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Liturgy At Elsinore[1]

Ephrem Lash

> 'I remember, the Illustrious *Marques de Nointel*, the French Embassador, was once with me present at the Patriarch's Church, upon a new Patriarch's Enthronement, and seeing this Adoration he smiled upon me, and afterwards used it as an Argument for the *Latines* adoring the Host; but when I informed him that the Elements were not as yet Consecrated, he dropt the Discourse.'[2]
>
> 'That there are seven Sacraments or Mysteries is a point of faith; whereas we in England seem to recognize only two.' 'Your difficulty is only verbal,' he said, 'since you admit all the seven. The Church does what suits her communion, and she cannot go back or turn aside to quibble about words.' He had at first contended that the Septenary number was from the beginning; at length he admitted that perhaps they had received it in later times from the Latins. 'I see what you mean,' he said; 'they existed and we had them from the beginning, and at length the Pope counted them for us. Well that is no great matter, we may admit that.'[3]

In his last book— he wrote the preface only a few weeks before his death in December 1983, and the English translation only appeared posthumously in 1988, it is thus almost exactly contemporary with Fr FitzPatrick's *In Breaking of Bread*— Father Alexander Schmemann gave the title 'Sacrament' to each of its twelve chapters: 'The Sacrament of the Word', 'The Sacrament of Thanksgiving' 'The Sacrament of Remembrance', and so forth.[4] He made this decision in order to

[1] 'But to my mind, though I am native here/And to the manner born, it is a custom/More honoured in the breach than in the observance' (*Hamlet*, Act I, Scene IV, lines 14–16).

[2] John Covel, Constantinople, 1670–77. De Noitel was also a Jansenist and a friend of Port-Royal. Covel, a Cambridge don, was chaplain to the English Ambassador to the *Sublime Porte.* The 'Adoration' refers to the reverence shown to the Great Entrance at the Liturgy, when the unconverted bread and wine are brought in solemn procession to the Holy Table. See Ephrem Lash, '"Incoherent Pageantry" or "Sincere Devotion"' in *Anglicanism and Orthodoxy 300 Hundred Years after the 'Greek College' in Oxford,* ed. by Peter Doll, Peter Lang 2006, pp. 133–152.

[3] William Palmer, *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church*, London 1882, p. 324. Palmer, Anglican deacon and fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, was staying with a Russian priest, Archpriest Vassily Ivanovich, during his first visit to Russia. He subsequently became a Catholic, and his account of this visit was edited and published by Cardinal Newman after Palmer's death. See Robin Wheeler, *Palmer's Pilgrimage*, Peter Lang 2006.

[4] It is interesting, following Professor Nicholas Lash's comment in his keynote lecture on article 7 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, that Fr Schmemann cites Matthew 18.20 in his first chapter, 'The Sacrament of the Assembly'.

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underline his belief that the whole action of the Eucharist is 'Sacrament' and to attempt to get the Orthodox to escape from what he liked to call 'the Babylonian Captivity of Orthodox theology to Western Scholasticism'. In discussing the Eucharist this means the tendency to focus attention on 'what happens when'; more generally to limit the number of the Sacraments to seven. He writes, 'The basic defect of school theology consists in that, in its treatment of the sacraments, it proceeds not from the living experience of the Church, not from the concrete liturgical tradition that has been preserved by the Church, but from its own a priori and abstract categories and definitions, which hardly conform to the reality of church life'.[5] It is important to point out here that Fr Schmemann is mainly concerned with the effect of the extensive 'Latinisation' of Russian theology, particularly in the seminaries in the nineteenth-century, and which had disastrous results in Orthodox life and practice. This explains why the most recent Catholic authority he cites is Abbot Vonier, and why he makes no reference to the Second Vatican Council or to the thinkers on which its teachings are based, like M-D. Chenu or H. de Lubac. He is concerned with the effects of bad scholasticism on generations of Orthodox clergy and theologians.

There are, moreover, other and older problems for Orthodox eucharistic theology; problems that have their origin in the fourth-century, when Christianity ceased to be a persecuted and minority religion and became the established church of the Roman Empire. In its early days participation in the Eucharist had been limited to the baptised, and though this was still true, the Christian Assembly now included an increasingly motley crowd of believers, often lacking the zeal and devotion of earlier days. No longer would leading a celibate life be a consequence of baptism, as it had been in the early Syrian church. Where once receiving communion had been the norm at every celebration, increasing numbers of Christians now felt unworthy and only communicated rarely. Already St John Chrysostom complains about infrequent communion. St Basil encourages daily communion, though he himself only communicated four times a week and on feast days. In a letter to the patrician Caesaria, presumably in answer to a question about the propriety of daily communion, he writes, 'To receive Communion each day and so to share in the holy Body and Blood of Christ is good and profitable; as he says himself, "One who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life".'[6] The people, the *laos*, became increasingly spectators, while the clergy, that is the

[5] *The Eucharist, Sacrament of the Kingdom*, p. 13. References are to the English translation, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988. As St Irenaeus puts it, 'Our way of thinking accords with the Eucharist and the Eucharist in turn confirms our thinking'. *Adv. Haer. 4.18.5.*

[6] *Letter 93.*

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sacred ministers and singers, performed a sort of sacred drama for their edification. The early manuscripts all indicate that the responses are made, not by the 'choir', which is what most current texts have, but by the 'People'.[7] The older idea is well expressed in an article by Fr Paul Koumerianos, 'Up to the time of iconoclasm, what is important in the Liturgy is *what the faithful* (clergy and laity) *are all doing together*. Interpretation and understanding of the Liturgy in this period is based on the rites per se, and these are rites performed by all, not just by the clergy. The Divine Liturgy is an action: it does not "symbolise" something, it is something. It is an act of Communion of the Faithful, with each other and with God; a communion which is a foretaste of the Kingdom of God.'[8] Already in the late fourth-century the Liturgy had been seen as an icon of Christ's passion, as the Catecheses of Theodore of Mopsuestia attest, but later the whole service came to be seen as a sacred drama of the life of Christ, in which every detail was given a symbolic meaning, however fanciful or inappropriate.[9] Thus the entrance with the Gospel is seen as Christ's going out to preach, whereas originally it was the entrance of clergy and people into the church to form the assembly, and the Gospel signified the presence of the risen Lord in the midst of this Assembly, or *Ekklesia*. As Fr Schmemann puts it, 'For the Church, the gospel book is a verbal icon of Christ's manifestation to and presence among us. Above all, it is an icon of his resurrection. The entrance with the gospels is therefore not a "representation", a sacred dramatization of events in the past — e.g. Christ's going out to preach . . . . It is the image of the appearance of the risen Lord in fulfilment of his promise, 'where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. 18.20).'[10]

This approach to the Liturgy has produced a wholesale distortion of the rite of preparation of the holy gifts, the Proskomide, which now has to 'represent' the Nativity, with the introduction of texts from the office of Christmas and even the painting of icons of the Nativity on the wall behind the Prothesis.

However, these symbolic explanations of the action of the Liturgy do not, I believe, involve the idea of the celebrant acting "*in persona*

[7] The bilingual edition of the Liturgy issued by the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain with the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch, has restored the traditional text. As I was preparing this paper I heard, on Radio 4, a teacher of Russian church music, a priest, explaining to the reporter, Michael Bordeaux, that in Russian churches the people do not sing; the choir sings for them! The congregation is 'not actually singing'. The choir is 'like a representative'.

[8] Pavlos Koumerianos, 'Symbol and Reality in the Divine Liturgy', in Greek in *Synaxi* no. 71 (1999), and in English in *Sourozh*, in May 2000, translated by Dr Elizabeth Theokritoff.

[9] This was also true of older Catholic commentaries. My first missal explained that the priest's bowing at the Confiteor symbolised Christ in the Garden of Gethsamane.

[10] *Op. Cit.,* p. 71.

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Christi". I once said this at an ecumenical gathering in Hexham and the local Catholic priest asked, 'But when you celebrate, don't you say, "This is my Body"?' I replied, 'No. I say, "He said, This is my Body"'. In the symbolic Byzantine commentaries, it is the Gospel book and the unconsecrated Bread and Wine that symbolise Christ. Even the idea of the priest as an 'icon' of Christ is very rarely found, if at all, in the Fathers.[11] A case might, perhaps, be made for the Bishop as an icon of Christ.[12] The Bishop's omophorion symbolises the human nature of Christ, based on the parable of the Lost Sheep as interpreted by St Gregory the Theologian.[13] An idea that is taken up in the following hymn to the Mother of God, 'The Prophet David, through you the ancestor of God, spoke of you in song beforehand to him who has done great things for you, the Queen stood at your right hand. For he, the God who was well pleased without father to become man from you, declared you to be mother, agent of life, that he might refashion his own image, corrupted by passions, and, having found the lost sheep wandering on the mountain and laid it on his shoulders, he might bring it to his Father; and by his own will unite it to the heavenly Powers and save the world, O Mother of God, Christ who has great and rich mercy.'[14]

Another effect of the decline in the reception of communion by the people and the increasing clericalisation of the Liturgy is that attendance at the Liturgy and the reception of communion were, and indeed often are, felt to be matters of personal piety and devotion, rather than active participation as a member of the Church in the Mystical Supper,[15] which is what the Liturgy is about. The prayers of the Liturgy make this quite clear. It is worth noticing that there is no mention of communion until after the catechumens have been dismissed. The first one comes in the second prayer of the faithful,

[11] 'If the words of the Lord are abstracted from the context of the early church structure and brought emphatically into the foreground, then their recitation becomes an immediate action in which Christ speaks and consecrates through the celebrating priest. The priest acts in an unmediated way *in persona Christi* – he stands immediately in the place of Christ. In the early church structure the priest is certainly also in the service of Christ and not some sort of delegate of the congregation, but he does not stand in this unmediated way in the place of Christ. The words of consecration are spoken consciously by him (in the name of the church) as an account of the foundation of what the church does in oblation, and of what the church prays the Holy Spirit to effect. Both the offerimus and the epiclesis are formulated as words of the church. The priest stands in the place of Christ only insofar as he presides at the Eucharistic gathering of the church.' Herwig Aldenhoven, 'Darbringung und Epiklesie im Eucharistiegebet', *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift* 70, 1980, pp. 212–225, here 220.

[12] Cf. Eusebius, *H.E.* 10.4.67, 'But in the leader of all it is reasonable to suppose that Christ himself dwells in his fullness, and in those that occupy the second rank after him, in proportion as each is able to contain the power of Christ and of the Holy Spirit'.

[13] *On Theophany* [*PG* 39, 328].

[14] Tone 4, Saturday Vespers, 1st Theotokion.

[15] Or 'a shared meal', in the words of Professor Lash.

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'Give also to those who pray with us — not just who are going to communion — the grace of progress in right living, in faith and spiritual understanding. Grant that always worshipping you with fear and love, they may partake, *metechein*, of your holy Mysteries without guilt or condemnation, and be counted worthy of your heavenly kingdom.' To put it somewhat crudely the purpose of the consecration of the Bread and Wine is to be eaten and drunk, not to produce the 'real presence'. The text of the Invocation of the Holy Spirit in the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom makes this perfectly clear, 'Remembering therefore this our Saviour's command and all that has been done for us: the Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection on the third day, the Ascension into heaven, the Sitting at the right hand, the Second and glorious Coming again; offering you your own of your own – in all things and for all things –

People: We praise you, we bless you, we give thanks to you, O Lord, and we pray to you, our God.
Priest: Also we offer you this spiritual worship without shedding of blood, and we ask, pray and implore you:[16] send down your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here set forth, and make this bread the precious Body of your Christ, and what is in this Cup the precious Blood of your Christ, changing them by your Holy Spirit, so that those who partake of them may obtain vigilance of soul, forgiveness of sins, communion of the Holy Spirit, fullness of the Kingdom of heaven, freedom to speak in your presence, not judgement or condemnation.[17]

Unfortunately in present practice, both Greek and Russian, this prayer has been turned into a 'moment of consecration', to make the point, at least in part, that **this** is the magic moment, not the Words of Institution. Indeed so ingrained is this idea that some manuscripts and editions of the Liturgy of St Basil even add, quite incorrectly, the phrase, 'changing them by your Holy Spirit' to the Invocation. The form of the Invocation in St Basil is, 'Therefore, we also, All-holy Master, sinners and your unworthy servants, whom you have counted worthy to minister at your holy altar, not because of *our own justice* (for *we have done* nothing good on earth), *but because of your mercies and pities, which you have richly poured out on us*,[18] boldly approach your holy altar; and as we set forth the

[16] I am not persuaded that this clause is a later interpolation, as Koumerianos suggests, following a conversation with Stephano Parenti, though to follow the People's *deometha* with the Priest's *katapempson* is attractive. There seems to be no manuscript evidence to support the change.
[17] I have omitted all the deacon's interpolations, especially the 'Amens', since where they are found in the mss. they seem to be said by the Priest.
[18] Dan 9.18; Titus 3.5–6.

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antitypes[19] of the holy body and blood of your Christ, we beg and implore you, O Holy of Holies, that by the good pleasure of your goodness, your *Holy Spirit may come upon*[20] us and upon these gifts here set forth, and that he may bless, hallow them and consecrate[21] this bread to be the precious body of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, this cup the precious blood of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, poured out for the life [and salvation] of the world'.

On the other hand it is worth observing that when the Anaphora began to be recited silently, probably in the fifth or sixth century, these words, and **not** the Invocation of the Holy Spirit, were still chanted and the People answered each with 'Amen'. The Russians have even preserved a late medieval practice of inserting a troparion about the Holy Spirit, accompanied by verses from Psalm 50, from the office of Terce, at this point, though I have one recent Moscow edition of the Sluzebnik which has them in brackets.[22] Many Greek clergy, including Bishops, say the last part of the Invocation on their knees, though the latest edition of the *Ieratikon* forbids this, at least on Sundays and during Paschal Time. In Orthodox tradition the whole Anaphora is the prayer of Consecration, nor is there provision in the books for a supplementary Consecration.

An old Serbian priest told me once of an ordination which neatly illustrates this point. In the Byzantine ordination rite, the Bishop, after the Invocation of the Holy Spirit, takes the Lamb and places it in the hands of the newly ordained priest with the words, 'Take this deposit, *parakatatheke*, and guard it until the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you will be asked to give an account of it'. The new priest holds it until it is needed again for the fraction. On this occasion the new priest had not been well-instructed, and when the Bishop called for the Lamb, the new priest, under the impression that he had been given Communion, had to confess that he had eaten it. 'So', said the old Priest, 'what did the Bishop do? He said "Shut the holy doors, tell the choir to sing something and bring a new prosphora". He then recited the whole of the Eucharistic Prayer again'.

[19] I have left the transliteration of the Greek. The Greek *antitypos* is not easy to translate. In 1 Peter 3.21 the word is used of the "reality" of baptism, whose water is the "antitype" of the water of the Flood. On the other hand in Hebrews 9.24 it refers to the earthly tabernacle, which is the "symbol" of the real, or heavenly, Tabernacle. St Cyril of Jerusalem uses the word to refer of the reality of the sacrament: It is not bread and wine that you taste, but an antitype of the body and blood of Christ [*Myst. Cat.* V.20, 6].

[20] Acts 19.6.

[21] This word, *anadeixei*, presents a problem. It usually means 'show', 'display'; but also 'declare'. It is also, though rarely, used in Classical Greek to mean 'consecrate'. This meaning is supported by an important passage in St Basil's book *On the Holy Spirit*, 66 [*PG* 32.118]: Which of the saints has left us in writing the words of the invocation at the consecration (*anadeixei*) of the bread of the Eucharist and the cup of blessing?

[22] This interpolation seems not to appear in Greek mss. before the 16th century.

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Another effect of the alienation of the people from the liturgical action and the catastrophic decline in frequent communion was that the preparation for communion became increasingly elaborate and demanding, including confession before every communion, attendance at Vespers the evening before, strict fasting, at least from midnight, and often for a number of days, and lengthy prayers of preparation. In Russian churches it used to be quite common for people go up and congratulate those who had made their Communion. Only the most observant Russians still keep all these rules, and in most Orthodox churches they are greatly relaxed and frequent Communion is encouraged. However, the attitude to Communion is still predominantly a question of personal sanctification, rather than of communal participation in the Mystical Supper. There is little or no consciousness that not to receive Communion at the Liturgy is, effectively, to excommunicate oneself. In theory the 9th of the Canons of the Apostles is still in force, 'All the faithful who come in and hear the Scriptures, but do not stay for the prayers and Holy Communion, are to be excommunicated, as causing disorder in the Church'.[23] In my monastery on Mt Athos the whole brotherhood made its Communion at the Sunday Liturgy. One Sunday the Abbot said to a monk who had not done so, 'I can excommunicate you; you cannot excommunicate yourself'. In this connection I must add that I find the notion of "impaired communion", which is currently very popular in Anglican circles, quite incoherent. If I can share in the Mystical Supper with someone, I am in communion with them; if I cannot, I am not. The Norris Hulse Professor Emeritus has suggested that it is, perhaps, better to distinguish between "communion" and "fellowship". I find this a useful distinction.

Clearly one should not go to Communion without preparation, but I frequently have to remind people that Communion is, as the words of distribution say, 'for forgiveness of sins'. The prayer that introduces the Our Father in the Liturgy makes the point clearly, 'To you, Master, Lover of mankind, we entrust our whole life and our hope, and we entreat, pray and implore you: count us worthy to partake of your heavenly and awesome Mysteries at this sacred and spiritual Table with a pure conscience, for the forgiveness of sins and pardon of offences, for communion of the Holy Spirit, for inheritance of the Kingdom of heaven and for boldness (*parrhesia*) before you; not for judgement or condemnation'.

As Father Schmemann wrote in the Preface to his book, 'There is a eucharistic crisis in the Church. In the tradition of the Church, nothing has changed. What has changed is the perception of its very essence.'[24] A few pages later he quotes from Professor Afanasiev,

[23] This canon is still printed as the first in the selection of canons given in the standard Greek *Mega Horologion*.

[24] *Op. Cit.,* p. 9.

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'Our task, therefore, consists not so much in making various changes in our liturgical life, but rather in coming to realise the genuine nature of the Eucharist.'[25]

It is in this spirit that many dioceses are making serious efforts to restore the ancient discipline of Communion. The Archbishop of San Francisco, for example, has issued a most encouraging set of instructions to his people on Communion and they have also been adopted by the Greek Archdiocese of Australia. The Archbishop even goes so far as to say, 'The Eucharist, approached in the correct manner, takes away our sin and gives us the strength to draw closer to God. What is the correct manner? The answer is found in the liturgy itself when the Priest presents the Chalice and intones, "With fear of God, with faith and love, draw near". Therefore, if you do not have a valid reason for not partaking, you are obliged to receive the Eucharist'.

After the Second Vatican Council the books of the Roman rite were not only translated into the modern vernaculars, they were also completely overhauled and revised, and new texts were added. Many of these have been taken from ancient Sacramentaries and elsewhere, but there is no time to discuss them here. I will only say two things. They have in many respects greatly enriched both the Missal and Breviary, but it must be confessed that the current English translation leaves much to be desired.[26] At a clergy meeting in Paris over thirty years ago, after a paper by one of the leading French liturgists on the new Missal, one priest complained about the indifferent quality of the official French version. The only reply he got was, 'Mon Père, est-ce que vous avez vu la traduction anglaise?' Professor Lash earlier remarked on the apparent lack of reverence for the Body of Christ by some communicants. I have observed the same myself, whereas the great reverence with which most Anglicans receive Communion is very noticeable. If I may make a suggestion, I think people should be encouraged to consume the host, before wandering back to their place.

It is unlikely, to say the least, that the Orthodox Churches will ever make a similar wholesale reform of their liturgical books. What is more probable is that they will, to use a currently fashionable expression, re-receive their own tradition.

The Very Rev Archemandrite Ephrem Lash
Monastery of St Andrew
217 Clarendon Road
Whalley Range
Manchester M16 0AY
ephrem@chorlton.com

[25] *Ibid.,* p. 19.
[26] See the regular commentaries on the Sunday collects in *The Tablet*.

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