

Resource Sheet 69

This is an extract from an E-Quip Lecture on Christian worship, the full text of which may be found here: -

<http://www.equip-orthodox.com/app/download/12491157/20-liturgical-east-west.pdf>

The Liturgical Rites of the Orthodox Christian West and the Orthodox Christian East

Introduction

The liturgical works of **St. Hippolytus**, a Greek speaking, sometime anti-Pope, from the East and hieromartyr who reposed in the Lord in the year 236 are precious historical witnesses to the manner of the offering of the Eucharist as Orthodox in both East and West from the earliest times. Compiled in "The Apostolic Tradition" some 80 years later, Chapter 9 is of note as it shows that in the earliest period the actual content of the Eucharistic anaphora was a good deal more fluid than in later periods and indeed varied from bishop to bishop. These are his rubrics concerning this diversity of usage:-

Let the bishop give thanks in the manner we indicated earlier. It is not necessary, however, that he repeats the same words we provided, as though he had to try to say them from memory in his thanksgiving to God. Let each one pray according to his ability. If he is capable of praying at length and offering a solemn prayer, then all is well and good. But if he prays differently and pronounces a shorter and simpler prayer, he is not to be prevented, provided his prayer be sound and Orthodox.

By the **4th Century**, however, doubtless as a result of both trial and error, of unity and disunity, we see a growing adherence to particular rites in particular places and regions albeit that there is strong evidence for an enduring influence and even translocation between places. In West and East we note an eventual predominance of certain rites which in the West supplant others and in the East achieve a less exclusive but still nonetheless dominant status. This process of standardisation is largely complete by the **12th century**.

The Christian East

In the East, reflecting perhaps the two exegetical schools, there were and are two liturgical families: **Alexandrian and Antiochian**. Although both traditions within Chalcedonian Orthodoxy use the same rites today it was not always thus. The Copts retain the anterior local rite, that of St. Mark. Therefore, it was not just Rome, influenced by Frankish Carolingian reforms that made the Roman rite uniform in the west. A similar standardisation happened in the East, spreading outward from Byzantium, albeit originating in West Syria.

The original Alexandrian liturgical family differed structurally from the Antiochian in two important respects. The Alexandrian diptychs were offered before the sanctification of the gifts, whereas in the Antiochian tradition such intercessions happened after the consecration. In the Alexandria there existed an extra preliminary epiklesis before the Words of Institution which the Antiochian tradition lacked. It should be conceded readily,

therefore, that both Alexandrian and Antiochian liturgical families shared the same basic Eucharistic structure and these indeed may be traced back to a common Jewish antecedent in prayers of blessing. The more interesting differences perhaps lie within the liturgical families and between them, as concerning the content of the prayers themselves.

The Alexandrian rites of ancient usage comprise three anaphoras—that of St. Mark, St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory the Theologian. The rite of St. Basil is shorter than that originating in Antioch and has some other minor differences. It may represent a common Basilian patrimony or it may have been received directly from the Byzantine version, widely regarded to be the original. The most ancient anaphora is that of St. Mark and may be traced back to the 4th Century. This was at some point influenced by the Antiochian tradition in the reduction of the number of readings in the Liturgy of the Catechumens and the breaking of the Lamb after and not before the Lord’s Prayer (amongst other examples). The anaphora of St. Gregory the Theologian is unusual in being addressed in the first place to the Son and not to the Father as is the case with the other rites.

The Antiochian family of liturgical forms is immense owing to its geographical and cultural dispersion.

<p>1. The West Syrian Liturgical Rite</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Antiochian Liturgical Rite b) The Jerusalem Liturgical Rite c) The Byzantine Liturgical Rite d) The Maronite Liturgical Rite e) The Armenian Liturgical Rite f) The Georgian Liturgical Rite 	<p>2. The East Syrian Liturgical Rite</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Nestorian Liturgical Rite b) The Chaldean Liturgical Rite c) The Malabar Liturgical Rite
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It lies beyond the scope of this lecture to examine each of these rites in turn in detail but the following highly selective comments illuminate the landscape of these Syrian type liturgies.

As to the West Syrian branch, the **Jerusalem Liturgical Rite**, typically that of St. James, is still occasionally served in the Chalcedonian Orthodox churches. It was probably and originally the most highly esteemed of all the early rites. The indigenous sources—the Mystagogical Catecheses of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, the Typicon of the Church of the Resurrection and the famous accounts of the pilgrim nun Egeria - testify to a rite which continued to influence and be influenced by the Antiochian liturgical tradition.

The anaphora of **St. Basil the Great** was perhaps the normative rite of the Church in Constantinople although it is widely thought that **St. John Chrysostom** brought what may have been an edited version of the same (attributed but not conclusively shown to be his own work) to that city upon becoming its Archbishop. It is these two anaphoras that have endured of course in the use of the Chalcedonian Churches to this day.

The **Armenian liturgical rite** drew upon the Antiochian Liturgical tradition in the earliest missionary period but later incorporated Monophysite and Latin elements. It also deserves to be listed within the West Syrian family in its primitive form.

The **East Syrian Liturgical rites** are now only known to us in their Nestorian forms but a key original component was the Prayer of **Addai and Mari**, probably a third century composition from Edessa. From an Orthodox point of view, its principle defect is the lack of the Words of Institution, but this may attest to an early mainstream East Syrian type.

The Christian West

During the period when the Western and Eastern patriarchates had not yet divided **the West** experienced a parallel evolution towards a uniform, Roman rite although the Mozarabic Liturgical rite persisted in some parts of Spain until the 15th century. The Roman rite was itself influenced by this and other extant rites in France (the Gallican rite) and Italy (the Ambrosian rite in Milan). Elsewhere and particularly in Britain, the Celtic rites drew on these entire Western and Eastern sources through the contribution of itinerant missionaries. The only other rite of note under Rome's oversight was the now lost Carthaginian rite used in North Africa outside of Alexandria's jurisdiction.

The earliest forms of the **Roman rite** is represented in various usages attested to in Justin Martyr, Hippolytus and the Euchologia of Popes Leo the Great, Gelasius the First and Gregory the Great. In this early period such rites ran in parallel to the other western rites until the 9th century when the Franks promoted the uniform use of the Roman rite. By this time the Roman rite had been revised within a new Gelasian Sacramentary incorporating the original Roman forms and elements from the Gallican rite. Local rites persisted in Europe for some time and the Roman rite itself varied from place to place. Strict uniformity in the west did not appear until the 16th century Council of Trent (1545-1563).

Finally, we should note some key aspects and questions concerning the non-Roman local rites in the West.

The **Ambrosian rite**, as its name suggests, was instituted by St. Ambrose, (339-397) and was originally a Milanese rite serving northern Italy. Later, it was used in some centres in France and Spain. Its affinities are with the early Roman rites particularly in the anaphora, although there are Gallican resonances and an alleged dependency on eastern liturgical forms. After the Carolingian reforms its use persisted for a time in Milan.

The **Gallican rite** was pluriform and in use in Gaul from the 5th to 9th centuries. These complex rites owe a lot to the Christian East and may have been influenced in their original forms by the legacy of St. Irenaeus of Lyon (177-200), a Greek from Smyrna. Eastern liturgical influences include the chanting of the Trisagion, the Great Entrance with the Holy Gifts, the Kiss of Peace before the Anaphora, the inclusion of an Epiklesis (unusual in the west) and the proclamation of:- “The holy things are for the holy” before Communion. The rite persisted for some time in Lyons after the Carolingian reforms.

The **Mozarabic rite** and its use in Spain is closely associated with St. Isidore of Seville (+636) and the city of Toledo, the centre of the rite. The rite is truly eclectic in its influences from both East and West. It was not replaced by the Roman rite until the 11th century and persisted in Toledo even to the beginning of the 15th century.

The rites used in Britain in the first millennium, the so-called **Celtic usages**, are only known now from fragmentary remains in the Bobbio Missal, the Antiphony of Bangor, the Stowe Missal and the Lectionary of Luxeuil. The revised Roman rite replaced these in England in the 9th century, in Scotland in the 11th century and in Ireland in the 12th century. In England as elsewhere the old but revised Orthodox Roman rite existed in an interesting variant in the south of England called the **Sarum rite** which may have been influenced by the rite used in Rouen in France. Variants of the Sarum rite existed in cathedral usage in Lincoln and Westminster with more substantial revisions existing in Hereford, Bangor, York and Aberdeen.

In this broad sketch of liturgical developments of Eucharistic forms in the East and the West **three periods** may be discerned:

- (1) A time of significant diversity in the first three centuries where rites developed in particular places and associated with local bishops, most of them saints.
- (2) A second period of consolidation and the emergence of rites, perhaps fewer in number, that continued to influence each other across the Christian Church.
- (3) A third period of standardisation that from the 9th to the 12th century reduced the scope of the former diversity in favour of rites that predominated through both hallowed usage and political conformity in both the East and the West.

The reader is left to judge whether such developments towards uniformity of rite were either providential and / or in some ways perhaps regrettable!