is what happened afterwards. Gradually, a process of systematizing these varying local traditions took place, and this resulted in a small number of more widely employed liturgical rites. One of these is the so-called Byzantine rite, used by the contemporary Eastern Orthodox Churches (as opposed to the Oriental Churches, such as the Ethiopian, Armenian, and Syro-Jacobite Churches, that have their own rites) and the Eastern Catholic churches, including most notably the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic church and the Arabic-speaking Melkite Greek Catholic Church. There are also various autonomous groups within the Catholic church that follow the Byzantine rite, as well as instances in the Lutheran and Anglican spheres. However, the Eastern Orthodox remain the largest group employing it.

In scholarship, the term ‘Byzantine rite’ is also sometimes used as a historical term to denote the rite of the East Roman capital, Constantinople, as opposed to the other Greek-speaking local liturgical rites, such as that of Palestine. However, in this present article the term is primarily used to describe the received liturgical tradition of the Eastern Orthodox churches, the result of a centuries-long developmental process in which the divide between Constantinopolitan and Palestinian practice was largely harmonized.

The ‘Byzantine’ moniker refers to the rite’s origins in Greek-speaking Christian communities, roughly during the period when the Eastern Roman Empire (commonly referred to as ‘Byzantium’) existed as an independent state (from the fourth century up to 1453), and which was the formative period of the received tradition. However, the term should not be understood as limiting itself to the political borders of Byzantium: rather, it describes the broader cultural world of Greek-speaking Christianity, even under Muslim or Roman Catholic rule.

The services of the Byzantine rite were gradually translated into several languages, the earliest of them being Syriac, Georgian, and Church Slavonic. In the modern age, the number of translations has radically increased, and the full Byzantine rite can be celebrated in scores of contemporary languages. Despite some minor local variations, it is nevertheless characteristic for the followers of the Byzantine rite to adhere to its forms rather conservatively.

2 History of the Byzantine rite

The process of local differentiation of rites and some kind of synthesis around major centres of worship began in the fourth century, when Christianity began to become a predominant religion in Rome. There is naturally a pre-history of these rites among early Christians from the very beginnings of Christianity. Some liturgical evidence for this exists in the New Testament itself, as well as in many extra-canonical texts and liturgical instructions included in works such as the Apostolic Constitutions in the fourth century. These early sources show abundant variation among local liturgical traditions (Bradshaw 1996).

Much scholarly effort has been expended in past decades to offer a convincing narrative of distinction between ‘monastic’ and ‘cathedral’ liturgical practices, as well as details of a so-called ‘liturgical synthesis’ that took place between the two main traditions of the Byzantine East – that of Constantinople and Palestine, each of which will be presented in more detail below. This version of the history of the Byzantine rite, first written by scholars such as Anton Baumstark (collected in Baumstark 2010), and later on, perhaps most influentially, Robert F. Taft (e.g. Taft 1992), has been seriously reconsidered in more recent scholarship, and new avenues have been pursued.

Limitations of space require me to omit other local traditions from this survey, such as the important patriarchates of Antioch and Alexandria, also because of the state of affairs in scholarship: these traditions require much more research by liturgists in order to reach a reliable image of their development and influence on Byzantine worship elsewhere.

2.1 Palestinian liturgy

The main centre of Palestinian worship was Jerusalem and was focused intimately on the Anastasis (Resurrection) Church, consecrated in 335 as a commission by Constantine the Great, and housing Christ’s tomb. In Byzantine manuscripts, the rite of the Resurrection cathedral was called Hagiopolite (‘of the Holy City’). Significantly, the desert monasteries surrounding Jerusalem were also important spiritual centres, and there is a lot of scholarship dealing with the distinction between the monastic and cathedral rites of Palestine, but the division seems far from clear-cut. The Resurrection Church had a significant monastic presence, bringing monastic influence to its liturgical life, but the cathedral rite here was also distinct from the rites of the surrounding monasteries, even though the rites of monastic communities also differed (see Galadza 2018: 31–32 and 57–59 and the relevant bibliography). A good example of common ground is that Hagiopolitan Psalters, a division of the Book of Psalms into twenty sections of roughly equal length (*kathismata*) for liturgical use, were used in both monastic and cathedral surroundings.

A comprehensive history of the early Palestinian liturgy remains to be written, partly because of the lack of editions and study of source texts. The earliest sources include the catechetical sermons of Cyril of Jerusalem (313–387), the diaries of a Hispanic nun

named Egeria in the late fourth century (McGowan and Bradshaw 2018), and later the Armenian (Renoux 1971) and Georgian lectionaries (Tarchnischvili 1959), which describe the liturgical practices of the Holy City (the Greek prototype of these last texts has not survived).

One of the most notable features of worship concentrated around the Holy Sepulchre is its stational character. Liturgical celebrations included processions between churches and holy places, naturally connected with the character of Jerusalem being the centre of the Holy Land: at times, processions also extended elsewhere in the Palestinian lands. The eucharistic liturgy described in Cyril's fifth catechesis closely resembles the structure of the liturgy of St James. The most important hymnographic collection of the early Palestinian tradition is the *Tropologion*. This book, even called the 'First Christian Hymnal' (Shoemaker 2018), survives in its (supposedly) oldest form only in a Georgian translation of the lost Greek original, called the *Iadgari*, even though its dating remains a matter of dispute. It includes hymns for the weekly, annual, and fixed festal cycles, and influenced later Byzantine hymnals. A distinction between the 'new' and 'ancient' *Tropologion* was made by a tenth-century scribe, Iovane Zosime, and thus many scholars consider the ancient *Iadgari* to represent the oldest Palestinian layer of the received tradition of Orthodox hymnography (for example Frøyshov 2013).

The most important sources for Palestinian monastic liturgy are hagiographical texts, since there are no surviving liturgical manuscripts. The eucharistic liturgy was a Hagiopolite one, that of St James, but not much else is known about the structure of early Palestinian monastic liturgy. The dozens of monasteries around Jerusalem and the Judean desert represented both coenobitic and lavriote traditions. The former consisted of a tightly connected community, where all monks share a common daily schedule and property, whereas in the latter communities monks lived in isolation and gathered together in common services only on Saturdays and Sundays. This naturally affected their liturgical life, as the practice of private prayer was much more prominent in lavriote monasticism.

Current scholarship suggests that there was liturgical variation among the monastic communities of Palestine, as this was witnessed by the abbots Sophronios and John during their visits to Sinai (Galadza 2018: 32; Longo 1965). The most significant monastery of the Palestinian desert, Mar Saba, acquired an even more important position from the eighth century onwards, which has often misled scholars into referring even to early Palestinian monastic liturgy as 'Sabaite' practice. This is not the case, even though at this later date the liturgical tradition of Mar Saba became a commonly emulated liturgical standard.

2.2 Constantinopolitan liturgy

The ‘Great Church’ of Constantinople, Hagia Sophia, was another major centre of liturgical worship in the Eastern empire. This church was the See of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the most important episcopal centre of the Eastern Empire and the first in hierarchy after the schism with Old Rome. Before the time of iconoclasm in the eighth and ninth centuries, only a little direct information remains on the liturgical rite of the Byzantine capital, most importantly in the manuscript Barberini gr. 336 dating from ca 780 CE (Parenti and Velkovska 1995). However, more information can be deduced from sermons from the fourth century onwards, as well as the *kontakia* hymns by Romanos the Melodist from the sixth century.

More detailed liturgical rubrics can be found in the *kanonarion-synaxarion*, commonly known in scholarship by its misleading title ‘Typikon of the Great Church of Christ’ (Mateos 1962). *Typikon* usually refers to one of three things: a collection of liturgical rubrics, the foundation document of a monastery, or the oral liturgical tradition of a particular location, but in this case it refers to a liturgical calendar combined with some liturgical texts, scriptural readings, and liturgical instructions. Also, manuscripts called *Praxapostolos* (‘Acts and Epistles’) include both a lectionary of epistle readings from the New Testament and a liturgical structure for offices. The tradition preserved in these manuscripts represents the established tradition of approximately the tenth century (Hanke 2018).

The eucharistic liturgies celebrated in Constantinople were those attributed to St Basil the Great and St John Chrysostom, described later in this entry. An important source for the study of the historical development of these liturgies are the abundant liturgical commentaries which have survived (see Bornert 1966 and Ray 2017), but some of them still lack critical editions and translations. These are important sources for the theology of the Byzantine rite, including not only liturgical texts but also movements, gestures, descriptions of the church space, and other non-verbal elements of the liturgy.

An early monastic tradition of Constantinopolitan liturgy is represented by the monastery of the *Akoimetoi*, the ‘Sleepless Ones’, founded in the fifth century by the monk Alexander: here, the monastic community was divided into choirs tasked with offering unceasing liturgical prayer in the monastery’s main church, hence their name (see Fountoules 1963). Later, Constantinopolitan monastic liturgy is best documented at the monastery of Studion, one of the centres of hymnographic composition in the capital since the time of Theodore Studite (759–826). The earliest source of the Studite order is the *Typikon* of Alexios the Studite, Patriarch of Constantinople (1025–1043), a collection of liturgical rubrics preserved only in its Slavonic translation (Petras 1991).

As in Palestine, Constantinople had developed Psalters for use in both its monastic and cathedral surroundings; however, the Constantinopolitan Psalters followed the ecclesiastical (*ekklesiastes*) tradition, where the Book of Psalms was divided into sixty-

eight antiphons, and included refrains for liturgical singing, as well as other hymnography and instructions. Individual manuscripts of this type vary greatly in content (Parpulov 2014).

2.3 Liturgical synthesis

Local liturgical practices did not exist in a vacuum as isolated peripheries, but there was clearly an exchange of influences between monasteries and city churches. From at least the eighth century onwards, there was an increasing process of synthesis between not only the liturgical traditions of local monastic and city churches, but between the liturgical traditions of Constantinople and Palestine as well, resulting ultimately in the so-called Neo-Sabbaitic Typikon that forms the basis of the received tradition of Byzantine liturgy.

Recent research has significantly revised previous thinking regarding the processes of liturgical synthesis, and the discussion is an ongoing one. Most twentieth-century scholarship, taking its cue from comments made by Symeon of Thessalonica (d. 1429), relies on an assumption which identifies Palestinian liturgy with ‘monastic’ and Constantinopolitan liturgy with ‘cathedral’ or ‘sung’ liturgy. As seen above, monastic and cathedral rites existed simultaneously in both locations, and there was interaction between them. Palestinian influence on Constantinople was not only monastic: the Hagiopolitan office, celebrated in the cathedral of Jerusalem, was a designation also mentioned in Constantinopolitan sources, showing that the rite of the Anastasis church – including its attendant monastic elements – was imported to the Byzantine capital.

There is much contemporary debate on the beginnings of this liturgical synthesis, revolving around the exact time Palestinian liturgy was introduced in Constantinople and what its early phases looked like. Stig Frøyshov (2020) has argued for at least a partial employment of the Hagiopolite office in Constantinople even before the seventh century, but his views have not been universally embraced (Parenti 2022). On the other hand, the process of ‘Byzantinization’ that Palestinian liturgy underwent was a long one, stretching over half a millennium due to historical conditions: Palestine falling into the hands of Arabs in the seventh century, and, later on, the troops of the First Crusade.

What is known explicitly about Palestinian influences in the Byzantine capital is that some hymnographers – such as Andrew of Crete (650–740[?]), a Hagiopolitan monk who later on migrated to Constantinople and Crete, and Germanos (c. 634–733), patriarch of Constantinople (though questions of authorship are problematic), composed hymns titled *canons*, a poetic genre with Palestinian origins. This shows that this particular Palestinian element, at least, became popular in the Byzantine capital. Monks of the monastery of Mar Saba apparently also had influence on the liturgy of Byzantium, even though many details of this process still remain speculative.

The Studion monastery, mentioned above as one of the liturgical centres of Constantinople, replaced the older Constantinopolitan monastic tradition of the *Akoimetoi* and went through liturgical reforms of its own under the auspices of St Theodore. Earlier liturgical scholarship has called this 'Middle-Byzantine synthesis' (e.g. Taft 1992: 67–77), where the Palestinian structures of the Liturgy of the Hours – represented by the liturgical book *Horologion* ('Book of Hours') – were combined with the prayers and eucharistic offices of the Constantinopolitan rite. Theodore promoted daily communion, and seems to have preferred the shorter eucharistic liturgy of John Chrysostom as part of the daily office, relegating Basil the Great's longer liturgy to a secondary place (Pott 2010). This influenced the whole Constantinopolitan church, where John Chrysostom's liturgy came to dominate by the eleventh century, and its celebration in the Great Church had become daily, while Basil's liturgy was used merely ten times a year (see Parenti 2021). The Studion reforms also gave rise to the numerous hymnographic books of the received tradition.

The Studite form of liturgical life gained ground in Constantinople, even though the cathedral rite was still celebrated in the city's main church, Hagia Sophia. After the sack of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204, the cathedral rite disappeared from the main church, being first replaced by Latin offices and, after the return of Constantinople into the hands of Byzantines in 1261, wholesale by the Studite office. The cathedral office survived until the fifteenth century in the Hagia Sophia of Thessalonica, as witnessed by St Symeon of Thessalonica.

The simultaneous Byzantinization of Palestinian liturgy had several major external events exerting their own pressures. Jerusalem's liturgical life was first influenced by the Islamic conquest of Palestine, followed by the crusades in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when Greek liturgical life ceased in the church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Hagiopolitan liturgical rite disappeared finally in the thirteenth century after a long and gradual process of liturgical reforms, spontaneously rather than imposed. This led to the disappearance of the liturgy of St James by the twelfth century, as well as the introduction of many other Constantinopolitan elements, some of which had, in turn, been formed earlier by exposure to the Palestinian rite (Galadza 2018).

The monastic peninsula of Mount Athos became from the tenth century onwards another important liturgical centre, where influences from different local traditions were synthetized. This interaction, together with developments in Constantinople and Palestine, led to the 'Neo-Sabaitic synthesis', where liturgy throughout the cultural sphere of Byzantium, including in areas long under non-Byzantine political rule, lost even more of the cathedral elements of Constantinople. This liturgical tradition reached its peak in the fourteenth-century spiritual revival of Mount Athos – the hesychastic movement – and its most important sources are the *Diataxis* of the hesychast Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos, including the order of the eucharistic liturgy, the liturgical commentary by another

hesychast clergyman, Nicholas Cabasilas (Hussey and McNulty 1960), and the Typikon of St Sabas that mainly includes instructions for the Liturgy of Hours.

2.4 After Byzantium

No further significant liturgical forms can be found after the fall of Byzantium, but the liturgical books themselves underwent editing processes, particularly due to book printing. The earliest Byzantine liturgical books in the Greek language were printed in Italy, where a part of the Constantinopolitan intellectual élite had migrated after the fall of Constantinople. These books were created for the needs of both the Eastern Orthodox churches as well as Byzantine Catholic communities, even though the production of hand-copied manuscripts still continued under Ottoman rule in the East (this early phase of liturgical book printing is currently being studied by Samuel M. Bauer).

One might consider the introduction of printed service books as the last significant phase of the development of these rites, as their availability slowed down changes in liturgical structures. Most liturgical innovations were based on jurisdictional differences and local veneration of saints. New offices were written for newly canonized saints, and only in rare cases were these new offices translated into other languages. This gradually resulted in some differences in the liturgical calendar of commemorations between the Russian- and Greek-speaking churches, for instance. On the other hand, books intended for use by Byzantine Catholic communities removed saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church (such as the fourteenth-century theologian Gregory Palamas, canonized after the Great Schism), and some newly-introduced offices influenced by Roman Catholic theology and spirituality adapted themselves to the forms of the Byzantine rite, such as Corpus Christi (Takala-Roszczenko 2013).

The rubrics of offices continued to be based, especially in areas under Ottoman rule, on the Typikon of St Sabas, whereas in Russia some Studite elements survived until the seventeenth century. However, in the liturgical reforms of Patriarch Nikon (1605–1681), Russian liturgical texts, rubrics, and other liturgical elements were harmonized with contemporary Greek practices. This resulted in the schism of the so-called ‘Old Believers’ or ‘Old Ritualists’, who fought to maintain pre-Nikonian liturgical forms, thus preserving more Studite influences compared with the received Greek tradition (for an Old Believer prayer book, see Simon, Ciuba and Jorewiec 1986).

In the nineteenth century, liturgical books in Greek began to be published in the newly independent Kingdom of Greece (Alexopoulos and Bilalis Anatolikiotes 2025). Simultaneously, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople took an active role in reforming liturgical material, including the *typikon*, a collection of liturgical rubrics. Whereas the Eastern Orthodox church had, for centuries, used the Typikon of St Sabas, its monastic origins resulted in liturgical offices deemed too long for parish usage. In 1838, a *typikon*

titled ‘The Ecclesiastical Typikon according to the Style of the Great Church of Christ’ was published, and later on revised in 1888 by the head chanter of the patriarchate, George Violakes, titled ‘Typikon of the Great Church of Christ’ (Violakis 2015). This set of liturgical instructions systematized abbreviations that had become common in parish use: Psalter and patristic readings were omitted, and the structure of Matins in particular was reorganized in such a way as to facilitate latecomers to hear what was considered the most essential part of Matins – the Gospel reading. The Violakes Typikon is still mainly in use in Greek-speaking parish churches and communities heavily influenced by them, but it was not adopted in other local churches.

Therefore, there is slight variation in the way the liturgy of the hours is organized in different contemporary local churches. However, the eucharistic offices (Divine Liturgies) are practically identical, with only very minor local variations. Most local variation, however, is related not to rubrics, but rather to movements that are not commonly written down in rubrics, liturgical vestments, church music, and other church arts.

3 Structure of the received tradition

3.1 Liturgical cycles

The Byzantine rite includes a complex system of overlapping but independent liturgical cycles. Each day has a cycle of services, beginning from the Vespers office of the preceding evening; each week also follows a cycle of commemorations; the calendar year of days and months is a cycle as well; and in the spring season all this is modified by the movable cycle centred around the feast of Christ’s resurrection, Pascha (consisting of Great Lent and Paschaltide). Biblical readings, hymnography, and the daily prayer texts are drawn from all these different cycles within any given liturgical service in a systematic and highly regulated manner (see also Christian Year).

3.1.1 Daily and weekly cycle

The daily cycle of services consists of Midnight Office, Matins, Hours (first, third, sixth), Divine Liturgy, ninth Hour, Vespers, and Compline: even though the liturgical day usually begins from Vespers, the Horologion customarily begins from the Midnight Office. The Divine Liturgy will be discussed below, and this section shall concentrate on the Liturgy of the Hours, constituted of the rest of these listed services and designed in such a way that it can be performed nearly in its entirety without a priest present. Below is an overview of these services, not a systematic presentation of all possible combinations or exceptions (a more detailed description of liturgical rubrics of the received tradition is Getcha 2012).

Traditionally, Matins and Vespers hold a prominent position among these offices, and in monastic churches that preserve the traditional tripartite structure of altar, nave, and

narthex (or lite), only Vespers, Matins, and the Divine Liturgy are celebrated in the nave and altar itself, whereas the other offices are recited in the narthex.

Vespers begins with the recitation of the Psalm of Creation (104), during which the priest silently reads evening prayers drawn from the Constantinopolitan cathedral rite, followed by the Great Litany, Psalm reading, and 'Lord, I have cried' (Ps 140–141; 129; 116) with interpolated *stichera* (a set of monostrophic hymns). After this the vesperal hymn 'O Gladsome Light' is recited or sung, followed by a daily psalm verse called *prokeimenon*. After petitions and the prayer 'Vouchsafe, O Lord', a vesperal set of Aposticha (a set of *stichera*, monostrophic hymns) is sung, after which St Symeon's prayer (*Nunc dimittis*, Luke 2:29–32) and the Trishagion are read. After the singing of the Apolytikion and the reciting of petitions, there is the final dismissal. On Saturday evenings and feast days, there is a procession during 'O Gladsome Light', and the *prokeimenon* might be followed by three readings usually drawn from the Old Testament, except on the feasts of apostles, when they are drawn from the epistles.

Compline exists in two versions, the Great and Small, the former of which is celebrated only during weekdays of the Great Lent and the all-night vigils (see below) beginning with a Compline (Christmas, Theophany, and Annunciation). Both versions consist of psalm readings, Doxology, and prayers, with an interpolated canon (see the description of Matins) or Akathistos hymn (a long poem to the Mother of God, consisting of twenty-four alphabetic stanzas).

Midnight office is rarely celebrated in parishes, but a standard service in monasteries, where it is usually combined with Matins and preceded by a brief introductory service, a thanksgiving for waking up. A central part of the office is the recitation of Psalm 119 (118 LXX [Septuagint]), titled *Amomos* ('Blameless') after its introductory verse. On Saturdays this is replaced by other psalms of the ninth *kathisma*, because the *Amomos* is recited in the Psalter readings of Matins; on Sundays, the structure of the Midnight office is strikingly different, and its central part is a trinitarian canon hymn according to the mode assigned for each week.

Weekday Matins begin with the Royal Office (Ps 19–20), then the Six Psalms (Ps 3; 38; 63; 88; 103; 143), penitential and doxological in their character, during which the priest silently recites morning prayers drawn from the Constantinopolitan rite. After that, the hymn 'God is the Lord' is followed by the Apolytikion (a brief monostrophic hymn on the day or celebrated saint) and psalm readings (which are usually omitted in parish usage). On feast days and Sundays, after the psalm readings there is an interpolation called the Polyeleos, consisting of psalmody (though the Violakes typikon, described in section 2.4, omits it), followed by a set of antiphons and the reading of the Gospel. After a recitation of Psalm 51 there follows the singing of canons, the hymnographic highlight of Matins. The

canon is a long hymnographic entity that consists usually of eight odes, numbered one to nine (with ode two omitted outside of Great Lent) and with interpolations after odes three and six. Each ode consists of an introductory stanza, *heirmos*, and followed by *troparia*, a set of stanzas that follow the metrical and musical model of the *heirmos*. Whereas each ode of the canon is based on a biblical ode (canticle) that are customarily copied as an appendix of Byzantine Psalters, usually in the received tradition only ode nine (*Magnificat*) is sung as an interpolation before ode nine. After this the Lauds are sung, on festal days interpolated with *stichera*, followed by the Great Doxology (recited on weekdays and sung on Sundays and festal days, when it is concluded by the Trisagion ['Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us'] and the Apolytikion), petitions, and another set of Aposticha (except when the Doxology is sung), followed again by Trisagion and the Apolytikion. After the Dismissal, the first Hour is attached to the service.

All the Hours follow a similar structure: they consist of three psalms, a set of prayers that is partially identical and partially different, with each hour ending with its characteristic prayer. The first hour is attached to Matins, whereas the third and sixth hours are usually read together as a service called *Trithekte* before the Divine Liturgy or as an independent service. The ninth hour is attached to Vespers; on lenten days, when Divine Liturgy is not celebrated, it is followed by a service called Typika.

All offices of the Liturgy of the Hours change slightly during Great Lent, the period of six weeks preceding Holy Week and Pascha. However, this 'Lenten office' is historically the everyday weekday office of the Neo-Sabaitic typikon, whereas the weekday service of the received tradition represents a simplified festal office.

On the eve of major feast days and Sundays, the Neo-Sabaitic typikon prescribes an 'all-night vigil' (*agrypnia*), consisting of Vespers, Matins, and first hour as a unified office. Whereas most parishes following the Russian tradition retain this tradition, in other local churches it is mostly celebrated only in monasteries or perhaps on special occasions.

Superimposed on this daily cycle of services is a weekly cycle that provides a theme to be commemorated on each day through copious amounts of hymnography. Sunday, the first day of the week, is the day of Resurrection, Monday is dedicated to angels and repentance, Tuesday to St John the Baptist and repentance, Wednesday to the Cross and the Mother of God (Virgin Mary), Thursday to the apostles and St Nicholas, Friday to the Cross, and Saturdays to all saints and the deceased.

3.1.2 Annual cycle

There are several overlapping annual cycles. The fixed calendrical cycle, beginning from September and included in the liturgical books called *Menaia* ('Monthly Books'), contains liturgical texts for each day of each month. There is also the movable Paschal cycle,

anchored by the date of Pascha at its centre: this gives the starting point for the Lenten cycle preceding it and the Pentekostarion, an eight-week cycle following Pascha up to the feast of Pentecost and its following Sunday, dedicated to all saints. What is typical for this movable cycle is a different thematic commemoration on each Sunday.

An element that combines the two cycles is the system of twelve major feasts, consisting of pre- and postfeasts, apart from the feast day itself. Some of these feasts, such as Christmas and Theophany, belong to the fixed cycle, whereas Palm Sunday, Ascension, and Pentecost are related to the movable cycle.

The feast of Pascha also provides a starting point for the lectionary system of epistle and Gospel readings in the Divine Liturgy. Whereas the epistle readings are assigned continuously until the beginning of next year's Lenten cycle, the Gospel cycle is rearranged after the feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross on September 14. The Resurrectional Gospels read during Sunday Matins, known as *eothina*, follow an eleven-week cycle of their own.

After the Pentekostarion period finishes, there begins another continuous cycle that affects hymnography and music, called the Oktoechos ('Eight Modes'). Each week, beginning from the first service of Sunday (Vespers sung on Saturday evening), is dominated musically by a musical idiom called '*echos*', each of the *echoi* representing a particular character. The cycle is divided into four authentic and four plagal modes: hymns to be sung according to these modes are included in the liturgical book of Oktoechos or Parakletike. Once the cycle is complete, it begins again from the first mode. The Oktoechos cycle is continued until the last week of the Great Lent.

3.2 Liturgical books

Printed liturgical books used in Byzantine worship are a continuation of the manuscript tradition that went through an extensive reform from the ninth century onwards. Along this chronological trajectory, there seems to be a general tendency from textual variety to uniformity, while at the same time from simpler forms of liturgical elements to more complicated ones. The printed liturgical books roughly correspond to the structure of manuscripts from the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries onwards, with some variation in content.

Even though there are some differences in how liturgical books are named, the Greek titles of books are most often the standard ones used in Western languages as well, whereas the Slavonic and Romanian traditions use their own versions. The prayer book used by the priest to celebrate liturgies and sacraments, traditionally called 'mysteries', is called the *Euchologion* (Book of Prayers). In contemporary worship, the mysteries are often separated from the rest of the liturgies, and the book containing the latter is called

the *Hieratikon* (Priestly Book), whereas the former are included in the *Euchologion* or in a separate book called *Hagiasmatarion* (Book of Sanctification). A book including only the deacon's parts is called the *Hierodiakonikon* (Diaconal Book). The Gospel readings, always recited by the clergy, are included in the *Evangelion* (Gospel book), organized by liturgical readings. The *Tetraevangelion* (Four Gospels' Book) includes all four canonical Gospels in their full form, read during the Holy Week.

Another group of books are meant for the use of the reader. These include the *Horologion* (Book of Hours), which contains the Liturgy of the Hours, together with some hymnographic material. The *Psalter* is organized according to the liturgical way of reading the Book of Psalms in twenty parts called *kathismata*, each of them divided into three parts: thus, the received tradition uses the Palestinian Psalter. The *Apostolos* (Apostle) includes epistles, divided into liturgical readings for the whole ecclesiastical year, together with the preceding and following psalm verses (*prokeimena* and *allelouiaria*). Traditionally, there is also a book called the *Prophetologion* (Book of Prophesies), which contains Old Testament readings for festal Vespers, but nowadays these readings are usually included in the *Menaia* or the *Triodion* and *Pentekostarion*.

There are also several hymnals, corresponding to the different liturgical cycles, providing material for daily Vespers and Matins, at times also for Compline, Midnight Office, and Liturgy. The *Menaia* (Monthly Books) include daily hymnography for each calendar day of the year, and Old Testament readings for the feasts. The *Parakletike* or *Oktoechos* (Book of Eight Modes) includes daily hymnography for the eight-week cycle of eight musical modes. This is partly replaced during Great Lent and its preparatory weeks by the *Triodion* (Three-Ode Book), which includes Old Testament readings for weekday Vespers, and from Paschal Sunday to the Sunday of All Saints (the Sunday following Pentecost) by the *Pentekostarion* (the Fifty-Day Book), likewise includes Old Testament readings for the festal Vespers.

Since no book traditionally contains all the texts for a particular office in a systematic manner, there is also the *Typikon* that regulates the use of these other liturgical books. In other words, it is a guidebook, but is not used as a liturgical book itself. Nowadays there are several local *Typika* published, and some local churches publish an annual collection of liturgical rubrics. New digital tools allow collecting liturgical texts to daily full offices more easily, which has reduced the need of chanters, readers, and priests using the *Typikon* itself.

3.3 Eucharistic liturgies

Eucharistic liturgies, usually called Divine Liturgies in the Byzantine tradition, refer to the services in which Holy Communion is distributed to the faithful. More specifically, all liturgies, apart from the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, include the consecration of the

eucharistic gifts, bread and wine, into Christ's body and blood, through eucharistic prayers that are called *anaphora*. The bread used in all eucharistic liturgies must exclusively be leavened wheat bread, as opposed to the Latin church, which uses unleavened bread – this was a matter of heated controversy during the Middle Ages. The wine is always sweetened, fortified red wine made of grapes. The faithful are enjoined to refrain from eating and drinking anything from the night before receiving the Eucharist.

As seen above, the early church developed several local liturgies, and among the Oriental churches there is a still broader variety of eucharistic prayers, but in the Byzantine rite, the liturgy attributed to St John Chrysostom came to dominate the liturgical year. The liturgy of St Basil is celebrated only ten times per year. The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated mainly on Wednesdays and Fridays of Great Lent, and locally the reformed version of the Liturgy of St James is also celebrated; at times, other revived versions of ancient *anaphorae* are also used.

All of these *anaphorae* in use belong to the Antiochian or West Syrian classification of *anaphorae*, and therefore share a common structure, as opposed to the East Syrian or Alexandrian *anaphorae*. Regarding the three *anaphorae* here, earlier scholarship has argued for a progressive development, where the anaphora of St James would have been the 'original liturgy', then abbreviated into St Basil's and, after further redaction, to St John Chrysostom's – a legend first presented by the eleventh or twelveth-century *Synaxarion of Constantinople* – but this theory has been rejected (see Galadza 2018: 157–159).

Both main liturgies of the received tradition, Chrysostom's and Basil's liturgies, follow a similar structure: the only variant element are the prayers recited by the priest after the Gospel reading. The liturgy itself is preceded by a preparatory rite, the *prothesis*, where the priest prepares the *prosphoron* (communion bread) and wine in their vessels, accompanied with prayers. The liturgy itself begins with the Liturgy of the Word, following the structure below:

(1) Initial blessing by the celebrant
(2) Great Litany by the deacon (or celebrant) and its prayer
(3) Three Antiphons (or the 'Typika' Psalms 102 and 145 LXX and the Beatitudes) sung by the choir, interpolated by Small Litanies and their prayers
(4) Small Entrance, where the Gospel book is carried through the nave back into the altar, and its prayer
(5) Apolytikia (brief hymns on the theme of the day, sung by the choir)
(6) The Trisagion (or its substitute) and its prayer
(7) Epistle and Gospel readings and the Gospel prayer.

The second part of the office, the Liturgy of the Faithful, is originally intended for full members of the church only, because of the sacrament of communion distributed in

its end. Therefore, its initial part includes a dismissal of catechumens, even though many contemporary churches omit it or do not follow the practice, despite reciting these dismissal commands. The structure of the liturgy of the faithful is as follows:

(1) Litanies of Fervent Supplication
(2) Litany of Catechumens and their Dismissal, then two prayers of the faithful
(3) Cherubic Hymn (or its substitute), its prayer and the Great Entrance (where the eucharistic gifts are transferred from the *prothesis* to the altar table)
(4) The Plerotika (a series of petitions) and its prayer and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed
(5) The Anaphora (with its opening dialogue, the Sanctus/Benedictus, the Institution Narrative, Anamnesis, Epiclesis, Intercessions [during which the choir sings an appointed hymn to Mary, usually 'It is truly meet'], and a Doxology)
(6) The Lord's Prayer
(7) Elevation and Fraction
(8) Holy Communion (clergy in the altar, faithful in the nave)
(9) Thanksgiving and Dismissal.

In some rare cases, namely on the eves of Christmas, Theophany, the feast day of Annunciation (when these fall on weekdays), and on Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday, Basil's or Chrysostom's liturgies are to be celebrated as a vesperal liturgy because of the fasting character of the day and, thus, prolonging the pre-communion fast. Nevertheless, in some contemporary local traditions these might be replaced by normal liturgies. In a vesperal liturgy, the liturgy itself is preceded by the first part of festal vespers, but after the Old Testament readings the liturgy continues from Trishagion (or its substitute) onwards. It has lately become customary in some local traditions to celebrate vesperal liturgies on feasts falling on weekdays, in order to facilitate liturgical participation by those unable (or unwilling) to take time off work during the day, even though this has come under fire for its liturgical novelty from some quarters.

3.3.1 St Basil

The Liturgy of St Basil, despite the fact that it is a more rarely used eucharistic liturgy, was the standard eucharistic office of the Constantinopolitan rite, celebrated each Sunday: in the received tradition, this liturgy is celebrated on the Sundays of Great Lent, as well as the eves of Christmas and Theophany, Holy Thursday, Holy Saturday, and the feast of St Basil on January 1. Even though it today remains a rarity in the Byzantine rite, its centrality to the Eastern Christian rites in general is demonstrated by the fact that it exists practically in all Eastern liturgical rites, in all languages.

The attribution of authorship to Basil of Caesarea (Basil the Great) is an established tradition in the Eastern Church by the sixth century, but for which there is limited agreement among modern scholars (see, for example, Taft 1990 and Streza 2021).

Other more recent scholarship challenges this attribution (such as Parenti 2020). Its core structure, however, does seem to originate in the fourth century, so it is, at least in its core, contemporary with St Basil. The earliest Greek text of the liturgy is found in Barberini gr. 336, a South Italian codex dating from around 780 CE (Parenti and Velkovska 1995).

The anaphoral prayer of St Basil is known for its abundant dogmatic expressions and its extensive commemoration of salvation history and God's benevolence towards mankind:

> For having made man by taking dust from the earth, and having honored him with Your own image, O God, You placed him in a garden of delight, promising him eternal life and the enjoyment of everlasting blessings in the observance of Your commandments. But when he disobeyed You, the true God who had created him, and was led astray by the deception of the serpent becoming subject to death through his own transgressions, You, O God, in Your righteous judgment, expelled him from paradise into this world, returning him to the earth from which he was taken, yet providing for him the salvation of regeneration in Your Christ. For You did not forever reject Your creature whom You made, O Good One, nor did You forget the work of Your hands, but because of Your tender compassion, You visited him in various ways […]. (*The Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great*)

Another notable difference to the briefer liturgy of St John Chrysostom is in the intercessions following the consecration of the eucharistic gifts, where Basil's is more extensive:

> […] Remember, Lord, those who are in the deserts, on mountains, in caverns, and in the chambers of the earth. Remember, Lord, those living in chastity and godliness, in asceticism and holiness of life. Remember, Lord, this country and all those in public service whom you have allowed to govern on earth. Grant them profound and lasting peace. Speak to their hearts good things concerning your Church and all your people that through the faithful conduct of their duties we may live peaceful and serene lives in all piety and holiness. Sustain the good in their goodness; make the wicked good through Your goodness […]. (*The Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great*)

3.3.2 St John Chrysostom

The Liturgy attributed to John Chrysostom, the renowned preacher and archbishop of Constantinople, was native to the Church of Antioch. Whereas this view was supported by the late Robert Taft, among others, most recently Stefano Parenti (2020) has criticized the methodology and results of Taft's views and doubts the Chrysostomian authorship of this anaphora. Instead, the attribution to Chrysostom seems to appear between the mid-sixth and eighth centuries, long after Chrysostom's death in 407. Still, the multi-volume series

by Taft remains the most extensive study on the liturgy of St John Chrysostom, whereas Parenti's work provides many revised views and significantly enriches this information.

Despite the brevity of the anaphora of St John Chrysostom, it is a work of remarkable theological and rhetorical quality:

> […] Holy are You and most holy, You and Your only-begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit. Holy are You and most holy, and sublime is Your glory. You so loved Your world that You gave Your only-begotten Son so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. When He had come and fulfilled for our sake the entire plan of salvation, on the night in which He was delivered up, or rather when He delivered Himself up for the life of the world, He took bread in His holy, pure, and blameless hands, and, giving thanks and blessing, He hallowed and broke it, and gave it to His holy disciples and apostles, saying: Take, eat, this is My Body, which is broken for you for the remission of sins […]. (*The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*)

3.3.3 Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, rather than a service in which there is a consecration of bread and wine, is a way to distribute Holy Communion to the faithful on days when the celebration of eucharist is forbidden according to Holy Canons – critically, the service lacks an *anaphora*. Originally, the service could be served on all fasting days throughout the year – including the fasting days of Wednesday and Friday – as well as coronations, weddings, and the appointment of civil officials. In the contemporary church, it is celebrated only on weekdays of Great Lent, usually on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as the first three days of Holy Week. There are various other liturgical celebrations falling on weekdays of Great Lent when it is customary to celebrate the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. In some monasteries, it might be celebrated on all weekdays of Great Lent, as ordered by the Council of Trullo in 692.

The first manuscript evidence for the existence of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is Barberini gr. 336, though by the seventh century a reference can be found to the celebration of this office. Even these first bits of evidence provide the basic structure of the Presanctified Liturgy: the eucharistic gifts, the body and blood of Christ, are preserved from a previous liturgy with an *anaphora*, then transferred to the altar table, and then distributed to the faithful (Alexopoulos 2009: 46–47). The service itself begins with an extended form of Vespers, and so its place at the very end of the current day's liturgical cycle and at the cusp of the beginning of the next day's means that the faithful have been fasting strictly throughout the day in anticipation of receiving the Eucharist, offering a penitential flavour to the proceedings.

Over time, the form of this liturgy gradually expanded, adding elements in imitation of the anaphoric liturgies, preserving some Constantinopolitan elements that disappeared from other liturgical services, and added some characteristics of its own, resulting in the present rubric. It begins with usual weekday Vespers, during which the priest prepares the pre-consecrated eucharistic gifts and carries them to the sacrificial table (*prothesis*). However, after the procession and the Old Testament readings following it, the service continues with the singing of Ps 140:2. After this, the service follows the structure of the usual eucharistic liturgies apart from the *anaphora*, with petitions, the hymn 'Now the powers of heavens' (to substitute the Cherubic Hymn usually sung in eucharistic liturgies), during which the eucharistic gifts are transferred to the altar table, more petitions, the Lord's Prayer, the distribution of Communion, and final thanksgiving.

The received form of the presanctified has at times been attributed to St Gregory the Dialogist (or Great), Pope of Rome between 590 and 604. This attribution was probably made between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, during the attempts to reach a union between the Eastern and Western churches. It is not attested to in older manuscripts, and therefore no reliable attribution to St Gregory can be made.

3.3.4 Other liturgies

Other local rites fell out of use, including the Liturgy of St James, which was celebrated locally in Jerusalem. Despite the claims for the ancient origins of this *anaphora*, including its attribution to the Brother of the Lord and first bishop of Jerusalem, its early history until the earliest manuscripts from the eighth and ninth centuries remains unclear. By the eleventh century, Chrysostom's and Basil's liturgies had largely replaced the liturgy of James in Palestine.

In the nineteenth century, however, thanks to scholarly interest in liturgy and the printed publications of various historical *anaphorae*, there were attempts at reviving their use (see Fountoules 1994). The most successful of these cases was the liturgy of St James, published in various publications for practical liturgical purposes. Indeed, many parishes celebrate this liturgy on the feast day of St James, the Brother of the Lord, to whom it is attributed; sometimes it is also used on the Sunday following the Nativity of Christ, when St James is again commemorated. The form of these revived services nevertheless bears little resemblance to the historical rubric of this liturgy that fell out of use in twelfth-century Palestine. Daniel Galadza warns about returning to such 'old' liturgies: 'any celebration of JAS [the Liturgy of St James] in today's Byzantine rite should avoid treating the Divine Liturgy as an exercise in exotic historical revivalism' (Galadza 2018: 355). Some recent and more serious attempts of revising this revived form of the St James liturgy have been made (see Permiakov 2020b).

The liturgies of St Mark, once local to the patriarchate of Alexandria, and Apostolic Constitutions are at times also celebrated, mostly in theological faculties where liturgical experiments are a part of the liturgical training, but also on other occasions. They remain a marginal phenomenon.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there have been some attempts at creating new liturgical forms. The more established of them are the pre-anaphoral prayers inserted into petitions before the Cherubic Hymn, used regularly at the monastery of St John the Baptist in Essex, England. Also, Nicholas Denysenko has published a New Order for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, but this is not used in Byzantine-rite churches, perhaps apart from a few exceptions (Denysenko 2021).

4 Theology of the Byzantine rite

The conservatism with which the Byzantine rite has been preserved to the present day, and the unwillingness of worshippers of Byzantine liturgy to make 'too many' changes in the way it is celebrated, demonstrates well its central position in those churches' lives. Liturgy is both an expression of the community's faith and a locus of formation for the faithful. Therefore, liturgical worship can be seen as theology in various ways. The scholarly field that deals especially with the theological understanding of liturgy is commonly known in academia as 'liturgical theology' (see Geldhof 2010).

Liturgy on its textual level – through the liturgical readings, prayers, and hymns – explicitly teaches theology to the believers; this is particularly true for hymns and naturally for sermons that are a 'quasi-liturgical' part of the Byzantine liturgy, since the deliverance of the sermon is not strictly ordered by the rubrics nor is its content predictated by them (except readings from sermons of church fathers, recited during the Liturgy of the Hours, even though in the received tradition this has become exceptionally rare). Byzantine hymnography is full of dogmatic expressions, particularly promoting the Chalcedonian doctrine of the two natures of Christ. Another strand of theological teaching conveyed by hymnography is scriptural hermeneutics: hymns often provide comment on the daily scriptural readings of the lectionary. Therefore, in order to understand the basic liturgical training an Orthodox believer has, one must comprehend what he or she hears and experiences in liturgy.

It is essential to understand the importance that is given among the Eastern churches to Byzantine liturgy as the 'location' *par excellence* of biblical interpretation. In the same spirit, the Council of Jerusalem in 1672, directed against Protestant and especially Calvinist teachings, condemned the Protestant practice of *all Christians reading the Bible*, but instead – perhaps merely polemicizing against Protestants – exhorted them to hear the

Scriptures through their liturgical performance in the original Greek (with Septuagint as the authoritative version of the Old Testament), not in a vernacular translation.

More recently, much scholarly attention has been devoted to the sensory perception of liturgy, including hearing (see Permiakov 2020a; Pentcheva 2017 and 2010; and Harrison 2015). This is, indeed, essential from the point of view of the medieval Byzantine tradition. The Seventh Ecumenical Council, convened in Nicaea in 787, emphasizes the parallel between the senses of hearing and seeing, the former being represented in the liturgical space by the scriptures, and the latter by icons. Therefore, the participation of a believer in Byzantine liturgy happens through this *intermedial* whole, where voices, sounds, images, scents, movements, and most importantly divine presence contribute to a complex liturgical experience (see Olkinuora 2015 and Larin 2013). Much of this experience is dependent on the church space itself. The development of the iconostasis/templon (icon screen) between the faithful and the clergy, depending on its structure, particularly influences the visibility of the actions performed in the altar space.

On the other hand, liturgical structures, movements, vestments, and vessels convey symbolic meanings of liturgy that can only be appreciated through liturgical commentaries, either in their written or oral form, or through spiritual contemplation, *theoria* (Olkinuora 2015). In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, liturgical customs have been seen even as a dogmatic authority, and many theologians give strong emphasis to *orthopraxy* (the correct way of following the practices of the Eastern church).

Figures in the twentieth century introduced some debate on how much emphasis should be given to this part of liturgical theology. Alexander Schmemann, an influential liturgical theologian, harshly criticized allegorical narrative interpretations of the liturgy and advocated for an ‘original understanding’ of Byzantine liturgy, even though historically allegory was inseparable from the understanding of liturgy. The past few decades have diluted and added nuance to many of Schmemann’s views (see, for example, Butcher 2018), though they remain extremely popular in ecclesiastical circles where his works have circulated.

For a modern reader, Schmemann’s quest for an ‘original’ meaning of liturgy is perhaps pastorally useful but problematic from the point of view of the history of liturgy, since many of his views are not based on the current understanding of liturgical history. Moreover, the problem in such liturgical archeologism is defining the authoritative historical moment of liturgy, when it would have been in its ‘purest’ or ‘least corrupt’ form. His views can be traced back to the historical context where he was acting, since he – like many other Russian emigré theologians – was strongly influenced by the Roman Catholic *ressourcement* and the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, an event that he actually attended.

Schmemann himself confesses this in his introduction to liturgical theology, where he states that

> even though the liturgical revival as an organized movement arose and developed for the most part among non-Orthodox people in the West, it has nevertheless a deep internal bond with the Church in the East, and is therefore of special interest to Orthodox theologians. (Schmemann 1975: 13)

Greek liturgy scholars, such as Panagiotis Trembelas and Ioannis Fountoulis, did not remain unaffected by the tendencies to turn to older and historical sources that had affected the Greek-speaking Orthodox as well since the late nineteenth century, but their work resulted in less radical changes in parish practice than Schmemann's reforms.

Both the theology conveyed by liturgy and the theological interpretation of liturgy are related to its performance practices. Accordingly, recent decades have seen a rising interest in the performative and sensory aspects of liturgy (see Olkinuora 2021; White 2018; Pentcheva 2017).

4.1 Eucharistic theology

The most essential theological element of the Divine Liturgy is, the eucharist, the most central of sacraments – mysteries – in the Byzantine understanding. Sacraments allow the faithful to personally take part in the salvific Economy of Christ and become a part of salvation history, resulting in their own salvation. Nicholas Cabasilas, in his commentary on Christian life, describes sacraments as a divine gift coupled with our own zeal, a sentiment also expressed by the twofold 'content' of each mystery: matter and Spirit.

It is hardly surprising then that participation in the Eucharist is essential for receiving salvation, according to the Orthodox understanding. The bread – which has to be leavened – and wine are truly transformed into the body and blood of Christ. The term used for this change in the Middle Ages was *metabole*, whereas the synod of Jerusalem in 1672 uses the term *metousiosis*, a Greek semantic equivalent of *transsubstantiatio*, and first used by Gennadios Scholarios (1400–1473), the patriarch of Constantinople after its fall, a theologian influenced by Western Thomism. Participation in divinity itself through the person of Christ is such an awesome event that, in the liturgical tradition, the unworthiness of the faithful in this process is repeatedly emphasized.

The Eucharist also has a sacrificial character, in which it is Christ who sacrifices Himself on behalf of the 'life of the world', whereas the celebrant – bishop or priest – acts in His place, providing his body and actions as a vessel for Christ to act (as shall be described below in detail in the liturgical commentaries). A prayer shared by the liturgies of John Chrysostom

and Basil mentions: ‘For You are the One Who both offers and is offered, the One Who is received and is distributed, O Christ our God’.

Due to different historical circumstances, frequent participation in the eucharist has declined in many local churches. Already in the late eighteenth century, the Kollyvades movement on the Holy Mountain promoted more frequent participation in communion (Patapios and Chrysostomos 2006), and this was again taken up by the so-called eucharistic ecclesiology of the Russian emigrés in twentieth century France and America (e.g. Afanasiev 2019). As a part of the latter, there have been attempts of liturgical reforms to make the anaphora more accessible to the faithful by, for example, stopping the practice of keeping the holy doors of the icon screen (separating the altar space from the nave) closed during the consecration of eucharistic gifts, and reciting the anaphora aloud instead of reading it ‘secretly’, i.e. inaudibly. Some local communities have adopted this practice, whereas others still continue to close the doors before the consecration and recite the anaphora inaudibly.

4.2 Notion of ‘liturgical time’

The timeless character of the mystery of the Eucharist is one of the deepest theological notions in Byzantine liturgical texts, and the way it connects past, present, and future with each other into a synchronous reality is sometimes called ‘liturgical time’. If liturgy is participation in the Divinity, the faithful also participate in its timelessness. The initial blessing of the liturgy, ‘blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages’, opens up the eternal kingdom of God: the same kingdom manifests itself throughout times and places (cf. Andreopoulos 2013: 39–56). Liturgy can actually be seen, according to the Greek liturgical commentaries, from three different temporal approaches: it is a commemoration of a past event, an image of a present reality, and proclamation of something that will be fulfilled in the future (Bornert 1966: 36).

Apart from the eschatological character of eucharistic worship, the timelessness of the liturgical space is expressed by other structures of liturgical life. Byzantine liturgy expresses simultaneously a linear concept of time, through the commemoration of salvation history, but also a cyclical concept of time, found in the different liturgical cycles and their never-ending reiterations. A numerological image for this cyclical time is the number eight: it is seen to be an image of the resurrection of Christ that took place simultaneously on the first and eighth day of the week. This is an ancient tradition, spoken of by Origen in the third century. Many after-feasts of great feasts last a full octave (eight days); the naming of a child takes place on the eighth day; and the musical system used in Byzantine worship is called the *Oktoechos*, ‘Eight modes’.

Byzantine rhetoric also contributes to this aim of making liturgy an image of the presence of past, present, and future together in each liturgical gathering. This is seen particularly in the textual material of the Liturgy of the Hours. It is often expressed in hymns through the rhetorical mode of *enargia*, or making the described event and persons more tangibly present. Numerous hymns include a reference to the narrative taking place 'today', or *semeron*. A hymn from the Matins of Palm Sunday is such an example: 'Today Christ enters the Holy City seated on a colt, abolishing the wicked folly of the nations, that had been left dry and barren of old'. A similar effect is created, for instance, in a Palm Sunday sermon by St Andrew of Crete, where he exhorts his audience:

> But come with me and going up on to the Mount of Olives let us meet Christ today as He approaches from Bethany and advances willingly towards that holy and blessed Passion that He may reach the goal of the mystery of our salvation […] and let us imitate those who met Him, not strewing branches of olive or implements or palms in His path, but spreading out our very selves as much as we are able, with humble soul and correct belief, that we may receive the Word as He comes and that God may be contained in us, God Who is nowhere contained. (Cunningham 1983: 387, 389–390).

Prayers as such are offered to God and His saints as if they were present in the church space – which, according to the Byzantine liturgical understanding, they spiritually are. Some Byzantine monastic foundation documents aptly exhort the monastic chanters to perform in the church space with the understanding that God is their audience (Olkinuora 2020).

It has also been noted that the same rhetorical devices affected iconography, where Byzantine artists aimed at conveying a feeling of the presence of saints in the church space (Maguire 1981). This is aesthetically achieved by the lack of perspective, unlike in the religious art of the Western European Renaissance. The Byzantine icon opens up a space between the icon and its beholder, thus allowing for a dialogue to happen between the person depicted in the icon and its beholder (Kordis 2010). The *enargia* is, then, actualized by the prominent presence of icons in the church space, as well.

4.3 Liturgical mimesis

Byzantine liturgical commentaries of the Constantinopolitan tradition that form the basis of the contemporary mystical understanding of liturgy have much to say about the idea of *mimesis*, or imitation, that happens through various elements of the liturgy. The church building itself, it is seen as a mimetic image in Maximos the Confessor's (d. 662) *Mystagogy*, one of the most influential liturgical commentaries (Berthold 1985: 181–226): he interprets the church building as an image not only of God himself but also of the

universe consisting of visible and invisible substances, the sensible world as such and, finally, man with his tripartite soul. In other words, mystical contemplation of a liturgical element can lead to results on various levels and with dramatically different interpretive trajectories.

A commentary attributed to Germanos of Constantinople also assigns connections between locations related to the salvific work of Christ and particular locations in the church: the apse represents the birth cave in Bethlehem; the holy table is an image of the spot in the tomb where Christ was placed, but also the throne of God; the ciborium corresponds with the place of crucifixion and the ark of the covenant; the altar as a whole is an image of the tomb of Christ (Meyendorff 1984: 58–63).

The liturgical commentaries also give emphasis to the performative roles of the liturgy. It is common for the commentaries to see the celebrant as an image of Christ and the deacons as images of the angels, thus imitating the invisible heavenly liturgy. Despite the occasional modern criticism towards this view as being 'clericalist', it is deeply rooted in the thought of ecclesiastical hierarchy, first systematically represented by Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite. It is up to the higher levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the clergy, to transmit divine glory to the lower levels of the hierarchy during the liturgy.

There is nothing fake or pretentious in this process of imitation. Instead, Terence Cuneo has aptly pointed out that this process of full immersion into the target roles, as he calls the process, means that the priest does things on behalf of Christ and tries to become like Christ. The Byzantine commentators, according to Cuneo, 'found something like the dramatic representation theory, with its emphasis on role-playing, to be the natural interpretation of important elements of the liturgy' (Cuneo 2016: 75).

Finally, the liturgical movements themselves are a mimetic imitation of salvation history. The mystical interpretation of movements finds its first ontological explanation in the teaching of Pseudo-Dionysios, more precisely in the concepts of movement and stillness, drawing inspiration from Neoplatonic philosophy. Liturgical movements aim to instil an inner stillness in the faithful, reached through the cyclical structure of liturgical life – as shown above – and the numerous repetitions of liturgical elements on a daily, weekly, and annual basis. The circular movement in censing the church by the hierarch, for example, is an image of the cosmological concepts of procession (*proodos*), reversion (*epistrophe*), and remaining (*mone*). According to Pseudo-Dionysios, this circular progression in liturgy is also an image of the incarnation:

> We must look attentively upon the beauty which gives it so divine a form and we must turn a reverent glance to the double movement of the hierarch when he goes first from the divine altar to the far edges of the sacred place spreading the fragrance and then returns

> to the altar. For the blessed divinity, which transcends all being, while proceeding gradually outward because of goodness to commune with those who partake of him, never actually departs from his essential stability and immobility. He returns to his own starting point without having any loss. (Luibheid 1987: 211)

The strict observance of the movements dictated by rubrics is, according to Maximos the Confessor, a tool to unite the congregation:

> [God] leads all beings to a common and unconfused identity of movement and existence, no one being originally in revolt against any other or separated from him by a difference of nature or of movement. (Berthold 1985: 186)

Liturgical commentaries also connect particular movements with moments of salvation history. For example, the commentary attributed to Germanos sees the Small Entrance as an image of the incarnation:

> The entrance of the Gospel signifies the coming of the Son of God and His entrance into this world, as the apostle says: 'When He', that is the God and Father, 'brings the first-born into the world, He says: "Let all God's angels worship him"' (Hb 1:6). Then the bishop, by his stole, manifests the red and bloody stole of the flesh of Christ. The immaterial One and God wore this stole, as porphyry decorated by the undefiled blood of the virgin Theotokos. (Meyendorff 1984: 73–75)

Again, this kind of reading of the liturgy should not be understood as a 'fake' performance, but as a deeply transformative mimetic experience. As Christina Gschwandtner has recently argued, Byzantine liturgy creates a 'fit' between the corporeal and incorporeal, the body and the soul, the visible and the invisible: participation in the invisible requires visible images, through the invisible being 'instantiated in space and time, in bodies and materiality'. She concludes:

> Earth does not just mirror heaven in the false sense of mimesis as mere shadow or deceptive imitation, but it becomes imbued with it as the two are transformed in a union without confusion where they match up, where the 'feasting above' is entirely comingled with and occurs in the 'feasting below'. (Gschwandtner 2017: 22)

5 Conclusion

It is impossible to distil the complex richness of Byzantine worship into a survey as short as this, but what is described here is enough to demonstrate the multi-faceted approach a scholar of Byzantine liturgy must necessarily employ. The multiple historical influences and layers synthesized in the simplest of services of the daily office points to the nuance required in delving into any one of its elements merely on a textual level. Quite inseparably from this, recognizing the necessity for these liturgical texts to be realized in an actualized liturgical performance provides the only means by which their study can be contextualized in any satisfying way. The numerous desiderata for future scholarship include matters of not only manuscript history, but also deep immersion into liturgical theology and praxis.

Attributions

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