

Questions Concerning the Western Rite

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Revised January 2, 1995

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The call for a western liturgy in the Orthodox Church raises serious questions. What has been lacking, however, has been a serious sorting-out of the issues involved and examination of how each of those issues relates to each other. The phenomenon of the Western Rite cannot be supported simply because multiplicity of rites, including those of western origin, is an historic reality; nor can it be condemned simply because it is not the Byzantine Rite. In the first case one (tacitly) assumes that all rites are equally beneficial in how they express the Church's adoration of the Creator and the Truth she (the Church) has preserved. To support the latter argument one has to claim *a priori* that only the Byzantine rite is genuinely expressive of the Faith. It has seemed to me that one should ask, "Are the particular rites being used actually Orthodox expressions of worship? In either case, the assumption is that the dogmatic contents of the liturgical rites themselves are the only issues of importance. It has been the overall tendency so far to treat the issues on this level, without asking, "Are the particular rites being used truly Orthodox expressions of worship?"

There can be no doubt that a multiplicity of rites is possible in theory and that in the Orthodox Church western liturgical forms have been used. Nevertheless, a schism *did* occur. Therefore, we must ask ourselves if this might not be due to fundamental theological differences. The forms of liturgy being used for the Western Rite in North America are Tridentine and post-Tridentine, although in Europe the pre-Tridentine Gallican Rite is being used. In order to answer our question, then, it is necessary to discern what in the current rites being used is at the core of the tradition, and what evolved from the theology of the Middle Ages. At the outset, this writer feels that there is some of each. There are core theological problems, but there are also theological problems arising specifically from the time of the Council of Trent. As a result, what is being done in the Western Rite is not always faithful to the western liturgical tradition. Furthermore, there are problems behind the reasoning used to support the Western Rite.

It is not possible here to treat all of the questions thoroughly. Nor can we hope to answer all of our questions. We can only hope to express our own concerns about what seem to be the most serious, and hope that by raising such concerns, serious discussion of the issues will follow. Furthermore, we confine ourselves to discussion of the theological

problems of the Roman and Anglican Rites. While the Gallican Liturgy is used in Europe, our context is North America, where the Roman and Anglican Liturgies are used exclusively.¹

The Theological Issues behind the Western Rite

If we examine the theological presuppositions behind early Western liturgy, we find two potentially serious problems. The first problem stems from the poor Latin translation of Romans 5:12. The Latin translation states that in Adam all sinned, rather than saying, as the Greek does, that all sinned because of death, just as all die because of sin.

The faulty translation of Romans 5:12 had a serious impact on Latin anthropology and hence liturgical and sacramental theology. Baptism came to be seen solely in terms of washing away the stain of original sin.² The Incarnation, as we have seen, was, and is, understood solely in terms of Redemption by paying the price for our sins. The Eucharist slowly became the mechanical means of tapping into the treasure house of Christ's merits. The doctrine of merits and indulgences in the Reformation era was only possible because of the doctrine of original guilt. Only since the late nineteenth century the dogmata of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption (at least in the popular understanding) are based on the reality of original guilt. All of Christian life, the need to fast and pray, and to attend church, by the time of Reformation had come to be understood in these terms.³ Yet from the beginning of the Latin tradition, Adam's sin was understood as the root cause of the Incarnation. This view is reflected in the *Exultet* sung at the Roman Paschal Vigil,⁴ and expounded forcefully by St. Augustine of Hippo.

¹ This writer is not aware of any parishes in North America using any other rite. If a reader does know of such a parish the writer welcomes information, and especially liturgical texts.

² This must be contrasted with implication of the Greek original, that people inherit not the guilt, rather the consequences of Adam's sin, just as a baby can inherit the consequence of its mother's substance abuse, but not guilt for that abuse.

³ It is not possible here to explore the place of the doctrine of original guilt in the post-Vatican II era. There seems to be no formal repudiation of the doctrine, although on a popular level, at least in America, Catholics are rejecting "guilt theology." Only time will be able to tell what the outcome will be.

⁴ In *A Short History of the Western Liturgy*, Theodor Klauser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 171. The text says, "How wonderful the condescension of thy mercy toward us; how far beyond all reckoning thy loving kindness! To ransom thy slave thou gavest up thy Son! O truly necessary sin of Adam, that Christ's death blotted out; and happy fault that merited such a Redeemer."

The question for us is whether or not this theology is essential to the western liturgical tradition. Certainly the language of merits is present in the Roman Canon in the *Te Igitur* and *Hanc Igitur*, which dates back to the time of St. Ambrose of Milan. Is it inevitable, by the principle of *lex orandi, lex est credendi*, that use of the Roman Canon, and other liturgical prayers that employ the same language will lead to the same doctrinal system that once developed? It is certainly the path that the West did follow. While an Orthodox understanding of the language of merits may be possible, one is compelled to take a lesson from history and at least question the usefulness of a liturgical tradition that employs such language. Furthermore, it is less easy to become comfortable with the language of *felix culpa*, “happy guilt.” Because the Roman Canon and the *Exultet* are close to the roots of the Latin liturgical tradition, and contain much which is genuine *orthodoxia*, the problems we have seen demonstrate the difficulty of making unequivocal determinations about the theological value of Latin liturgical texts, and the Latin liturgical tradition as a whole.

While we can at present only speculate about the problem in the early period, there is no question that by the Council of Trent and the Reformation, the problem already existed. This is an important point because the liturgies we are concerned with are Tridentine and post-Tridentine liturgies.

The Council of Trent was clear in its doctrine of original guilt, which stemmed from the faulty Latin translation of Romans 5:12. The Council asserted that “this sin of Adam . . . is one of origin and is transmitted by propagation, *not by imitation*.”⁵ The same view is reflected in the rite of Baptism in the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*. One prayer says that “by nature” the child (person) cannot have membership in the Church. Article IX of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion says that original sin “naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam.”⁶

⁵ *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, editors. (New York: Alba House, 1982), p. 138. The text says in part, “If anyone denies that infants newly born from their mother’s womb . . . contract from Adam any trace of original sin which must be expiated by the bath of regeneration that leads to eternal life. . . *anathema sit*. For because of this rule of faith, in accordance with apostolic tradition, even children . . . are truly baptized . . . so that by regeneration they may be cleansed from what they contracted through generation.”

⁶ The *Book of Common Prayer* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1928), p. 274. Henceforth cited as *BCP*.

The doctrine of merits in the Reformation era was one of the most highly controversial issues. While the Roman Catholics asserted the efficacy of the merits of the Saints,⁷ the Anglicans and other Protestants denied this. Anglican theology never denied the reality and efficacy of the merits of Christ Himself, and this is reflected in their Canon.⁸ Orthodox must ask the question, “What is the meaning of the doctrine of merits?” That the development of the doctrine by the Reformation in a way that allowed the doctrine of indulgences must lead us to be quite cautious.⁹ Both original guilt and the development of the doctrine of merits are areas of Latin theology with which Orthodox have never been comfortable, nor can we be. The former asserts that every child born into the world is personally guilty of Adam’s sin, and the latter asserts that the way out of the first predicament is a legal, and monetary system. It suggests that the Christ’s fullness of grace as the Incarnate Word can be expressed in terms of individual merits, or credits in account that people can draw upon; a concept that must remain foreign to Orthodoxy.

Another question for the liturgical mind is, “In what sense was the Eucharist a sacrifice?” According to the Council of Trent:

In this divine sacrifice, which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered Himself once in a bloody manner . . . on the altar of the Cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner. Therefore, the holy Council teaches that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory.¹⁰

According to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, on the other hand,

The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Wherefore, sacrifices of Masses, in which it was commonly said, that the

⁷ Reference is made to the merits of the Saints even in the Roman Canon: In unity of holy fellowship, and venerating the memory of . . . all your saints, through whose merits and prayers grant that we may be ever strengthened by the help of your protection.” Translation from Enrico Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1986), p. 50.

⁸ *BCP*, p. 81. “And we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness, mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant that, by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ . . . we . . . may obtain remission of our sins and all other benefits of his passion.”

⁹ Indulgences were (are) means by which one could tap into the treasury of the merits of Christ and the Saints, in order to buy one’s way out of time in purgatory.

¹⁰ *The Christian Faith*, p. 425.

Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits.¹¹

This theology is reflected in the first section of the Anglican Canon:

All glory be to Thee, Almighty God, our heavenly Father, for that thou, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only begotten Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption; who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.¹²

The Anglican Canon and the Thirty-Nine Articles deny any sense of the Eucharist making present Christ's self-offering on Golgotha. The language is a polemic against the view set forth in the Council of Trent. Consequently, the language of the Canon also denies an Orthodox understanding of eucharistic sacrifice, which understands the Eucharist as the sacrifice in which Christ is "the offerer and the offered, the receiver and the received. (From the prayer "No one who is bound...")¹³ The result is that the Western Rite employs two liturgies whose most basic theological premises contradict one another. The one understands the Eucharist as the sacrifice of Christ on Golgotha, while the other considers this belief an abomination. Their simultaneous usage raises questions of internal consistency within the Western Rite, and ultimately within Orthodox theology.

Supporters of the "Liturgy of St. Tikhon"¹⁴ widely appeal to the "approbation" of the commission of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church in 1907 of the *Book of Common Prayer*. It must be noted here that this commission, far from giving its overwhelming approval to the *BCP*, it expressed wide-ranging, and deeply-felt reservations. The commission's comments on the Anglican ordinal seem to fit with its reservations concerning the *BCP* as a whole:

But on the other hand, those which we may call latent insufficiencies of the rite – its tendency to leave room for opinions which diverge from the Orthodox form of belief – must not be authorized simply, and with nothing to counteract them, in the hope that they will be neutralized through the adoption of the true conceptions by the new members of the Orthodox Church. In order more faithfully to guard those who use the rite from this effect of

¹¹ *BCP*, p. 609.

¹² *BCP*, p. 80.

¹³ Liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil the Great.

¹⁴ The name given to the Anglican Rite in *St. Andrew's Service Book* (St. Andrew's Parish, Eustis Florida), honoring St. Tikhon, the Confessor-Patriarch of Moscow for his support of the Western Rite.

the false influences which penetrate it, it would seem expedient not to rest satisfied with the possibility of setting the contents of this rite in its new light. It would be better to remove all possibility of maintaining the old ideas, and directly and firmly to bear witness to the Orthodox conception of ordination, where it differs from the Protestant view.¹⁵

Furthermore, the same commission also expressed its belief, which this writer shares, that it is necessary to examine the liturgical texts in their historical context in order to understand their intent. It is further necessary to require that they be absolutely clear on issues of the understanding of what the Eucharist is:

Considering the origin of the document and the epoch to which it belongs, it must be required to exhibit a definiteness on this question no less than the definiteness which liturgical monuments, hailing from the time of controversies about the Holy Trinity, about the wills in the Person of Jesus Christ, etc., exhibit on these subjects.¹⁶

Liturgical and sacramental theology in the Orthodox tradition are one and the same. In the course of the history of the Latin West, however, the sacraments were seen more and more in isolation from their surrounding liturgical rites. The sense of *leitourgia* (common work), and of *koinonia* (communion) in worship was gradually lost as a theological presupposition of worship. That these concepts were present early in the Latin West is evident from the text of the Roman Canon, which refers to the communion of the Church on earth with those at rest, and employs the term “household” to refer to the Church.¹⁷ The language of the Canon is always the first person plural, “We Your servants...” etc. We shall see later how the *Ordo Romanus Primus* (*Ordo I*) reflects a much more truly liturgical understanding of worship than the Tridentine and post-Tridentine orders.

The change in liturgical and sacramental theology in the West is seen in the categorical identification and enumeration of the Sacraments not only by the Latins but also by the Anglicans (and other Protestants), and the Latin distinction between “sacrament” and “sacramental.” Sacraments were reduced to quantifiable packets of grace, and the rites that surrounded them ceased to have meaning as the communal context for the celebration of God’s mysteries. The results of this were that it became unnecessary to actually celebrate the mysteries. One could perform a baptism without blessing water, consecrate new Eucharistic

¹⁵ *Russian Observations Upon the American Prayer Book* in *Alcuin Club Tracts* XII, London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd. (n.d.), p. 19.

¹⁶ *Russian Observations*, p. 7.

¹⁷ Mazza, p. 50. See also footnote above for same page.

Gifts without celebrating the Eucharist, or serve communion in the church solely from the Reserved Sacrament.¹⁸ Another consequence was the rise of the “private mass” in which no faithful were necessarily present, the very antithesis of *leitourgia*.

That the very term that the Church preserved for herself as a proper name, “Orthodox” means simultaneously “rightly-believing” and “rightly-glorifying” demonstrates an axiomatic presupposition behind Byzantine worship: that how one believes and how one worships go hand in hand. Furthermore, Worship must involve the entire person. For this reason we use incense to reach the sense of smell, music to touch the ears, Ikons to touch the eyes. Orthodox liturgy, then, knows no reduction of ritual to decoration or “trappings.” Byzantine theology is highly sacramental, or symbolic. A symbol is not something that replaces the reality it depicts; instead it communicates that very reality. This, according to Father Alexander Schmemmann, is the meaning of the Greek word *mysterion*.¹⁹ Material things communicate the reality and presence of realities beyond themselves. All of liturgy is *mysterion* as Fr. Alexander used the term, and consequentially, the Orthodox Church has never dogmatized any numbering or particular list of sacraments, nor has the Church ever distinguished between “sacraments” and “sacramentals.” The liturgy of the Church “always mak[es] her that which she is: the sacrament of the world, the sacrament of the Kingdom – their gift to us in Christ.” The ultimate tragedy that Father Alexander Schmemmann noted in his book *The Eucharist* is that the western approach to liturgy and the sacraments distorts their vision of what the Church herself is. He said,

The same thing happens with regard to the Church. “Isolating,” defining the Church as the “mediator in the sanctification of man,” school theology inevitably reduces the doctrine of the Church to its divinely established order, its hierarchical structure, as the condition and form of this mediation, but leaves out of its field of vision nothing less than the Church herself, the Church as the new life in the “unity of faith and love,” as the constant fulfillment of this unity. And finally, isolating on account of this hopelessly one-sided and thus depraved method, the sacraments in general and the Eucharist in particular, into a certain self-sufficient department – “on the means existing in the Church for the sanctification of man” – this theology is simply unaware of the Eucharist as above all the sacrament of the Church, as the gift and fulfillment

¹⁸ The practice of communion of the sick from Reserved Gifts is not intended as an example. That practice, followed in the Orthodox Church, is a pastoral accommodation to those who by reason of incapacitation are unable to be physically present in the Eucharist assembly. It is thus understood as an extension of the assembly to the sickbed.

¹⁹ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973), p. 129.

of that “unity of faith and love,” “communion of the one Spirit,” in which the essence of the Church is revealed.²⁰

Fidelity to the Tradition

The Western Rite has continually been faced with the question of which rite to use. Arguments have been made on one hand in favor of a “pre-schism” liturgy as being naturally Orthodox. On the other hand, arguments are made for the need for a “living” liturgy. Furthermore, it is argued that the western liturgy must be allowed to be itself in its use among Orthodox.²¹ Others complain of the Western Rite being “usurped by a byzantinism.”²² As this writer sees it, the problem is how can one have a rite that is indeed living, but genuinely faithful to the western tradition, and genuinely Orthodox? We are convinced that the current practices are in fact anything but faithful to the tradition. In order to understand the problems of *ordo* in the current rites employed by the Western Rite in North America, it is necessary to learn a little about the *ordo* of the early Roman Church, specifically *the Ordo I*, a highly detailed description of pontifical liturgy from around the year 700. An excellent account is provided by Theodor Klauser in his book *A Short History of the Western Liturgy*.²³ We have adapted and greatly abbreviated his account here.

The Roman Liturgy at the time *Ordo I* was the *stational* liturgy, the remnants of which can still be found in missals up to our own time. As in Constantinople, the Eucharist was celebrated at a *statio* relevant to the feast of the day where possible. In the *Ordo I* the starting point is the Lateran Basilica, where the Pope resided. The various liturgical books, linens, vessels, etc. were carried in the procession to the *stational* church where the Eucharist was to be celebrated, and the Pope was supported by deacons on either side. Arriving at the church, they went to the sacristy where, following Byzantine court ritual, the Pope was vested in the vestments he wears today, with the exception of the stole, miter (tiara) and pectoral cross. Meanwhile the assisting clergy processed directly to the altar and took their places in the apse. We should mention here that the sanctuary had a free-standing altar with seats for

²⁰ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1988), p. 143.

²¹ Winfield S. Mott, “Some Perspectives on the Western Rite” in *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, vol. 26/2 (1982), p. 120.

²² Andrew Sopko, “Western Rite Orthodoxy: A Case Study and Reappraisal,” in *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 24/4 (1980), p. 261.

²³ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 60ff.

the clergy in the apse behind the altar, including, of course, the Pope's cathedra. An acolyte carried the Book of Gospels to the altar and a sub-deacon placed it on the altar.

When the Pope was ready he gave a signal and seven torches were lit, incense was placed into the censer, and the introit was begun by the choir. The procession formed with the thurifer (a sub-deacon) leading, followed by the seven torches and then the remaining deacons and sub-deacons. The Pope was last, again supported by deacons. Part way up to the altar, a sub-deacon and two acolytes met the Pope, bringing to him a vessel with particles of the *Sancta*, (Holy Gifts) from the previous papal Mass. The Pope removed the amount he would use for the current Mass and the rest was stored in the sacristy at the Lateran. The *Sancta* he kept he added to the chalice just before Communion as a *fermentum*, a kind of leaven. This was to show the connection between each celebration of the Eucharist. In a like manner, just before Communion, fragments the Host (Lamb) were sent out as *fermentum* to the parishes in Rome to show the unity of their celebrations with the principal celebration by the Pope. Arriving at the altar, he signed his forehead with the cross, and gave the kiss of peace to his concelebrants down through the deacons. He then signaled for the introit to end and knelt in the apse. At the end he venerated the Gospels and altar, and turning to the East followed along with the *Kyrie*. He turned to face the people to begin the *Gloria* and turned toward the East again. Facing the people, he greeted them with "Peace be to all! Let us pray!"

At this juncture we need to step back approximately two hundred years. At this time the "prayers of the faithful" still existed and were offered at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful. They took the form that is found still on Holy Friday. The outline of the formula was always the same and silent prayer followed this bidding, followed in turn by a collecting prayer (*collecta*). During the prayer the Pope stood in the apse, facing East, in the *orans* position. All together gave their "Amen." In this way, they prayed for the clergy, state, and so forth. On penitential days, they knelt for these prayers. The deacon gave the signals for kneeling and standing saying, "Let us bend the knee!" and "Arise!" This particularly is still found in the prayers on Holy Friday. While this form of prayer provided plenty of opportunity for personal prayer, it was quite lengthy. Pope Gelasius liked the Byzantine style litany, which had been imported via Gaul and Northern Italy; he ordered that the litany replace the Roman form. Probably at the same time, the prayers were moved to the beginning of the Liturgy of the Catechumens. It was either Gregory or one of his immediate successors that further reduced the litany down to the *Kyrie*, although the litany itself has survived at Pascha. We can return now to where we left off.

The first thing we should notice is that the *Kyrie* has replaced the litany and there is no time between the bidding and the collect. All then sat for the lessons. As in the Byzantine rite, the deacon received a blessing ("The Lord be in your heart and upon your lips...") before taking the Gospels out to the *ambo*, accompanied by lights and incense. After the reading it was offered to the clergy to venerate as in the current Byzantine Liturgy. Already in the time of the *Ordo Romanus I*, the sermon had fallen by the wayside, or at least it was not in the Liturgy of the Word. The dismissal of the catechumens was also gone at this point. The Creed had not yet been introduced (it was introduced by the Franks about the time of the Great Schism).

As it occurs in Greek Churches in America today, the Liturgy proceeded with the offertory. The seven acolytes with torches, who all this time had remained before the altar in a row, now lay down their torches, for they were needed to assist in setting the Holy Table. They would carry the loaves in *sindones*, or large linen cloths. At one time all the faithful had brought their own gifts, but by this *Ordo*, the clergy collected the gifts from the faithful. The Pope collected the gifts of the aristocracy. The wine, and a little water, was poured first into a chalice and then a larger vessel called a *scyphus*. At the end of the offertory the Pope and his assistants all washed their hands, as in the Byzantine rite when many bishops serve. This, of course, is the origin of the *lavabo*. When the offertory antiphon was finished the Pope said the *oratio super oblata*²⁴ aloud. This is the prayer that later became the "secret," being silenced.

For the canon the attending clergy stood around the altar, the sub-deacons in front facing the altar, deacons behind in ranks, with acolytes next to them, and the attending bishops and priests at their seats in the apse. The Pope stood at the altar facing West. While the preface was sung, the Canon itself was said in a voice only audible in the sanctuary, while all bowed their heads. There were still neither elevations nor genuflections with the Words of Institution. At the final exclamation, "By Whom..." the archdeacon raised the chalice while the Pope held the oblations to the edge of the chalice. The *Pater Noster*, newly transferred from just before communion, was then said or sung by the Pope, and this was followed by the *Pax*. The Pope returned to his seat and the Lamb was broken into pieces (by whom exactly?) while the choir sang the *Agnus Dei* (which Pope Sergius I had recently introduced from the Greek Liturgy.²⁵). To avoid confusion, I am referring to the hymn as it is known in the Latin

²⁴ "Prayer over the Gifts"

²⁵ Klauser, p. 67. Klauser says the Greek Liturgy, but I know of no evidence that the *Agnus Dei* was ever sung at

Liturgy, not to the prayer, "Divided and distributed." The paten and chalice were taken to the Pope at the cathedra for him to do his own fraction, with the prayer "Let this commixture." This may have been a new addition. After Communion, the Mass ended simply with the *postcommunio* and the dismissal, "*Ite, missa est.*"

Ordo I provides a fairly detailed description of the ceremonies, but not of the prayers themselves. Nevertheless, we can be reasonably certain that the Roman Canon was used. St. Ambrose of Milan considers it already to be fairly fixed and normative, indicating that it went back two generations before him (to the first half of the fourth century); the time required for something to be regarded as traditional. It appears also that there may have been a Greek forerunner to the Latin original of this Canon itself.²⁶ Other prayers may not be so easily determined without further evidence.

Even a cursory reading of the *Ordo Romanus Primus* demonstrates that much of the Tridentine *ordo* is a reduction of what used to take place in the Roman Church to mechanical forms. Many of the ancient practices, had a much more communal, truly liturgical sense. The Gifts of real bread and wine were offered by the people and received by the Pope and other members of the clergy, the *lavabo* being the Pope's washing the crumbs from his fingers. The altar was not against the wall, rather free-standing. While the Pope prayed the *Kyrie, Gloria, Collecta*, and other prayers with the people, he stood facing East with them. At the Anaphora, he faced them on the East side of the altar. The *Kyrie* is all that remains of the earlier Prayers of the Faithful.

The Anglican Rite has two fundamental problems: The first is that the rite being used is simply not reflective of genuine Anglican liturgy. The prayers imposed on the rite from the Roman Mass are just that – imposed; therefore they do not reflect the genuine Anglican theological tradition. Essentially the *ordo* is that of the Tridentine Mass. The second problem is that the Anglican liturgy is clearly a late-comer. It is, in fact, a direct product of the Reformation, not of "Catholic" England, which would more accurately be represented by the Sarum liturgy. The canon of the Sarum Missal is the Roman Canon, which employs the Roman Rite with a few location variations. The Anglican liturgy in the Western Rite by its

the Liturgy in Constantinople. Pope Sergius I, as Klauser says on p.47, was from a Syriac family living in Sicily. Perhaps the practice came from a Syriac community.

²⁶ Mazza, pp. 58-59. Any one seriously interested in the Western Rite should especially read chapter three – thoroughly.

very nature enshrines Anglican comprehensiveness. One is forced to either follow old English Catholic practice (i.e. the Sarum Rite), or Reformed English practice (i.e. the *Book of Common Prayer*). The two contradict each other since *Sarum* is essentially the Tridentine Rite. The rite is faithful neither to *Sarum* nor to the *BCP*, either historically or theologically, and has no place in the liturgical tradition of historical western Orthodoxy. The 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, based on the same scholarship as Vatican II's *Novus Ordo*, reflects similar changes to the earlier *ordo*, but it still enshrines Anglican comprehensiveness, making various practices optional, thereby raising questions of how these practices are or should be understood theologically.

Fidelity to western liturgical practice at times presents problems when that tradition, or what is supposed to be that tradition, directly contradicts theological principles of the Orthodox Church. In response to Andrew Sopko's "Case Study" cited above, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann observed that the norm of eucharistic fast on Lenten weekdays is not a "Byzantinism," rather the norm set forth by an Ecumenical Council.²⁷ The same problem occurs with Ikons which, as all know were the subject of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which firmly asserted their dogmatic nature. They absolutely cannot be reduced to a Byzantine liturgical expression. Furthermore, it is simply not true that Ikons were never used in the West. There are extant traces of Celtic ikonography. The comments in the 1549 Prayer Book, rejecting burning votive lamps before "images" implies that they were present. It must be conceded that the veneration of Ikons did not flourish in the West as it did in the East, but one must question whether this might not have been the result of a poor Latin translation of the synodikon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, and furthermore whether this itself is not a problem.²⁸

There are numerous practices in the Western Rite that are of dubious Orthodoxy and of dubious fidelity to the liturgical tradition of the West. Among the relatively minor is the

²⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, "Some Reflections Upon "A Case Study" in SVTQ 24/4 (1980), p. 267. Fr. Alexander also observes that Dr. Sopko fails to see that his own arguments serve to demonstrate the problem of isolating "rite" from the overall faith of the Church. Dr. Sopko reduces rites to a matter of taste to be accepted or rejected. It is ironic that, whatever the historical facts may be, the Liturgy of the Presanctified used in Byzantine churches, is attributed to St. Gregory Dialogos, Pope of Rome. The mere attribution suggests the use of this liturgy (in some form) in the West around the time of St. Gregory.

²⁸ This writer attended a Western Rite parish where it was in fact asserted that the reason they had very few Ikons was that they were considered to be "eastern."

insistence on pews, which were never a part of Roman liturgy.²⁹ The Office of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was not introduced until 1246 with the feast of Corpus Christi.³⁰ Furthermore, it reduces the Holy Gifts to a thing separate from the celebration of the Eucharist. This writer has heard the practice defended analogizing it to the veneration of Ikons; however the argument of ikonoclasts that the Eucharist was the only legitimate Ikon was rejected by the Church on the grounds that the Eucharistic Gifts are not Ikons.³¹ The use of wafers containing small amounts of leaven makes the least sense of all. First of all, the *Ordo I* demonstrates that regular leavened bread was used in Roman liturgy at the time. Secondly, the Council of Ferrara-Florence affirmed the acceptability of leavened bread. Thirdly, it seems quite artificial, and the worst form of legalism, to press “leavened” bread into wafers in order to retain an allegedly Latin form, while adhering to the Orthodox standards.

Faulty Reasoning Behind the Use of the Western Rite

In this century most of the Christians of the West have attempted to greatly reform their liturgies. There have also been reform movements within the Orthodox Church. Such movements have used as a methodological process the reduction of the liturgy to its logical components. In trying to make the liturgy clearer, more straightforward, by returning to simpler forms, the reformers seem to have forgotten that liturgy is not simply a conglomeration of elements, some of which are “later accretions.” Instead, the liturgy is organic. It has a life of its own, so to speak. To reduce it to its logical components is not methodologically different from reducing a person to quantities of various chemicals. Liturgy, while it should be “reasonable worship” transcends logical categories as it is lived out. To reduce liturgy to rational categories is to do exactly what Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

²⁹ It is to be immediately conceded that most Byzantine Rite parishes in the USA have pews, which is a clear contradiction of the Orthodox liturgical ethos. Defense of pews seems to reduce the issues to whether or not there is anything dogmatically wrong with them. At the same time, pews are equally foreign to the liturgical ethos of the West, having been introduced in Protestant churches where sermons became the focal point of worship. In the end we must ask whether our posture during liturgy is related to how we pray. Based on the Orthodox understanding of people as psychosomatic leads one to believe that posture profoundly affects how we pray.

³⁰ Short History, p. 136.

³¹ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987) pp. 49-50.

warned that we must not do: make it the object of study rather than the subject of living, breathing worship in Spirit and in Truth.³²

There is no way to explain the mystery of life, or beauty, or poetry, all of which transcend reason. In order to understand worship, one must simply come to it, hungry and thirsty, for coming to it is precisely coming to Christ and ask of Him the Bread of Life and the streams of Living Water.³³ One must be baptized into the reality of the Church, which reality is the reality of the Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection and ultimately the *Parousia*. Without this baptism, no logic on earth will make sense of liturgical worship. It is the stated goal of the Western Rite to provide Christians of western background with a liturgy with which they will be at home. Winfield Mott, commenting in his article on Andrew Sopko's comments, found "some truth" in them and said,

If we are to understand that negativism, we must understand the genuine concern lying behind it: that Orthodoxy will become an empty shell in the western world, existing with liturgical correctness but devoid of the meaningful context.³⁴

He contends that "Eastern Orthodoxy [and therefore the Byzantine Rite] is . . . alien to the North American setting. . ." and that the Byzantine Rite is meaningless to westerners, who are outside of the original cultural context of the Byzantine Rite.³⁵ His argument reduces the Byzantine Liturgy to a purely ethnic expression of worship.³⁶ Andrew Sopko's argument concerning "Byzantine negativism" throughout his article has the same effect, and fails to see that he is promoting a "western negativism" which is itself very ethnic. The reduction of the Liturgy to ethnic expression defies the Church's understanding of her catholicity and of her orthodoxy, which are *homoousios*. She is catholic because she preserves the fullness of Truth, and Orthodox because her worship expresses the same. Mott's claim is proven false by the fact that most converts to Orthodoxy enter the Byzantine Rite and find themselves quite at home. Many feel that Byzantine hymnography in particular leads one to confront issues of Christian living in modern society, while western liturgy does not do this. More importantly, if Orthodoxy in the West is to become an "empty shell" it will

³² See *For the Life of the World*, pp. 142-145; also *The Eucharist*, pp. 142-143; also *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), pp. 16-32.

³³ John 6:35-59; 4:7-15.

³⁴ Mott, p. 119.

³⁵ Mott, p. 118-119.

³⁶ Mott, p. 121.

not be due to the Byzantine Liturgy. The issue for Christians in America is Truth in the face of “political correctness” and other forces that trivialize religious beliefs and moral values; Christ’s own question, “But who do *you* say that I am?”³⁷ is the only relevant question for serious converts to Orthodoxy. It is not the Byzantine Rite that is rejected by American culture today, it is the Gospel itself. For a person coming to the Church *seeking Christ*, rite will not be an issue. *The real issue and potential stumbling block is the Orthodox Faith itself – the preaching of Christ crucified.*

Conclusions

Father Alexander Schmemmann succinctly expressed the concerns we have raised here in his reflection on Dr. Sopko’s “Case Study”:

Indeed, one does not have to be an "authority on the West" in order to know that the liturgical development in the West was shaped to a degree unknown in the East, by the various theologies, the succession of which, as well as the clashes of which with one another, constitute western religious history. Scholasticism, Reformation, Counter-Reformation, etc., all have resulted in sometimes radical liturgical metaphorphoses, all have had a decisive impact on worship. Therefore one should speak today not of *the* Western rite, but of Western rites, deeply, if not radically differing from one another, yet all reflecting, in one way or another, the western theological tragedy and fragmentation. This does not mean that these rites are "heretical" and are simply to be condemned. It only means that from an Orthodox point of view, their evaluation in terms of merely "deletions" and "additions" is, to say the least, inadequate and cannot resolve the tensions mentioned above. And even if in the past this method had a semblance of justification, the acute liturgical crisis that encompasses today virtually all western confessions, makes it obsolete and irrelevant. For the irony of our present situation is that while some western Christians come to Orthodoxy in order to salvage the *rite* they cherish (*Book of Common Prayer*, Tridentine mass, etc.) from liturgical reforms they abhor, some of these reforms, at least *in abstracto*, are closer to the structures and spirit of the early Western rite and thus to the Orthodox liturgical tradition, than the later rites – those precisely that the Orthodox Church is supposed to "sanction" and to "adopt."³⁸

It is has not been our purpose to be negative, rather to provoke honest, serious, and thorough discussion of what seem to many to be serious problems with the Western Rite as it currently exists. As we said in the beginning, we could not hope to answer all questions here;

³⁷ Matthew 16:15.

³⁸ "Some Reflections Upon 'A Case Study'", p. 268-269.

on the contrary, it is our purpose to raise questions. Here in summary form are the questions we find to be most essential:

- 1) a) What is the extent and relevance of the implicit and explicit references to original guilt and merits in early Latin liturgical texts?
 - b) How are we to understand these references in the light of the theology of their own time and of subsequent doctrinal development?
 - c) If the Western Rite continues to be used, will the same problems that came about in the past resurface?

- 2) a) What is the true history in the liturgical tradition of the West of the practices that are so dear to Western Rite Orthodox, and which have been taken for granted as deeply rooted in the tradition?
 - b) Which practices are genuinely from the Orthodox history of the West, and which are relative late-comers, and/or products of theological perspectives at variance with Orthodox liturgical theology?
 - c) More specifically, what are the pluses and minuses, from the standpoint both of theology and liturgical history of the *Ordo Romanus Primus* for the purpose of being a model for the Western Rite?

- 3) a) How does western liturgy fit into the Orthodox understanding of God, humanity, *theosis*, and the rest of the Orthodox theological Tradition?
 - b) How will the absence of liturgical texts which express that Tradition affect the spiritual lives of worshippers in the Western Rite, and their communion with the rest of the Church?

- 4) Are the premises that support the claims for the need for and the value of a Western Rite themselves sound?

- 5) What organism within the Church should be responsible for finding these answers and overseeing the Western Rite based on what positive answers may be found?

In order to thoroughly consider the issues set forth here, it is this writer's hope that a new commission would be formed, under episcopal headship, that would have as its task the following: 1) review of the findings of the 1907 commission of the Holy Synod of Russia concerning the *Book of Common Prayer*; 2) a fresh consideration of the Anglican liturgy in that light and in the light of modern scholarship; 3) a similar review of the Tridentine Rite; 4) a similar review of the Gallican Rite as it is currently used; 5) a review of the history of the development of liturgy in the West; 6) a review of the various liturgical and para-liturgical devotions used among Western Rite Orthodox. All of these reviews should be made in the light of the Orthodox theology in all of its aspects, emphasizing the necessary unity of various elements of the Tradition. For this purpose the commission would necessarily be composed

of experts in the area of Byzantine liturgical history, western liturgical history, Orthodox liturgical theology, Patristics, Dogmatics, and Spirituality.

As an introduction to the kind of discussion we would like to see take place, we put forth the following thoughts: The *Ordo Romanus Primus* is striking as an historically sound, and pastorally rich model for Western Rite.³⁹ *Ordo I* is much like a modern papal Mass. Certainly Orthodox practice would require that the Roman Liturgy always be served in its solemn form, and use the Roman Canon.⁴⁰ From that point, the possibilities for congregational participation are almost endless, as well as the development of genuine ministries for the diaconate and the minor orders. Naturally, it would be most desirable to restore the old offertory practice, including the use of leavened bread, as an occasion to offer food from which the best bread and wine would be set aside for that Eucharist, while the rest would be distributed to the poor of the community. This would have the benefits of historical fidelity, of outreach to the community, and of giving a real, *personal* meaning to the offertory rite. The early forms of antiphonal and responsorial chant provided for congregational participation in a way that preserves dignity and order.⁴¹ The *ordo* itself is certainly capable of preserving a genuinely Orthodox liturgical ethos. Furthermore, an Orthodox practice would also be familiar to modern Roman Catholics and Anglicans, essentially a living liturgy.⁴²

Having fled from *the Novus Ordo Missae* in either its Roman or Protestant expressions, those who wish to use the Western Rite defend their own relatively late practices on the basis of their supposed use in the Orthodox history of the West, often simultaneously condemning the *Novus Ordo* without considering the possibility that, in spite of its problems,

³⁹ The writer wishes to stress immediately that his enthusiasm is based on the qualities of the *ordo* itself, which says nothing about the theological problems. At the same time the writer, himself a convert from the West and a student of liturgics, hopes that one day *Ordo I* could be used.

⁴⁰ The other canons provided do not have firm historical foundations, nor would they be true to the *Ordo Romanus Primus*. It is also important to do our own translations, as the ICEL translations take great liberties with the original texts. See Mazza.

⁴¹ Most of these considerations are also relevant in relationship to the Byzantine Liturgy.

⁴² For these reasons, a thorough study of the *Ordo Romanus Primus* and of the Roman Canon is especially desirable. The reader is strongly encouraged to read both Theodor Klauser's *A Short History of the Western Liturgy* and Enrico Mazza's *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite*, in order to understand many of the relevant facts about western liturgy, and to read Mazza's discussion of the Roman Canon in light of the Liturgy of St. Basil. It is this author's deepest regret that it is not possible here to explore more deeply the positive qualities he sees in the *Ordo I* and even the Roman Canon, which has many Orthodox qualities to it.

it might more accurately reflect western liturgical tradition. Opposition to the Western Rite has been condemned with such terms as “Byzantine negativism,” and the general feeling is that opponents believe that only the Byzantine Rite could ever be truly Orthodox. The apprehensions of those who flee the *Novus Ordo* are certainly understandable since the *Novus Ordo* has become associated with the liberalization of theology, biblical exegesis, and morals in the West. No less understandable is their love for the liturgical life they have cherished from their childhood. Nevertheless, if the Western Rite is to succeed those concerned must seek to understand and history the true *ethos* of the early western liturgy.