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Orthodox Ecclesiastical Hymnography:

33AD to late-10th century AD

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INTRODUCTION

In every 21st-century Orthodox service clergymen, chanters and laypeople, individually and collectively, in cooperation and alone, combine hearts, minds and, above all, voices to come up with the best result in serving the Lord and His Church whose proud members they have been since baptism. Sunday after Sunday (at least), big feast after big feast, and the canvas is stretched so that each and altogether put upon it their vocal brushstrokes in offering to the Lord “His own from His own” as an “of-speech” personal sacrifice, the least and most they can do at the same time, to produce an artistical manifestation of worship by the local body of Christ they are members of.

In this they comprise rings of an unbroken chain dating back to the apostolic times. Divine Liturgy’s blessing of the Kingdom of God, Holy-Thrice Hymn and the anaphora prayer. And a Matins’ or a Vespers’ recited psalms and petitions and chanted troparia, the latter either of their own melody (idiomela) or following patterns lost in time (prosomoia). All together form a magnificent and occasionally incomprehensible as per structure and execution rules ensemble, which partly resonates even pre-Jesus times liturgical practices of His compatriots-by-flesh Jews. All together and each separately form cases of historical evolution and, very rarely, outstanding stability.

It is the purpose of this essay to examine and briefly sketch the history of the Orthodox liturgical components and the main poets and melodists behind them. Approaching this ensemble as another brilliant gift from the Holy Spirit’s wealth of unfathomable and limitless energies upon receptive individuals and their historical audiences, we deem ourselves blessed daily using and being benefited from them; and equally responsible to constructively develop, unveil hidden gems out of or even retrieve them from oblivion, to bequeath them upon present and future Orthodox generations – avoiding both conservative traditionalism and disrespectful modernisation.

Let me finish this introduction with a telling personal experience. Almost forty years ago, in my early 20s, a History University student and a parish Church chanter with still much space to cover, I was on a Holy Mountain pilgrimage. In one of its twenty coenobitic Monasteries, renowned for sublime chanting execution and honouring the order of services or typicon to the letter, I was invited to the podium to observe a weekday’s Matins procedures. From the very beginning, chanters were using an A5 or even B5 thin booklet titled “Stichologia” (“Versology” in free translation). Other books were coming and going but “Stichologia” was there until the dismissal and the beginning of the Divine Liturgy. One of the monks, ten years senior to me at most, almost winked to me adding: “You see, the rest of the books were used for a section of Matins; but Stichologia was always open and running through them”.

Let us therefore examine books like “Stichologia” and go so back in time as possible, to re-create and delve into our Christian forefathers’ and mothers’ liturgical environments and customs, and become, once again, one with them in the unifying presence of the Head of the Church.

1. THE FIRST THREE CHRISTIAN CENTURIES

1a. JEWISH TRADITION & PRE-CHRISTIAN BACKDROP IN DIVINE LITURGY

Our Lord's words "Think not that I have come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I have not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17) also applied and still do in Christian worship and art, with music and hymns of all kinds included.

In the Upper Room, Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, fulfilled the Jewish Passover's Seder in appending the establishment of Eucharist.¹ And before moving to the garden of Gethsemane, He and His Disciples sang Passover hymns (Matthew 26:30).

Before Pentecost, the Apostles daily occupied Hekal, the Temple of Solomon's main room, "praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:53), following, thus, a religious Jew's daily praying/of-services routine. Three decades later, Paul exhorted Colossians "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col 3:16); and Ephesians: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph 5:19).

A careful reading of Paul's passages suggests that psalms (the 150 Davidic), hymns (like those sung by Jesus and His Disciples in the Upper Room) and spiritual songs (something entirely new and related to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) could be either recited or sung; in public (congregation) or individually; to pray with and catechise. Furthermore, Paul addressing two local churches whose congregation must have been a mixed one but with Gentiles the majority, was attempting to match traditional Jewish worship with Gentiles' secular customs, to keep a healthy balance among brethren-in-Christ. Besides, it is remarkable we do not encounter similar lines in his Epistles addressing Churches almost exclusively of Gentiles, as Paul's concern was their observing of the core of his teachings – not how they would express their new faith artistically. To cap the first three post-Pentecost decades, James in his universal Epistle exhorted the faithful: when merry, sing in psalms (James 5:13)

By and large the first three Christian centuries were defined by either a propensity to hold the Jewish "liturgical" tradition and enlarge it with Jesus's and His Apostles' teachings (as already recorded in the four gospels and the Epistles of Paul, Peter, John, James and Jude by the end of the 1st century AD), and Eucharist. Or neglect whatever Jewish as having nothing with their cultural past and only observe the AD "chapters" of God's revelation to humans. In the first case, Christians from Jews were even at pains to match their Pascha with their former brethren's Passover – hence the various schisms of the 2nd century AD about the Pascha date: should it coincide with the Jews', or should it be the Sunday after the Jewish Passover? In the second case, "1st Generation" Christians from the Gentiles (not proselytes) sought to encompass their pagan cultural past within the new faith, with poetic and musical expressions spearheading their efforts.

¹ On this issue and the general similarity of Jewish Synagogue's with the first Christian Liturgy, see Silouan Thompson, *First-century Christian synagogue liturgy*, [First-century Christian synagogue liturgy - S I L O U A N](#); Luis Guilherme de Oliveira e Silva Martins, LC, *Historical Development of the Christian Liturgy and the Liturgical Sacred Space from Antiquity to Middle Ages*, Capstone Thesis, 2024; [Liturgica.com | Liturgics | Early Christian Liturgics | The Jewish Components of Christian Worship](#); Louis Bouyer, [Jewish Liturgy and Christian Liturgy | Church Life Journal | University of Notre Dame](#); Tracey R. Rich, [Jewish Liturgy - Judaism 101 \(JewFAQ\)](#); Philip A. Pecorino, [Worship and Practices | World Religions](#); [Messianic Judaism Australia | Gold Coast | Derech HaMashiach](#), Messianic Synagogue: Order of Service

NOTE: Most of the current subchapter is based upon pieces of one or more from the above mentioned sources

All ancient Divine Liturgies (James's, Mark's, Clemen's), the centrepiece of contemporary Christians' ecclesiastical life, are developments of the Jewish synagogue's daily and Shabbat services: overall and as a sequence of their sections. But what Jews stopped and still stop short by invoking/imploing the coming of the Messiah, Christians, in belief of Jesus Christ being the Messiah, fulfilled it by attaching to the Jewish service the offering and the consecration of the common bread and cup by the presiding member of the clergy, who either used an already widely accepted anaphora prayer or simply improvised. To put it simply, Jews stopped and stop with the Liturgy of the Word; Christians carried/carry on with the Liturgy of the Faithful.

Order of a Synagogue Service

IN A SYNAGOGUE SERVICE:

1. First the **"Shema"** would be recited (this is **Deuteronomy 6:4**, which Jews would repeat several times daily). **"Hear, O Israel! The Lord is Our God. The Lord is one!"** (NASB)
2. Then **certain prayers** would be spoken.
3. Then a **reading from the Law** (Genesis through Deuteronomy).
4. Then a **reading from the Prophets** (intended to illustrate the law).
5. Then **a sermon**. The *synagogue rulers* would decide who was to lead the service and give the sermon. A different person would be chosen to lead each week.
6. Since it was customary for the synagogue leader to **invite visiting rabbis to speak**, Paul and Barnabas usually would have an open door when they went go to a synagogue. But as soon as they spoke about Jesus as Messiah, the door would often slam shut. Usually they would not be invited back by the religious leaders, and sometimes they would be thrown out of town!

The invitation from the synagogue rulers was to speak *a message of encouragement*. What an open invitation for the gospel! There can be no more encouraging word than the fact that God has come to earth and opened a door to heaven, providing an atonement for sin and offering new life in Jesus Christ! Such an invitation was all Paul needed.



Barnes' Bible Charts

Source: [Bible Charts - Teaching and Preaching Resources](#)

So, poetic and musical parts of the Jewish service kept on use in the Christian Divine Liturgy of the Word. This is what Paul exhorted Colossians with as per the first part of their congregation-in-Christ (their still-not-on-the-stone-written "official" Divine Liturgy): "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms". This is the Jewish "Matins" Service's section of P'sukei d'Zimra or Pasuk D'Zimrah or, in plain English, verses of song, and it is done right after the synagogue's president has blessed God with the so-called Shema: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is Our God. The Lord is one!"

Paul in another Epistle of his, exhorted Timothy "that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men", without excluding pagan or self-deified Roman Emperors, and all in authority. The reason: "That we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim 2:1-2; also, the final sentence of the prayer after the consecration of

the Holy Gifts in Chrysostom's Liturgy). His "first of all" note alludes to the first section of Timothy's Ephesian congregation's Divine Liturgy.

Not surprisingly, all Jewish services, both "Matins" (Shacharit) and "Vespers" (Ma'ariv) included and still include a section of 19 parts of requests, expressions of gratitude, and praising God which fits perfectly with what Justin the Philosopher and martyr informed Emperor Antoninus (138-161AD) in his Apology: "[we offer] prayers and hymns for our creation and for prosperity, the varieties of species, the changes of the weather, and also requests to become incorruptible through faith in God". If one adds up the three litanies before the Christian Divine Liturgy's small entrance, alternating with Psalms 102 and 145, and the priestly exclamations, with the exclusion of "Commemorating our all-holy..." one has precisely a perfect copy of the Jewish "Matins" and "Vespers" services 19 pieces preceding the chief part of the Liturgy of the Word: the readings. As per the content of the Christian Divine Liturgy's 19 pieces? Almost identical with the Jewish service.

Same with Christian Vespers and Matins. In the former, it is again 19 pieces of petitions and exclamations between initial Psalm 103 and Psalms 140 and 141 (the Psalms of censing), obviously when the 1st Kathisma on Saturdays, the 18th in Lent and other Kathismata in other parts of the year are read in three parts with two small litanies between them. In the latter, it is again the same 19 pieces with the Great Litany after the six-Psalms and the two small between the three Kathismata of the Psalter.

Following the 19 pieces section, ancient Liturgies, either more consolidated (James's, Mark's, Clemens's) or less (Colossians' (Col 3:16), Corinthians' (1 Cor 11:17-34) and – maybe – Thessalonians' (1 Thes 5:12-23)), continued with the reading of pieces from the Pentateuch or Torah (the Law), the 17 or so books of Prophets and, of course, from the last quarter of the 1st century AD on, apostolic epistles and gospels. In the first Christian generation, the latter two were still absent, unless visiting eye- and ear-witnesses of Jesus's preachings and miracles were to share their recollections. Obviously, a variety of manuscripts on Jesus' life might have been circulating, before the three synoptic Gospels were completed and widely accepted. Again, the Jewish service pattern was followed to the letter, literally and metaphorically, obviously with the New Testament's later additions/fulfilments. And following the readings, a sermon explaining the Law and the prophets as precursors of the coming of Jesus Christ the Messiah was given. Which also took place in the synagogue, and still does, albeit in the sense that the Messiah is still awaited.

Remarkably, synagogue's ceremonial treatment of the Word of God has been copied by the Christian Divine Liturgy's Little Entrance. Torah's scrolls or books were and are still paraded around the synagogue before they were/are rested on the bimah (podium) and male members were/are invited to read the appointed piece for the day, as Torah, similarly to the New Testament (except for the Revelation) needs to be read in its entirety across a calendar year. This is what Jesus did in Nazareth's synagogue on the Rosh Hashanah (New Year's Day, mid- to late-September), one-and-half years before His Passion (Luke 4:16-19). And this is what the Christian deacon or priest nowadays do, albeit with the Eisodikon (Small Entrance Hymn), Apolytikia, Kontakion and Holy-thrice hymn to be sung between the Little Entrance and the New Testament readings. But these will be examined later as per when, where and why they emerged.

Jesus, in the Nazareth case, finished His reading and sat down, only to stand up again and, to the overt or covert request of His compatriots, give a short homily on the lines He had just read (Luke 4:20-27). This was also what Paul and Barnabas took advantage of in their first missionary journey in Antioch, Pisidia, to speak about Christ, when invited by the lords of the synagogue to give a homily after the

readings (Acts 13:15-41); same in Iconium (Acts 14:1). In the Christian Divine Liturgy, of old and nowadays, the presiding clergyman was/is expected to do the same right after the apostolic and evangelical readings. In Greek it is called “nouthesia” (placing of the mind), and it is first named as such by St Justin’s Apology we have already referenced. “Nouthesia”, therefore, reveals a purpose of putting congregants’ minds onto the right place as per what they just heard, to avoid misconceptions, which might - if not already have had - lead to inflammatory or smouldering heresies and schisms; also, of pointing out how the Lord’s words should be applied by the faithful in daily life.

The synagogue’s services finished and still finish with Kaddish, which caps the readings and the sermon in essentially praising the Lord for His Revelation through the Scriptures and asking Him to hasten the fulfilment of His promises with sending the Messiah. It has been rightly noted that Kaddish is a precursor to the Lord’s prayer during which, a bit before Holy Communion, Christians pray, among other things, for “Thy Kingdom come”.

This is where similarities between the Jewish synagogue service and the Christian Divine Liturgy end. As per Christian Matins and Vespers and their Jewish counterparts Shacharit and Ma’ariv we shall treat them separately later. But let us now move to the novelties of the Christian Divine Liturgy, especially as per the use of Psalms, hymns and spiritual odes within the first three Christian centuries.

1b. LITURGY OF THE WORD & LITURGY OF THE FAITHFUL: NOVELTIES

Until 313AD and the Edict of Mediolanum, and despite internal issues caused by heresies and the degree of their influence (usually local), Christians’ main concern was to survive recurring persecutions and a general disdain against a peculiar “cult” defying materialism and considering “all things as offscourings to win a life in Christ” (Philippians 3:7-8). So, Divine Liturgy and other makeshift daily “services” of a nascent nature did not feature any significant evolution with artistic additions and melodical embellishments. Besides, multicentricity, differences in traditions and individual histories from Church to Church, and the absence of a universally accepted personality or a local Church to steer the global body of Christ, led to arrangements valid only to a restricted radius. As we saw, churches could not even agree as per the definition of the Pascha date, an issue decisively resolved by the 1st Ecumenical Council in 325AD, at the dawn of the Church’s administrative centralisation (also urged by a sympathetic and later apparently pro-Christian centralised imperial administration) which, again, was not fully achieved before mid-9th century AD. So, what follows as fragmentary pieces of information should not be considered as omnipresent and by default used across Christianity from Jerusalem to Britain and Danube to North Africa².

The Liturgy of the Word acted as the spiritual “warm-up” for the Liturgy of the Faithful, which, as we saw, was elementary. So, copying the synagogue’s practice, Christian congregations, after the presiding member of clergy would have blessed the Lord and them or given them peace (the blessing of the Kingdom of the Holy Trinity a 10th century AD first)³, would split into a male and a female choir to sing Davidic Psalms (most probably the 134th, the 135th and the 148th) in that way: the choir leader chanted half of a Psalm’s verses and the choirs finished them; or, verse by verse, the choir leader chanted it all,

² For the purposes of this subchapter, see George I. Papadopoulos, *Byzantine Ecclesiastical Music Historical Review* (in Greek), Athens, 1904, pp. 8-19; Egon Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, Oxford, 1961, pp. 34-44

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³ Charalambos Pr. Koltouktsoglou, *Liturgical View of the Divine Liturgy* (in Greek), Postgraduate Dissertation, Athens, 2023, p. 17

with the choirs either repeating the verses, some words of them, or sealing them with “Amen”. It is possible that in holding tentative harbingers of nowadays established Lord’s and the Theotokos’s feasts, appropriate Psalms were added (for example psalms 110-112 for Christmas; psalm 131 for the Theotokos’s Nativity). In late 1st century AD Antioch, St Ignatius the God-bearer (33-108AD) the city’s bishop, is believed to be the first to have organised the congregation in male and female choirs singing antiphonally, surely a novelty as in Jewish synagogues women kept silent.

But as the warning has been, Antioch’s customs should not be considered as universal, especially among Churches predominantly Jewish: Jerusalem and Palestine in general; or of Gentiles: Paul’s Macedonian and Achaean ones; Paul’s and, later, John the Theologian’s Ephesus with its Book of Revelation seven satellite Churches; and Rome, Alexandria, Cyrene and Carthage.

However, all these local bodies of Christ, and as per Divine Liturgy, followed some common basics, in that order: the reading of scriptures and the ensuing sermon; the special treatment/petitions for the catechumens, the possessed, those at the final stage of pre-baptismal preparations and those in repentance (namely, all those, who could not partake of the Holy Gifts, and were ushered outside the church by deacons before what we now know as “Great Entrance”); the ceremonial presentation of the offerings of bread and wine and their placement upon (what now is known as) Holy Table; litanies and petitions, mainly for those who had remained in the church to partake of the Holy Gifts, however, also for the sick, the travelling and the imprisoned who, plausibly, could not be physically present; the exchange of the kiss of peace (separately: bishop and priests; deacons; lower clergy; men; women); the anaphora prayer(s); the epiclesis; the commemoration after the consecration (in essence a repetition of the litanies and petitions before the exchange of the kiss of peace, however, in the knowledge of the Messiah mystically standing among the congregation); the Communion; the dismissal. Obviously, 1st and 2nd century liturgies should have been much simpler and varying from locality to locality.

Ancient and post-4th century AD Divine Liturgies alike are predominantly an offering of speech, God’s gift to humans as images of Him and clearly distinguishing them from the most evolved mammals. In that sense, all common liturgical sections mentioned were offered as speech by the clergy: either as an already written down piece of a local tradition, or an impromptu improvisation. Characteristically, Clemens’s liturgy’s anaphora prayer covers one-fifth of the whole. Besides, Chrysostom thrice in his liturgy declares “we offer this **of-speech** (logiki) veneration”, which has been translated in English as either “spiritual” or “rational”. A digressionary comment on this is now crucial to understand the roots and the evolution of the ecclesiastical music and hymnography.

The former translation, inadvertently, diminishes human contribution as secondary, merely auxiliary or even that of an audience, as it is the Holy Spirit Who does the job. Even if this is not what it is implied, there is a notion of superiority of the spiritual against the physical, which again negatively affects the balance between the two integral parts of every human as the Creator Himself put them together: body from the earth He Himself created and soul from His breath.

The latter translation implies something unique among humans as juxtaposed to the most evolved mammals, however largely intellectual and not assuming the importance of the physical tools of speech (tongue, lips, teeth, etc) and exhalation as a tripartite combination for speech to materialise. It is only this combination that is able to produce a clergyman’s or a choir’s concerted “of-speech” liturgical offer, time and again, as a unique, in given space and time, reproduction of the “wavelengths” transmitted by the Holy Spirit and mystically received by that clergyman or the choir. Obviously, any established Divine Liturgy’s order and prayers are identically repeated each time it is served. But the

“of-speech” offer is a unique one, because it takes place in a different time and in a Heraclitean different space. It is an additional ring of a chain that has started in the Upper Room and continues each time a Divine Liturgy is served anywhere to incorporate increasingly more humans in the ecclesiastical Kingdom of the Holy Trinity. But even if by rational it is implied the analogy of human speech to the distinguishing attribute of the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Son and Logos of God Jesus Christ (Logos=analogy, verbal expression, cause), then Him being the cause and purpose of everything and everyone is missing. And so is the entirety of the Divine Liturgy as encompassing anyone and anything across and beyond space and time.

To put it simpler: each time an officiating clergyman says “Take, eat, this is my body” is he simply repeating Jesus’ words 2,000 years old as merely obeying to an order of the Holy Master, or is he “lending” his speech tools to the One that “offers and is offered, distributes and is distributed” so that the Upper Room sacrament encompasses at the time and space a Liturgy is offered the specific congregation awaiting to partake of it? If the latter, then the officiating clergyman does not do his “job”, but, “endued with the grace of priesthood”, mobilises the tripartite function of his personal speech capability so that the congregation and himself “hear” Jesus’ Upper Room words, and in Holy Spirit be united with Him. But even with the 1st and 2nd century less established Divine Liturgies, it was again the work of the Holy Spirit to be heard by the officiating clergyman’s improvisations: not his “wisdom”.

So, the “of-speech” offer of worship, climaxing with the anaphora prayer(s) and the epiclesis was and remains an intense experience for both clergy and laity. But laity, of which and for which the liturgy was and is offered (the ancient Greek word meaning “a work of/for people”), needed to actively participate throughout it: a) to manifest the essence of the sacrament (a liturgy is not valid without the participation of at least one layperson), b) to by any means available and appropriate demonstrate their involvement, c) to vary the “offering of plain speech” with songs and spiritual odes and keep the congregation on their toes, literally and metaphorically. Toward these, “hallelujahs” were sung between or among the various Old and New Testament readings, prefixed by psalms verses; “Glory to you O Lord” both before and after the gospel; “Lord have mercy” after petitions and requests; “Holy, holy, holy Lord of Sabaoth...” to split the anaphora prayer into two more manageable pieces as well as underline the gradual lifting of souls and bodies toward the heavenly altar (with the choirs characteristically singing it on tiptoe).

All latter being Paul’s “spiritual odes” and with Psalms monopolising the Liturgy of the Word, there is a gap as per “hymns”: what kind and which they were. Scholars agree that there existed but were never recorded, thus, perished in historical oblivion. Treatment of hymns in 4th and 5th centuries by the official Church (we will come to that later) shows Her overall scepticism on the genre. As it seems, for reasons already explained (multicentricity, heresies, persecutions) hymns must have been local products for local consumption. Given the artistic freedom they were based on (both poetic and musical), as well as the emotional influence music and songs largely bring forward, they could range from tools of edifying proper faith and ethos to weapons of their annihilation. For example, Clemens of Alexandria (ca 150-ca 220AD), who himself wrote non-extant hymns, urged his flock, while chanting, to avoid copying contemporary theatre’s debauched musical expressionism of vocal manoeuvres and be decent and humble. So, even hymns written by Hippolytus of Rome (ca 165-ca 235) and Origen (ca 185-ca 253) against heresies of the time did not survive.

2. 324-451AD: THE BLESSING OF THE END OF THE PERSECUTIONS & THE CURSE OF HERESIES AND ANTAGONISM

2a. THE BACKGROUND

At the dawn of 4th century some cataclysmic events happened, which would irrevocably change the course of the history of the Church, locally and across the still vast Roman Empire, and make Her also reconsider the use of music and hymnography in the Divine Liturgy, as well as in the emerging genre of the extra-Divine-Liturgy services of Vespers and Matins. 4th and 5th centuries alike were the time for the Church to redefine Herself as also a largely state-supported institution with a need for: internal organisation, management of increasing estates and wealth, regularisation of the role of monks and Monasteries, and the redefinition of the laity's daily involvement in liturgical life. These were the most pressing but by no means the only issues at hand.

The Edict of Mediolanum (313), fully observed after Licinius' defeat by St Constantine the Great in the battle of Chrysopolis (324) with the latter becoming the sole ruler of the Roman Empire, elated Christians for it decisively brought persecutions to an end. However, multicentricity and heresies still prospered. Prior to 330, Constantinople was the see of the insignificant diocese of Byzantium, however, with the city rapidly asserting itself as the political, legislative and administrative heart of the Empire (not a self-evident development in post-tetrarchy centrifugal Roman Empire), Church followed. But it was not before 381 that it became an equal to Antioch and Alexandria Patriarchates, when, in the fringes of the 2nd Ecumenical Council and because the Church of the new capital, it was given the precedence of honour over them, ranking second only to Rome. Seventy years later, in the fringes of the 4th Ecumenical Council (451), it was granted equal privileges with the Church of Rome and placed the dioceses of Pontus, Asia, and Thrace under its jurisdiction. Finally, in 587, Patriarch St John the Faster (585-595) was the first to use the title "Ecumenical" approved by the Patriarchate's permanent council (not an Ecumenical) in Constantinople. Despite the dismay of the contemporary Pope and the rest of the Eastern Patriarchates, the Constantinopolitan Church had achieved an undoubted prevalence. However, it was never a universally agreed, peaceful outcome, and it had required two-and-a-half centuries to materialise. Let us examine how and why.

After St Constantine's death (337) the supposedly denounced by the 1st Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325) Arians not only did they regroup but effectively overtook the Church administration, appointing Constantinopolitan bishops of their liking for more than forty years, until emperor Theodosius I the Great (379-395) acceded to the throne. Personalities such as St Athanasius the Great, patriarch of Alexandria (328-335, 337-338, 346-356, 362, 363-364, 364-373; rest years in self-imposed or forced exile from Alexandria and his throne), and St Basil the Great, archbishop of Caesarea, Cappadocia (370-379), led the battle of the Orthodox against the adulteration of the true faith by a combination of incorrigible heresiarchs and political opportunists, some of them simply anti-Constantine; and they bore the brunt of stricter or milder ecclesiastical and political oppression. But in doing so, Athanasios and Basil also bolstered their local Church's influence upon ecumenical issues. It was not only their writings to be mobilised against the non-Orthodox doctrines; but also, their Sees' growing prestige to gather a decisive number of bishops behind them.

Notwithstanding its service to Orthodoxy such power was time and again used to disproportionately strengthen the local See against the rest, also by influencing the selection of the Constantinopolitan bishop (and, as we saw, after 381, "Patriarch") after Arians had been decisively defeated. St John the Chrysostom's case, an Antiochian's, speaks volumes, as the Alexandrian patriarch Theofilus I (385-412), irritated by Antioch's influence upon the capital's ecclesiastical affairs, strove and finally achieved to

have him deposed, exiled and effectively murdered in 407. Less than 30 years later, another Alexandrian patriarch and a saint this time, Cyril (412-444), led the Orthodox war against the Constantinopolitan heresiarch patriarch Nestorios, again of an Antiochian origin. With the 3rd Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (431) Cyril had Nestorios' doctrines of Christ being a double person denounced and him deposed. Characteristically, Cyril himself had even ejected Chrysostom from the Alexandrian Church's diptych of departed hierarchs, only to put him back after a vision of Chrysostom showing him his posthumous heavenly glory.

By mid-5th century Alexandria had become the indisputable protagonist in the ecclesiastical arena. It had defeated Antioch twice, and the Constantinopolitan throne was at its mercy. Obviously, heresiarchs like Nestorios ought to be tackled, but soon Alexandria tasted its own medicine, when St Cyril's successor, patriarch Dioskoros (444-451), overstepped (again) canonical boundaries to impose upon the Constantinopolitan throne a bishop of Alexandria's liking.

Taking advantage of the notoriously weak emperor Theodosius II (408-450), Dioskoros, whilst presiding the so called "Marauding Council of Ephesus" (449) he had had Theodosius II to convene, achieved by brutal coercion the deposition of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch Flavian (446-449) as allegedly Nestorian; also, the reestablishment in priesthood of archimandrite Eutyches, the Monophysitism theorist, who had been suspended by Flavian as heretic with Pope Leo's I consent some months before. Unsurprisingly, Dioskoros' representative in Constantinople Anatolius succeeded Flavian with Theodosius II ratifying the selection.

Flavian (commemorated as saint on February 16th) died some weeks later in exile because of the injuries he had sustained, beaten at the "Marauding Council" by Egyptian monks, whom Dioskoros had brought together as his quasi-praetorians; Theodosius II soon passed away too. The new emperor Marcian (450-457) and especially his wife and empress Pulcheria, Theodosios' II sister and longstanding regent, refused to accept the "Marauding Council's" decrees and with Pope Leo's I support convened the 4th Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon (451).

There, Dioskoros was deposed less as a Monophysite heretical and Eutyches' supporter and more for his non-canonical and inhumane actions two years before. It was the same Chalcedon Council, as we saw, to bestow upon the See of Constantinople equal privileges with Rome, to submit under its jurisdiction hundreds of dioceses, and to give it the right to hear appeals involving clergy from other ecclesiastical jurisdictions. Besides, the same Council scissored Antioch's status by elevating Jerusalem to a patriarchate and allocating to it 57 dioceses that hitherto belonged to Antioch.

So, by mid-5th century and after Antioch's defeat by Alexandria twice, Alexandria's self-inflicted defeat, and Rome's precarious position within a sea of barbarian invasions (the western part of the Empire passing to their hands completely in 476), the Constantinopolitan Church had *de facto* become the major and undisputed player of the ecclesiastical affairs. Yet, a relatively new Church, without the glittering historical and cultural background of Her ancient sisters, She looked up to them for inspiration to form Her identity. But that proved to be a lengthy process, only finalised by late-9th century.

2b. LITURGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The 4th and 5th centuries of multicentricity and four major heresies should also be seen through the angle of a general political instability and minor imperial leadership, which spawned or further nourished a general centrifugal pattern. Similarly to Alexander the Great's vast Empire's division into

four major kingdoms fighting against each other after his death (Hellenistic era, 323-31BC), East Roman Empire became a quicksand after St Constantine's repose to the Lord. Besides, Christianity, not until late-4th century the official religion of the Empire, had started gaining ground with massive conversions, especially and unprecedentedly among the backbone of the imperial population of peasants and free farmers, whose knowledge and devotion to the faith should be considered at least questionable. If St Basil the Great got baptised at 27, after returning from his lengthy studies in ancient Athens Academy, a man who would combine studies with Scriptures to combat heresies and a still rife idolatry, what could have been the case of an urban artisan or petty shopkeeper or an illiterate rural family after their hasty baptism, which somehow was following the new "fashion" or was even used as a means of conscription of manipulated "flocks" of newly-illuminated by either the local pro-Nicene bishop or his Arian counterpart?

So, the pro-Nicene Church personalities needed to continuously fight against both enemies: their flocks' minimal knowledge of the faith, and the heretics' efforts to register them under their wings. And they did it using liturgical music and hymns which did both. Ephraim the Syrian (306-373), Athanasios the Great patriarch of Alexandria (293-373), Ambrose bishop of Mediolanum (339-397), Basil the Great (330-379) and John Chrysostom (347-407) as patriarch of Constantinople (397-404), all within their ecclesiastical jurisdiction, allowed the introduction of melodic hymns to continue catechising their flocks on the right faith in a pleasant manner. They were forced to do so (and to a point they were confronted even by contemporary ascetics who saw in this novelty a moral decadence) because Arians and Macedonians had been enticing newly converted in their churches with secular theatre's music and its sensual choreography, with Arians' Thaleia the most conspicuous example.⁴

Further to this, pro-Nicene Church also made clear with the 15th canon of the Laodicea Council (363/4) (consisting of Asia Minor bishops; later ratified by Ecumenical Councils) that only appointed chanters, forming two antiphonal choirs, would do the liturgical chanting, cancelling, thus, the custom of the whole of the congregation participating, for its majority had come to consist of inexperienced new converts. Even further, appointed chanters would chant their pieces only from a vellum, whose contents had been prior checked and approved by local bishops and priests.⁵ And because this could not be happening time and again, local hymns, both as lyrics and melody and on a still-nascent-annual-feasts-basis, and by regular repetition, started to register in the collective psyche, become popular and travel beyond the community which had generated them. Two examples: one from the Divine Liturgy, the other from vespers.

Divine Liturgy: St James's liturgy's cherubic hymn "Let all mortal flesh keep silent and stand in fear and trembling, giving no thought to things of the earth. For the King of kings and the Lord of lords is coming forth to be sacrificed and given as food to the faithful. Before Him go the Choir of Angels, with all the Principalities and Powers" (which nowadays is chanted only in St Basil's Holy Saturday Vespersal Liturgy) was widely accepted in all local Churches' Divine Liturgies before it was replaced by "Let us who mystically represent..." in mid-6th century (we will come to this later).⁶

Vespers: the thanksgiving hymn at the lighting of the lamps "Glad some light of holy glory of the holy, blessed, heavenly, immortal Father, O Jesus Christ: arriving at the hour of sunset and having seen the evening light, we praise the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God. It is worthy for You to be praised at all times with happy voices, O Son of God and Giver of life; and therefore the world glorifies You". A hymn

⁴ Papadopoulos, 1904, pp. 23-28

⁵ Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 21

⁶ Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 16

attributed to St Athenogenes, bishop of Pidachthoe or Sebastia (martyred in 305), however, according to St Basil, resonating earlier times, and widely popular across Asia Minor and Syria at least.⁷

It is noteworthy that this hymn was initially exclusively dedicated to Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Light of the Glory of the Father, but later, with the addition of its central part, ended up also being a glorification of the Holy Trinity. The hymn can be split into three sections: a) “Glad some light of holy glory of the holy, blessed, heavenly, immortal Father, O Jesus Christ”; b) “arriving at the hour of sunset and having seen the evening light, we praise the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God”; and c) “It is worthy for You to be praised at all times with happy voices, O Son of God and Giver of life; and therefore the world glorifies You”.

Sections a) and c) bind harmoniously together and are of a Johannite inspiration (John 1:1-4, 9-10, 14), something that may attribute the birth of the hymn to Ephesus or its ecclesiastical hinterland as early as late 1st century (hence St Basil’s comment). However, section b) resonates a need to underline the trinitarian character of the Godhead, and as such it should be a post-Nicene or even post-Constantinople (2nd Ecumenical Council of 381) addition used by pro-Nicene Churches in their battle against emperor-supported Arians and their Churches. As per liturgical practice, it reveals the custom of vespersal congregation (“arriving at the hour of sunset and having seen the evening light”; “Vespers”, from Eos+peras, meaning in ancient Greek “the end of physical light” brought by Eos, the goddess of morning and day light), a copy from Jewish synagogue’s Ma’ariv as we have seen, and an exhortation to start the new 24 hours period by, first and foremost, ascribing to the Trinitarian God His true attributes to avoid misconceptions and ensuing heresies.

⁷ Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 16

3. 451-610AD: THE WIDENING OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL RIFTS & THE JUSTINIAN ERA

3a. THE BACKGROUND

Post-Chalcedon Constantinopolitan Church was strengthened territorially and became the *primus inter pares* of the rest Eastern Patriarchates and Rome. Yet She was not at all capable of changing Monophysites' minds who, by observing local liturgical customs, sought to see their heresy maintain and enhance their Churches' sway upon the local faithful – at least. The issue was deeply political, and thirty years after Chalcedon, emperor Zeno (474-491) and Patriarch Acacius (472-489) issued in 482 the Henotikon (Unifier), a document attempting to assuage Monophysites' resentment against Chalcedon and take on board the soul of large swathes of the Eastern Roman Empire from Syria to Egypt, important bastions against Persians and Constantinople's breadbasket respectively. That prompted the Acacian schism (484-519) with Rome, which ended when emperor Anastasius I (491-518), a moderate Monophysite, died, and was replaced by Justin I (518-527), the old Imperial Guard commander, whose nephew, Justinian I (527-565), soon became the effective ruler even prior to his official accession to the throne.

With Justinian a new era rose, also in the ecclesiastical affairs, approximately lasting a century. Justinian's primary concern was to reestablish the Roman Empire's authority across the Mediterranean, something that was largely crowned with success, albeit emptying the imperial coffers, increasing the popular dismay due to over-taxation and weakening the eastern front against the Persian Empire. Ecclesiastically, Justinian, although a Monophysite sympathiser, also influenced by his spouse Theodora, an ardent Monophysite, adopted a seemingly unbending anti-heresies policy decreeing in 530 that all four Ecumenical Councils' canons had the validity of imperial law, thus, heretics became outlaws.⁸

One of them, Severus, the self-exiled Monophysite ex-patriarch of Antioch (512-518), despite his amicable bond with the imperial couple, was anathematised in 536 by the Constantinopolitan Church Permanent Synod, and soon all but three Monophysite bishops lost their thrones. And despite Theodora secretly helping Jacob Baradeus to become the Monophysite bishop of Edessa and him clandestinely establishing a parallel to the official Church's system of dioceses in Syria and Armenia (the so-called Jacobite Church), there was no repetition of the Arian era, when Sees changed hands from pro-Nicene to Arians. It was rather the official and legitimate pro-Ecumenical-Councils-canons bishops against the illegitimate and non-canonically elected and appointed clergymen, who stood against Constantinople: as the emperor's seat and the Ecumenical Patriarch's see.⁹

3b. LITURGICAL DEVELOPMENTS & THE EMERGENCE OF KONTAKION

Together with coercion Justinian mobilised constructive policies as a means of gaining consensus of the pro-Chalcedon clergy and laity. And constructive they were literally and metaphorically. Literally: he undertook an impressive and unprecedented programme of building new or enlarging already established churches and Monasteries, with the Church of God's Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) in Constantinople the most illustrious example (completed in 537). Metaphorically: knowing that the capital's and other imperial cities' lay population was almost exclusively attending/participating in the Divine Liturgy whilst the rest services (Vespers, Midnight Office, Matins) were observed in Monasteries (rural and urban), he strove to embellish and doctrinally fortify Divine Liturgy. So, to what has already

⁸ Wellesz, 1961, p. 161

⁹ Wellesz, 1961, p. 161-162

been mentioned, Justinian is considered responsible for introducing the following hymns: a) “Only begotten Son and immortal Word of God...” (the so-called “second Creed” – with probably him being the author), b) the Cherubic to replace “Let all mortal flesh keep silent...” (most probably finalised by Ecumenical Patriarch John Scholasticus (565-577) in the days of Justinian’s successor Justin II (565-578)), c) the Nicene/Constantinopolitan Creed recited before the anaphora prayer.¹⁰

A necessary digression as per the Divine Liturgy per se. Which was the version used by Constantinople and the since 451 allocated to Her Thracian and Asia Minor dioceses? Earlier we saw that until the eve of the 4th century, a combination of the Jewish synagogue service as the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Faithful (with the anaphora prayer, the epiclesis and the communion of Christ’s Body and Blood its main parts) was followed with local variations. In the last third of the 4th century, St Basil the Great is believed to have considerably shortened ancient liturgical texts, especially the anaphora prayers, to spare his flock, predominantly of new converts, of weariness. And yet his anaphora prayer is considerably longer than that of Chrysostom’s, hence the Church’s practice to restrict its use for only 10 instances annually!

Generalised ecclesiastical turbulence and the pro-Nicene Churches struggle to keep their increasing, albeit elementarily literate-as-per-the-faith flocks pleased and focused, must have meant the dramatic shortening of the Liturgy of the Word (psalms chanted by antiphony abandoned; the 19 pieces of petitions and exclamations among them moved before and after the Great Entrance) with the focus shifting on, as we saw, timely melodical hymns underpinning congregations’ Orthodoxy. Chrysostom, already an experienced clergyman of the Antiochian Church (381-397), must have brought with him in Constantinople as her Patriarch (397-404) “his” liturgy, with a much-abbreviated anaphora prayer to St Basil’s.

Once purpose-built Churches had replaced the “domus ecclesiae” of the first three Christian centuries, Chrysostom’s and other Liturgies started with the clergy’s and the laity’s entrance into the building in procession, with deacons carrying the readings scrolls or books kept by the entrance, chanters singing hymns prefixed by psalms’ verses, and the presiding clergyman commencing the service with a “peace unto all” exclamation (with the blessing of the kingdom of the Holy Trinity beginning its use, as already mentioned, as late as in 10th century).¹¹ Chrysostom’s disciple and a Constantinople Patriarch himself, Proclus (434-446), following a miraculous incident celebrated annually on September 25th, introduced the “Holy Thrice” hymn as a refrain of the 79th entrance psalm, before it was formed in what we nowadays know, together with its relevant priestly prayer, in early 7th century.¹² Characteristically, 79th psalm’s verses 14 and 15 are used by the presiding bishop when he blesses the congregation waving dikirion and trikirion crosswise. Readings, sermon (or nouthesia), petitions for catechumens etc followed until Communion bread and wine were brought to the prothesis to be prepared, censed and covered by the bishop or the presiding priest in a low voice – hence the need for a prolonged hymn, the Cherubic, to fill-in the “offer-of-speech” hiatus, until the (great) entrance of the gifts and their placement upon the holy table. As per the rest parts of the Liturgy, they remained the same for both the 6th and the 7th centuries.¹³

¹⁰ Wellesz, 1961, p. 161-162; Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 26

¹¹ Koltouktsoglou, 2023, p. 15

¹² Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 27

¹³ Koltouktsoglou, 2023, pp. 14-16. However, later changes (8th to 10th century) were not dramatic either structurally or in introducing unprecedented novelties. For example, pre-Little Entrance litanies, priestly exclamations and antiphons were introduced in the 8th century; and the Little Entrance attained a special prayer to be read aloud. But antiphons had already been in use. And in the 9th century the service of Typica (a service

Justinian era's significant additions to the Divine Liturgy, which made it a balanced, robust and pleasant ensemble to the ear and the eye (and which must have been slowly but decisively spread across the dioceses under the Ecumenical Patriarchate – not the Monophysite-leaning Antiochian and Alexandrian Churches) needed one last piece of novelty: a normalised, digestible and explanatory sermon, which would be recited as a poem, centrally approved for its Chalcedonian Orthodoxy and partly memorised by the laity for future reference against heresies. That was the Kontakion with its most characteristic author St Romanus the Melodist (late 5th century-ca 560; commemorated on October 1st), a Jew monk from Emesa (Syria) and deacon in Beirut, who moved to Constantinople close to Anastasius's I (491-518) death, to join the Theotokos' Church clergy.

Kontakion is a lengthy poem consisting of 18 to 30 stanzas of 3 to 13 lines each. It starts with a model stanza (heirmos = from the ancient Greek verb "eiro" = "pull") according to which the rest are composed metrically and musically. Stanzas' first letters usually form an acrostic, which either reveals the author (for example an acrostic of 18 letters "ΤΟΥ ΤΑΠΕΙΝΟΥ ΡΩΜΑΝΟΥ" for the Epiphany feast) or the feast for which the Kontakion is composed and its author (an acrostic of 16 letters "ΕΙΣ ΤΑ ΒΑΙΑ ΡΩΜΑΝΟΥ" for Palm Sunday); if an acrostic of 24 stanzas, it usually follows the Greek language's alphabetical order of 24 letters (Α to Ω). Even before the model stanza stands the preamble, usually consisting of 2-3 stanzas of different to the heirmos metrical and musical composition. When Kontakion as a whole was not used anymore (possibly as early as mid-7th century), its preamble survived as "Kontakion" to be read before the Matins Synaxarion or chanted before the Holy-thrice hymn in the Divine Liturgy, concluding the rest timely hymns. Finally, all stanzas last line is a repetition of the last line of the first stanza, leading scholars to believe that stanzas were melodically recited by a member of the choir or a reader, with congregations repeating their last line, just like they had been doing, as we saw earlier, during the first three Christian centuries, with Davidic Psalms 102 and 145 at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Word, or, later, with the 79th.¹⁴

Either plainly read or melodically recited a Kontakion does not last more than 12-15 minutes, a length of time ideal to a self-respected and respectful-of-the-audience sermon, which points out to Kontakion serving as a readymade homily, hand-copied and disseminated across the Constantinopolitan Church's jurisdiction, similarly to nowadays' local hierarchs' festal encyclicals, to - by annual repetition - catechise the old and new converts on the correct perception of the faith and its hard-to-grasp truths. Truly, Romanus copied a 4th and 5th centuries poetic homiletic genre of his birthplace and Syria's in general, with the marked difference of composing his works by a metric and melodic pattern (heirmos), either entirely his or already in use, to which the rest stanzas followed, thus making the "sermon" flowing, pleasant to the ear, participatory and, in a word, achieving its purpose. St Ephraim the Syrian (306-373) and his spiritual descendants were Romanus's inspiration both by content and analysis (Ephraim's *madrāšê*: hymns full of rich, poetic imagery drawn from biblical sources, folk tradition, and other religions and philosophies such as early Rabbinic Judaism, Greek science and philosophy, and Mesopotamian/Persian symbolism) and oratory presentation (written in stanzas of syllabic verse employing over fifty different metrical schemes, also defined by an antiphon, or congregational refrain; with a *qālâ*, namely a traditional tune identified by its opening line (Romanus's heirmos)).¹⁵

monks read before receiving Holy Communion they carried with themselves or a priest brought to them) was also in use, albeit not universally.

¹⁴ Wellesz, 1961, pp. 178-184; Papadopoulos, 1904, pp. 38-39

¹⁵ [Ephrem the Syrian - Wikipedia](#)

So, either by God's providence, coincidentally, imperial selection or all together, Romanus (and contemporary colleagues of his like Anastasius and Kyriakos the Melodists) must have greatly pleased emperor Justinian in decisively underpinning his goal of artistically denouncing heresies, inculcating the Christian populace on the faith's great truths so that needless new religious/societal divisions would not emerge (at least withing Constantinople's ecclesiastical territories), and registering onto the wider imperial psyche the leadership's political priorities to which the populace's consensus and contribution was essential: rural production, military conscription, taxation, mobilisation against the heathen enemies of "Civitas Dei".

Romanus's works, legendary a thousand but more plausibly around ninety (assuming that Romanus would have needed 3-6 months for each in a productive section of his life spanning 30-40 years; besides, this is the figure of his extant works) also brought in the Constantinopolitan foreground his birthplace's musical system of eight modes or Octoechos. Romanus used all eight of them for either Kontakia's preamble or heirmos, thus, regularly familiarising his audiences' ears with musical forms that hitherto were largely used and normalised in Syria and partly in Asia Minor.

And, as it seems, Kontakion as a genre quickly faded after Romanus's and Justinian's deaths, also in the sense that, except for the Akathist of the early 7th century, no other descendants are witnessed. But the music was to stay forever as also a motivation for the emergence of the final phase of ecclesiastical hymnography of the 8th and 9th centuries, spearheaded by St John of Damascus, Kosmas bishop of Maiouma, Theodore the Studite, and monk Joseph (all of a monastic background), whose works, however, exclusively concerned the extra-Divine-Liturgy services of Vespers and Matins. But before we turn our attention to them and their work, it is now imperative to briefly examine two parallel historical procedures: a) the role of ascetics, monks and nuns, and Monasteries upon the affairs of the local and global Church, and, b) the impact of monastic daily services regulations (typikon) upon that of the laity.

4. MONASTICS, EXTRA-DIVINE-LITURGY SERVICES AND TYPICONS

4a. THE BACKGROUND

During the first three AD centuries' recurring persecutions, very few Christians, taking Jesus's warning "let them in Judea flee into the mountains" literally (Matthew 24:16; when He was prophesying Jerusalem's sack by the Romans in 70AD), to avoid arrest by the authorities, and sincerely acknowledging they were not ready for martyrdom, had fled to local mountains. Many are the daily synaxarion saints, who, chiefly from mid-3rd century, are mentioned to have sought an eremitic life, either in solitude or in small groups. Obviously, St Anthony the Great and leader of the desert (251-356) is the most conspicuous example, however, Paul in Thebes (227-341) had preceded him as his mentor. Chariton the Confessor (ca250-ca350) from SW Asia Minor Iconium was Anthony's Judean counterpart as, first, a hermit and, much later (after 324), founder of three monastic units of the Lavra type (monks living in separate cells of the same group of buildings, following individual ascetic weekday schedules, however congregating once/twice a week in the common place of worship, the Lavra's central church or Kyriakon=of/for-Sunday). Hilarion the great (291-371) flourished in his native Gaza as a hermit – not a founder of monastic establishments. Elsewhere, martyrs Mamas and Sozon (late 3rd-early 4th century AD), celebrated on September 2nd and 7th respectively, are thought to have fled into local mountains of Cappadocia and Cilicia respectively to avoid persecution, before arrested and finally martyred. Finally, hieromartyr Athenogenes, mid-3rd to early-4th century, bishop of Pidachthoe or Sebastia, NE Asia Minor, is recorded to have established an institution of monastic type close to his diocesan base, where he lived with about ten of his followers.

These offhand examples show that Paul's "wanderers in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Hebrews 11:38), sporadic and not related with each other toward any concerted inter-ecclesiastical goal per se, had already set the pace for another type of Christian life, one "imitating zealous Elijah's ways and following the Baptist paths" as St Anthony's apolytikion has it. However, following the definitive end of persecutions, more Christians sought, first, to look to these holy men for counsel, succour, prayerful intercessions and, why not, miraculous healings, and, second, gather around them as disciples and prospective monks. And however much most of these pioneers resisted accepting students treasuring their peaceful isolation and by the Holy Spirit ceaseless praying, it was a matter of time that others, guided by the same Holy Spirit, started doing the opposite, with the most pressing issue the subject of monastic life itself. Hence, coenobitic Monasteries with detailed orders of everyday monastic life emerged. In Egypt, with Pachomius (292-348); and in Palestine with Euthymius (377-473), his disciple Sabbas the Sanctified (439-532) and Theodosius the Cenobiarch (423-529).

It is not a coincidence that the last three descended from wider Cappadocia, a snowcapped mountainous and secluded region whose loyalty to either pagan Rome or Christian New Rome was dependent upon the successful protection either centres could supply against neighbouring Armenians and Persians, as well as the respect of its sui generis autonomy of extremely wealthy landowners like St Basil's maternal grandfather. It was this natural environment combined with its spiritual leader for less than, however so important, eight years, St Basil the Great (370-379), that bore and nourished coenobitic monasticism. Basil, a studious and zealous monk even as Caesarea archbishop, sifted the experience of many predecessors of his, either hermits or small brotherhoods, in both Cappadocia and neighbouring Pontus, and mobilising his uniquely organising mind put it down in two works, the Wider Rules (55) and the Shorter Rules (313), which give answers to every possible question the abbot of a Monastery or the newly tonsured and the more experienced monk might have.

Through them we may also securely trace the nascence and setting out of the extra-Divine-Liturgy services of Matins and Vespers, as well as the monastic typicon against that of the urban or village parish.

4b. MONASTICS, EXTRA-DIVINE-LITURGY SERVICES & THEIR STRUCTURE

The 37th of St Basil's Wider Rules, in combating complacency and negligence of prayers and psalms chanting on the pretext of pressing menial work, outlines any monk's daily respective schedule: matins, 3rd, 6th and 9th Hours, vesperal meditation, compline, midnight office. A point further: St Basil widely uses the word psalmody (from psalms + ode), which means the musical reciting or even chanting of Davidic Psalms *in addition* to personal or collectively offered prayers. So, one may safely conclude that, since mid-3rd century and until St Basil's Rules, monastics, either hermits or small makeshift brotherhoods, still without a formal approval by the local bishop or the global Church, used the psalter daily and intensively as a musical variable with "of-speech" offering of prayers, either in congregation or in seclusion.

And that was, as we saw, something emanating from the Jewish synagogue practice of "Matins" (Shacharit) and "Vespers" (Ma'ariv), and which was copied by the Christian Divine Liturgy in its "Liturgy of the Word" section with psalms chanted antiphonally. But what was new with monastics was the division of all Psalter in sections to be chanted either within a mere day or across the week, with sections rotated to all brotherhood for if any had not been competent enough in the Psalter soon enough, he did not have a place in the brotherhood (Shorter Rules 61 and 307). Such was the stress put on psalmody that St Basil even forbade short homilies during them (Shorter Rule 173), thus, putting as a historical peculiarity and not anymore present what Paul counselled Corinthians with Psalter itself (1 Cor 14:26).

Historically, laws and rules such as St Basil's have not been observed to the letter, even by self-disciplined monastics, otherwise they would not have had to be repeated time and again or would have thwarted any development such as St John's of Damascus canons and emperor Leo's VI the Sage magnificent doxastikon pieces. But before we examine the apogee of ecclesiastical hymnography (mid-8th to late-9th century) we need to continue with monastics, especially in Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine, their typicons and their interplay with urban and rural laypeople's customs of worship and otherwise, amidst an increasingly explosive and divisive pattern of intra-ecclesiastical confrontations (heresies and inter-local rivalries), external foes and a societal transformation.

4c. MONASTICS and their INFLUENCE upon the URBAN DIVINE LITURGY

St Basil's "spiritual grandchildren" of St Sabbas and St Theodosius the Cenobiarch settling in Palestine and crossing paths (if not "swords") with Chariton's and Hilarion's spiritual descendants were responsible for the establishment of a network of the Lavra and the Coenobium types respectively of significant and unprecedented (in these areas) conglomerations of monastics, usually conscripted nearby. But this additionally meant a gradual adjustment of St Basil's Rules, daily worship and services included, mainly according to the special needs and the traditions these conscripts brought together.

It is this period, mid-5th to mid-6th century, that the "troparion" emerges in the ecclesiastical hymnography as a poetic insertion either between all verses of a psalm or at the final three to six of

them; either a unique – repeated verse after verse, or a set of different.¹⁶ And monastic authors, covered by an institutional or self-imposed anonymity, must have been, like their first three AD centuries local church secular colleagues, producing pieces for internal consumption. But given the interaction of their institutions with the local rural or of town communities, their most successful works, poetically and musically, must have overcome boundaries and, from mouth to mouth, reached the ears of local bishops, clergymen and since the 363/4AD Laodicea Council “professional” chanters well beyond, who, in turn, must have either modified them (either poetically and/or musically to comply with their doctrinal, musical and ethical preferences) or left them intact.

Anthimus and Timocles were prolific troparion writers, who flourished in the beginning of the under-examination period (second half of 5th century), the former a Chalcedonian Orthodox, the latter a Monophysite, both active in Constantinople in the years of the Monophysite-leaning emperors Zeno I (474-491) and Anastasius I (491-518).¹⁷ Signed works of theirs did not survive, however, we may assume they were critically incorporated into the services of the sixth and seventh centuries of Orthodox or Monophysite monastic institutions.

With Justinian’s accession to the throne things dramatically changed, both on paper (new legislation) and practically. Earlier, we followed additions in the Divine Liturgy underlining Justinian’s will to support the pro-Chalcedonian Orthodox Church, with making the heart of Her services a memorable cultural event to ponder and wish for, at least weekly; also, by supporting Melodists like Romanus to work out poetic masterpieces, used as handy homilies in the capital and across all Ecumenical Patriarchates’ dioceses.

Justinian took it further, and with a 530 law ordered that all churches across the Empire (urban, rural, of town, monastic dependencies), with at least one priest assigned, should daily hold at least Vespers, Pannychis and Matins (the second, although meaning “all night vigils”, must have probably been an abbreviated Great Compline, and usually appended with Vespers). It is impossible to know whether a) all churches had at least one priest, and, b) if they did, the observation of the imperial law reached perfection. Perennial experience may exclude both. However, and for the purposes of this lecture, it would be interesting to see and compare the personnel assigned to Hagia Sophia and three appended-to-it Constantinopolitan churches (probably St Irene, the Theotokos of Chalkoprateia and Nea Ekkisia) by Justinian with a 535 law and changes in numbers and distribution as per clerical categories a hundred years later by Heraclius I (610-641) (see table).¹⁸ The unchanged number of chanters suggests

CATEGORY	JUSTINIAN	HERACLITUS	+/- CHANGE in %
Priests	60	80	+33%
Deacons	100	150	+50%
Deaconesses	40	40	0
Subdeacons	90	70	-22%
Lectors	110	160	+45%
Chanters	25	25	0

an equally unchanged volume of pieces to be sung. But the almost by half increased number of lectors

¹⁶ Wellesz, 1961, p. 170

¹⁷ Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 32; Wellesz, 1961, p. 173

¹⁸ Wellesz, 1961, p. 164

speaks of the need of significantly more competent readers for an equally increasing number of pieces of the three compulsory daily services. And this brings us to the second issue we need to examine before the presentation of the new genres of ecclesiastical hymnography: the secular typicon and its differences with the monastic.

4d. TYPICONS: ORIGINS, DIVERGENCE, CONVERGENCE

Two historical examples of the under-examination period (451-610) portray the common spring, split into two rivers, which, much later, and by confluence, produced what Orthodoxy nowadays follows with insignificant local variations.

As per the monastic typicon. With St Basil's 37th Wider Rule in mind, let us move to late-6th century Mount Sinai Monastery of St Catherine, newly built and established, also handsomely showered with imperial subsidies, tax exemptions and commissioned mosaics, to stand as a bastion, literally with its walls, and metaphorically with its culture, against Alexandrian Monophysitism and Arabic paganism. Abbots John and Sophronius, probably from Palestinian Monasteries, visited Mount Sinai Monastery's abbot Nilus. It was Saturday evening, time for Sunday Vespers. Nilus began the service with "Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to Holy Spirit", and what followed was: the 1st Kathisma of the Psalter (psalms 1-8), the 140th and 141st Psalm (of the censuring), "Gladsome Light..." (without an entrance), and "Vouchsafe o Lord...". Vespers ended with Symeon's prayer "Now let thy servant depart in peace..."¹⁹

After a meal, host and visitors immediately started Matins, which unfolded as such: the six psalms (3, 37, 62, 87, 102, 142), the Lord's prayer, all 150 Psalms read in a subdued voice into three sections of 50 intermittent with the Lords' prayer, "Lord have mercy" plus a) the reading of St James's Epistle (after the first section) b) one of St Peter's Epistles (after the second section) and c) one of St John's Epistles (after the third section), the nine biblical odes²⁰ in a subdued voice intermittent with the Lords' prayer and "Lord have mercy" after the 3rd and the 6th ode, the Lauds (psalms 148, 149, 150), the Doxology, the Lords' prayer, "Lord have mercy", finishing with a short prayer.²¹

Nilus' visitors were amazed that troparia had been overall omitted, and by that they meant special pieces among the last 3-6 verses of the 141st Psalm in Vespers; as per Matins, after the six psalms prefixed by "God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us...", after the 3rd and the 6th biblical ode, among the last 3-6 verses of the 8th and the 9th odes, the Lauds, and the final conclusion after Doxology.²²

So, both the "conservative" and eremitic-leaning host Nilus and his "progressive" guests John and Sophronius, leaders of Monasteries amidst largely pro-Monophysitism environments, reveal the structure of a coenobitic Monastery's most important daily services, where Psalter, read in a subdued

¹⁹ Wellesz, 1961, pp. 171-172

These are

1. First Ode of Moses (Exodus 15:1-19)
2. Second Ode of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:1-43)
3. Prayer of Anna, the mother of Samuel (1 Samuel 2:1-10)
4. Prayer of Habakkuk (Habakkuk 3:2-19)
5. Prayer of Isaiah (Isaiah 26:9-20)
6. Prayer of Jonah (Jonah 2:3-10)
7. Prayer of Azariah (Daniel 3:26-45)
8. Song of the Three Holy Children (Daniel 3:52-90)

Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79); and the Magnificat by the Theotokos (Luke 1:46-55)

²¹ Wellesz, 1961, p. 172

²² Wellesz, 1961, p. 172

voice or ceremoniously recited, enjoyed the lion's share, with the addition of the nine biblical odes (a telling appendix in all printed Psalters), seasoned, however, with the novelty of 6 vespers and 16-20 of Matins troparia which would make the lengthy "of-speech" services more digestible and the scriptural notions more understandable. However, their inclusion might have meant that other parts were scissored so that the length of the service did not increase. And these must have been the scriptural readings, which, after all, would feature in the Liturgy of the Word.

As per the secular typicon. A bit before, a bit after Chalcedon's 4th Ecumenical Council, on Chalcedon's very mountains and in eremitic seclusion lived Auxentius, born in Syria around 400, of Persian ancestry, and a former equestrian guard to emperor Theodosius II (408-450). Auxentius, celebrated as a venerable saint of Orthodox Church on February 14th, quickly started to be sought after by the nearby Constantinopolitan faithful asking for, as we saw with other ascetics across Middle East and Egypt, his prayers, advice and healings. Auxentius received them all and among other ways of general instruction to the Orthodox faith and its daily application, he taught them to sing simple troparia, inspired by the Psalter and the nine biblical odes, and consisting of two to three phrases. Upon learning them, all visitors would chant them together, something that went on for several hours, possibly also as a pleasant pastime upon them waiting for speaking with him personally, as well as a fitting spiritual preparation for this.²³

So, in mid- to late-5th century, laypeople from Constantinople and NW Asia Minor provinces seasoned their Psalter-based daily services, held at their urban or village parish church, with small troparia, inspired, on the one hand, by David's book, and, on the other, receiving the appropriate answers on contemporary hotly debated issues of doctrinal and everyday life level. As we saw, some decades later, Justinian decreed that at least Vespers, Pannychis and Matins should be served across the Empire provided parish churches were manned by at least one priest. So, back in Constantinople, Auxentius's visitors would use what he had taught them or be receptive of new and older troparia revolving around the Vespers' 141st psalm, Pannychis's 50th or Matins' 142nd, to actively participate. But because life was demanding and it must have been hard for any layperson to devote 3-4 hours daily to attend all three services, laypeople must have preserved their appetite for Divine Liturgy's much shorter counterparts - antiphonally chanted by professional chanters and the congregation guided by them - of psalms 102, 145 and 79 for Sundays or other for weekdays' great feasts. And what was happening in the imperial capital must have been the pattern for the rest of the under the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate dioceses.

That was the core of the secular or *asmatikon* (of small troparia) typicon in contrast to the monastic, which was increasingly embellished with more troparia, and more sophisticated chanting of all-night vigil psalms (134, 135, *polyeleos* selection). Obviously, an osmosis of both should not be excluded, with monks residing or passing-by Constantinople and other Asia Minor and Middle East cities and major towns on their way from or to their Monastery.²⁴ So, novel poetic and musical pieces must have been surfacing in both monastic services and urban parishes as reciprocal loans, and obviously, after the abbot or the local bishop respectively had approved their use. After all, as we saw, the *Kontakion* of the Justinian era was rapidly fading, and a new genre was emerging to replace it once and for all: the

²³ Wellesz, 1961, pp. 173-177

²⁴ For monks' generalised mobility see Peter Hatlie, *The monks and Monasteries of Constantinople, 350-850*, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 38-41

canon. It was the era of St John of Damascus and many other hymnographers to whom we should now turn our attention.

5. 610-843AD: THE BATTLE FOR POLITICAL SURVIVAL AND THE TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY

5a. THE BACKGROUND

The first decade of the 7th century had brought the still self-identifying as (Eastern) Roman Empire to a paralysis due to the incompetent reign of the debauched usurper Phokas (602-610). In 610 the Egypt born Heraclius (610-641) deposed and executed him and became the new emperor. It took Heraclius almost 20 years to reorganise the state and the army to defeat the Persians and reclaim the Holy Cross (628) they had looted from Jerusalem six years before; also, to achieve some peace and stability within the Balkans, at least along a chain of bigger or smaller towns, against Avars and their ancillaries Slavs, who had practically occupied the countryside, albeit with no political organisation on their sights.

Soon, however, in a lightning pace, Muslim Arabs, benefiting from the fatigue the holy war against Persians had brought upon the Empire, took under their control Syria, Palestine and Egypt. In mid-7th century they also built a navy ravaging Cyprus, Crete, the Aegean Sea islands, the south and west coasts of Asia Minor and the coasts of Thrace. Their advances culminated in the five years siege of Constantinople (673-678). In the Balkans things were not rosier with Slavs and Bulgars increasingly taking control of the countryside and a lot of strategic towns and castles. Practically, the Empire was expiring with only three-quarters of Asia Minor and Thrace under its control. Such was the level of desperation that emperor Constans II (641-668) was planning to move his capital to Syracuse, Sicily, to intercept from there the Arabic advance toward West Mediterranean and start an adverse Reconquista a hundred years after Justinian's I: his, a from the west for the east.

The ease with which Syria and Palestine fell to the Arabs also betrayed the local Monophysite-leaning elites' and populace's estrangement with pro-Chalcedonian Constantinople. So, similarly to many of their predecessors, Heraclius and Constans II attempted to regain their loyalty by doctrinal concessions. And once Monophysitism had decisively been renounced by 630 Holy Fathers in Chalcedon (451), a new and very similar heresy was centrally coined, by Constantinopolitan patriarch Sergius (610-638): Monothelitism or, briefly, that Jesus Christ was as Chalcedon had described Him, however, with only one volition – not two: a divine and a human. The heresy did not achieve the coveted results; on the contrary, it divided the remnants of the Empire and by Maximus's the Confessor guidance Orthodoxy triumphed again in the 6th Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (680-681) under Constantine's IV reign (668-685).

Monothelitism paled in comparison with the next heresy: iconoclasm. By 730s, emperor Leo III Isaurus (717-740), could have been regarded a "godsent" leader for repelling the 2nd Arabic siege of Constantinople (717-718), pacifying and controlling a rebellious army (a general of which he was before deposing his predecessor Theodosius III (715-717) who was imposed by a military coup), uniting what was left as imperial lands and masterminding the gradual Reconquista of crucial SE Asia Minor parts from the Arabs. But, precisely because of the very last policy, Leo III deemed fitting to bring back the souls of Monophysite-leaning Christians under the Muslim Caliphate to Constantinopolitan Church and political rule by declaring war against icons and Monasteries, many of which sought more to secure their privileges in this turbulent period than contribute to the war of survival against the Arabs.

His son, Constantine V (740-775), followed his father's steps at both fronts. Militarily, he strengthened the Empire's sway upon the Balkans and the Arabic front; ecclesiastically, he harshly persecuted iconophiles, earning the eponym "precursor of Antichrist" by St Theophanes the Confessor (759-818), an iconophile monk. With Constantine's V death the iconoclastic fervour faded, and in 787 his

daughter-in-law, Empress Irene, convened the 7th Ecumenical Council in Constantinople, which denounced iconoclasm as a heresy.

Ecclesiastical peace was however short-lived, as was the military. Irene was not a competent leader, and the Empire's enemies soon took advantage of this, leaving to her three consecutive successors (802-813) the difficult task to repel them anew, albeit unsuccessfully. Leo V the Armenian (813-820) overthrew Irene's last successor and became the new emperor, also initiating the second phase of Iconoclasm. This was milder and lasted until 843, the death of emperor Theophilus (829-842), allowing to another woman, his wife Theodora and an ardent iconophile, to stop persecutions as regent of her underage son and emperor Michael III (842-867). From that point on, starts the so-called Byzantine Renaissance, both as a military Reconquista and an ecclesiastical revival, which, among other things, was capped by the apogee of the ecclesiastical hymnography.

5b. THE EMERGENCE OF CANON

Under this unbelievably explosive and to-the-limits political, military and ecclesiastical backdrop it is no wonder that the Constantinopolitan Church was not the pioneer of hymnographic developments of the period under-examination. The baton was rather passed to ecclesiastical personalities of the under-the-Arabs-occupied Syria and Palestine, who, enjoying peace, stability and prosperity and a largely wide freedom to practice their faith under their Muslim rulers (the latter only asked for a special peaceful subordination tax from the "Biblical people" Jews and Christians), were protected from fresh doctrine-related persecutions by Constantinople's heretical political and ecclesiastical leaders. So, they were able to sharpen their pens to intensively and excessively write polemics and apologies against Monothelism and Iconoclasm, as well as compose poetic masterpieces. Which both as lyrics and music, and both for intro-monastic usage and exterior consumption, instructed at the time and ever since generations of Orthodox upon the correct faith with a pleasant-to-the-ear manner. Also, within a structure of daily services which, to an extent, became increasingly familiar even to non-monastic congregations, and, in that respect, brought the secular and the monastic typicons closer.

Two are the main genres of the ecclesiastical hymnography production of the period under examination. One already in use but reaching perfection: the troparion idiomelon (=a piece for a special occasion whose music is unique); and the absolute novelty: the canon. Both served the same purpose: adorn special services of Vespers and Matins for a Lord's feast (for example, Christmas), a Theotokos' counterpart (for example, Dormition) and the celebration day of a greatly (with an all-night vigil or at least with a Great Doxology; for example St Panteleimon, July 27th), less greatly (without an all-night vigil but at least with a Great Doxology; for example Luke the evangelist, October 18th) or basically celebrated saint (with the commonest, plain weekday of services, without any other troparia except for three vesperals and a mere canon, for example St Dorotheus, bishop of Tyrus, June 5th). Before their presentation, a necessary digression as per the establishment of the Orthodox festal calendar and the institutions behind it.

THE ORTHODOX CALENDAR and the INSTITUTIONS behind it

Within the period under examination, the Lord's and the Theotokos' feasts were widely popular and observed across the Empire, having largely sprang as dates on which a Church of the Holy Land, dedicated to one of these feasts, was consecrated. But even with their fore- and after-feasts days there was plenty of room for other major and minor celebrations. Obviously, Pascha, with Lent and Holy

Week before and the up-to-Pentecost Eastertide weeks after, was the focal point of the calendar, setting the pace for about four months, during which great feasts were intentionally not fixed but rather were spread out in the rest of the year. For example, Transfiguration should have been celebrated 40 days before Pascha, but it was fixed 40 days before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross feast (August 6th), the quasi-second Good Friday of the year. Similar was the case with the 40 days period before Christmas, although the only great feast within it was/is the Entrance of the Theotokos to the Temple (November 21st), with its fore-feast and four after-feast days, as a harbinger of Her giving birth to Jesus a month later.

Further to these, pagan annual cornerstones, still influencing the social psyche of the predominantly agrarian populations, who, as we saw, had been hastily and superficially converted, needed to be replaced by Christian calendar cornerstone-like feasts of a similar significance. For example, the Forerunner's feasts of conception (September 23rd) and birth (June 24th) were fixed on dates coinciding with the beginning of the astronomical autumn and summer respectively, dates by which the sunlight on the northern hemisphere starts to wane – also underlining the Forerunner as the “lamp” and Jesus the “Light”. Similar was the reason for “packed” or “empty” months of great celebrations in general (the Lord's, the Theotokos', great saints'). Farmers, the demographic, fiscal and military backbone of the Empire had to be ecclesiastically “entertained” in months such as July and November, full of great saints' feasts, when their farming jobs were significantly reduced. Conversely, they had to be “helped” in months such as June and October with only one to two major feasts, when harvesting and ploughing/sowing respectively kept them extremely busy.

Finally, the very fact that the annual festal calendar, largely as per saints' celebrations, was established and finalised in a period when the Empire's heart was beating in (most of) Asia Minor meant that the celebrated saints “filling in” the “gaps” were chiefly selected from that region. This way the populace attending their services, as well as listening to fitting panegyrics drawing parallels with pagan remnants and exaggerating their “life and times”, identified with the local Christian heroes, who once had stood against pagan authorities, and were inspired to imitate their bravery against the new idolatry of the new archenemy of Arab Muslims.

Obviously, this could never have happened in St Sabbas Monastery. However, relaxed the Arab conquest had been with the Christian institutions (Patriarchates, dioceses, Monasteries), the latter needed to keep a low profile and focus on the main Lord's, Theotokos' and Forerunner's feasts, rather than seeking for the celebration of (few, it is true) martyred heroes against Islam. So, by the end of the period under examination, the baton was passed to another monastic institution at the western fringes of Constantinople, the Studion Monastery, which first functioned as a repository of Sabbaitic manuscripts and host of great Palestinian iconophile monastic personalities, and later combined this legacy with its brotherhood's poetic talent to come up with its own “line” of production of troparia idiomela and canons, mainly for the Lenten Triodion, as well as Vesperal and Matins services on days still not dedicated for the celebration of a major or minor saint.

THE SYRO-PALESTINIAN OSMOSIS and SOPHRONIUS'S of JERUSALEM IDIOMELA TROPARIA

Earlier we followed the history of the troparion initially either as a brief poetic insertion between all verses of a psalm or a longer one at the final three to six of them; and something entirely unique, used to repel heresies (or cultivate them, when used by Arians and Monophysites) with nowadays apolytikion a fair likeness. Recalling the late-6th century story of Abbots John and Sophronius visiting

and praying together with Mount Sinai Monastery's abbot Nilus during Saturday Vespers and Sunday Matins, we concluded that the visitors were accustomed to troparion pieces embellishing the chanting of the 141st psalm in Vespers (stichera) and the 150th in the Matins (lauds); also, of respective pieces breaking the monotony of the reading of the Psalter and the nine biblical odes (or stichologia) as kathismata troparia or idiomela troparia among the final 3 to 6 verses of the 8th and the 9th odes.

As it seems by late-6th to early-7th century the dice had already been cast, and the most illustrious monastic institutions or talented personalities had thrown themselves into an undeclared competition of producing troparia with which they would supply local flocks and the rest Orthodoxy with pleasant to the ear hymns, to bolster doctrinal truths and lambast heretics. Sophronius (560-638), patriarch of Jerusalem (634-638), but a Damascene by origin and a monk of the under the Jerusalemite Patriarchate St Theodosius' Monastery, was the one to rubberstamp the completion of the Vespereal Entrance troparion "Gladsome Light..." with the addition "arriving at the hour of sunset and having seen the evening light, we praise the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God" to further underpin the theology of the Triune God.²⁵

To him are also attributed the 36 idiomela troparia of the Christmas, Epiphany and Good Friday Great and Royal Hours; also, triodions and tetraodions (canons with three or four odes respectively), most probably those chanted on Christmas' and Epiphany's fore-feast days' Compline services (currently appended with the Vespereal services); finally, the Epiphany Great Blessing idiomela.²⁶ So, a Syrian by origin, with an "ear" full of the wider region's eight-modes melodies systematised by Severus (the deposed Monophysite patriarch of Antioch (512-518)),²⁷ brought to the wider Jerusalemite environment both the wealth of the melodies and the poetic artistry of his birthplace. His 36 idiomela troparia for the Christmas, Epiphany and Good Friday Great and Royal Hours are monumental pieces exemplifying a perfect combination of poetry and melody, as well as doctrinal inculcation inspired by each Hour's respective readings.

5c. THE SYRO-PALESTINIAN OSMOSIS continued: ANDREW bishop of CRETE, ST JOHN of DAMASCUS, KOSMAS bishop of MAIOUMA and the CANON

THE CANON: FEATURES

Sophronius was soon followed by two generations of great Syrian descendants/Jerusalemite residents, spiritually and artistically. Who, instead of merely copying his troparion idiomelon penchant, they equally directed their prowess to a simpler genre, the canon, seeing in it an indomitable ability of successful doctrinal and other propaganda. The canon was seemingly a descendant of the Kontakion; only it was not. Kontakion, as we saw, was built upon one and only heirmos by which the rest 18-30 stanzas were recited, with the congregations repeating after the reader/reciter the final line of the heirmos, which was fittingly comprising the final line of all stanzas. But canon broke ground in many ways.

First, instead of one heirmos, it featured eight to nine, one for each ode respectively. All heirmoi were of the same mode and were followed by three to four troparia (and seldom five or six or more), which were chanted – not monotonously recited. Second, each of a canon's 32-40 troparia were considerably shorter than any Kontakion's stanzas, and, in this case, easier to comprehend and memorise. Their

²⁵ Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 33

²⁶ Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 33

²⁷ Wellesz, 1961, p. 140

overall chanting, musically more embellished than the recited Kontakion stanzas, but in a crescendo tempo, did not take more than 12-15 minutes, if not less, thus, equalling the Kontakion length and proportion within the Matins service as a whole. Third, canons were interwoven with all nine biblical odes (with only the second missing – except for the Lenten Triodion canons); hitherto, biblical odes, as we saw in the abbot Nilus's and his visitors' case, were monotonously recited without any congregational reaction; or, at best, embellished with short troparia in their 8th and 9th section. The difference that the introduction of the canon brought was that readers/reciters were starting with chanting the verses of the biblical odes by the mode of the canon heirmos, and were using the final two or as many needed as a prefix for the troparia of the respective ode of the day's canon, also repeating the heirmos of the 3rd, 6th, 8th and 9th ode at their end as a final piece before a short petition, prayer and exclamation by the officiating priest.

Fourth, as per their content, canons were climaxing the story they were narrating, with the ninth ode usually a description of the eternal bliss in which saints had already moved into; or an apex of the doctrinal exegesis of a Lord's or a Theotokos' feast. In this, they were again related to the nine biblical odes' climaxing as also the history of the chosen nation from which the Messiah would incarnate: from God's doxology after the Jews' miraculous passing of the Red Sea and Pharaoh's annihilation in it (1st ode) to that by the Forerunner's father Zechariah for what his child was bringing as the Messiah's precursor (9th ode), with the addition of the Theotokos's Magnificat upon meeting with the Forerunner's mother Elisabeth with Christ already in Her womb. In between, odes 2 to 8, stood as prophetic reminders in historical order encouraging Old Testament Jews (during their Matins "Shacharit" service) and confirming New Testament faithful belief that God's promise on the coming of the Messiah was to be and had been fulfilled respectively. Finally, all canons, except for those of a Lord's or a Theotokos' feast, ended all odes' troparia with a Theotokion, a special piece instructing on the Ephesian and Chalcedonian Orthodoxy as well as glorifying the Mother's of God inimitable part as per the salvation of humankind.

The only similarity between Kontakion and Canon was that both attempted to instruct their audiences/congregations upon general truths of the faith and a feast's meaning, significance and specificity. But alike modern means of propaganda, relying on catchphrases and an appealing (if not luring) musical carpet, Canons quickly rendered Kontakions obsolete with the lyrical brevity and the melodical repetition, which, although it changed from ode to ode, it remained on the same mode, not to mention it was a set of often repeated and widely popular melodies across the year, hence audiences were familiar with them and pleasantly disposed to listen to them again. Lastly, a technical similarity: most of the canons featured an acrostic, formed from the first letter of each troparion, which usually revealed their author and the celebrated saint; or merely the author along the first letters of the Theotokia; or, if with 24 troparia, a Greek alphabet sequence either from A to Ω, or in reverse order.

CANON MELODISTS: 680-750AD

ANDREW Archbishop of CRETE

Following Sophronius's death, Syrian/Jerusalemite ecclesiastical poetry, coated with Severus's eight-modes musical system and underpinned by a backbone of thriving monastic institutions with largely converging separate typicons, spawned a chain of brilliant melodists, namely, poets and composers together. First of them St Andrew, bishop of Gortyna, central-south Crete, and the island's Archbishop

(celebrated July 4th). Andrew was born in Damascus around 650 but from the age of 14 moved to St Sabas Monastery, the Jerusalemite Patriarchate's think-tank and source of officers and high clergymen. A prodigy, he was soon entrusted with important missions, at the top of which was the representation of the Patriarchate at the 6th Ecumenical Council against Monothelism in Constantinople (680/681). Andrew went to Constantinople but never returned. In Constantinople he was widely acknowledged for his unique abilities and adherence to Orthodoxy, and in early-8th century he was elected Archbishop of Crete, steering the island's Church for about a quarter of a century. Briefly pro-Monothelism under some heavy political pressure (712), he soon recanted, returned to Crete and continued the shepherding of the local flock. In 726, on his way from Constantinople to Crete, he passed away when his ship had anchored at Lesvos Island.

Andrew is widely known for his Great Canon, a huge, 252 troparia-long piece (9 odes by 28 troparia), which is chanted on the Matins of the Thursday of the fifth week of Lent and, except for its artistry, stands out as a brilliant recapitulation of the most important Old and New Testament events that monastic brotherhoods and secular congregations needed and still need to be reminded of ten days before Lent is over and Holy Week begins. The chromatic 6th mode eirmologikos (namely, fast) it is composed by, makes compunction, lamentation of sins and repentance easier, though, by no means, does it render it a pessimistic mournful elegy.

Andrew also wrote canons for Theotokos' (Nativity, Sep 8th; 2nd canon) and saints' feasts, troparia idiomela for the Christmas Matins Lauds and numerous troparia idiomela for the Lord's, the Theotokos' and greatly celebrated saints' feasts, especially for the Litia section (the Vespertal part before the aposticha, during which, in all-night Vigils, the blessing of the bread, the olive oil and the wine takes place).²⁸

JOHN the DAMASCENE and COSMAS bishop of MAIOUMA: the BROTHERS' DUET

A generation younger to Andrew stood the unsurpassable "duet" of St John the Damascene (676-756; commemorated December 4th) and his foster-brother St Kosmas (ca675-ca780; commemorated October 14th), bishop of Maiouma (ca750-ca780). John was the son of Sergius, governor of Damascus and lord-of-the-exchequer for the Khalif Abdul Melik I (685-705). When Syria was conquered by the Muslim Arabs in the 630s, the court at Damascus retained its large complement of Christian civil servants, John's grandfather among them. John's father followed on his father's steps and served the Umayyad caliphs from high and lucrative posts. He could thus afford the intelligence and the means to buy the Calabrian monk Cosmas, enslaved by Arab pirates ravaging the Mediterranean in late-7th century, a polymath and exquisitely deep student of letters, languages and sciences, and place him as his son's John's and his foster-son's Cosmas's teacher. Both were amply benefited, and John, succeeding his father, briefly became a senior official in the fiscal administration of the Umayyad Caliphate.²⁹

However, either because his family's patron Khalif Abdul Melik I passed away and his successor opted for different courtiers, or because that was his choice, or both, John left Damascus around 705 and moved to Jerusalem, where, by the Patriarch John's V (706-735) blessing was tonsured monk in St Sabbas Monastery and, later, ordained a priest. John, until his death, spent fifty remarkably productive years at St Sabbas', part of which was dedicated to hymnography, which he also saw as a branch of

²⁸ Papadopoulos, 1904, pp. 37-38

²⁹ Papadopoulos, 1904, pp. 44, 46-47

polemic/apology against the heresies of his time, particularly Iconoclasm³⁰. Cosmas's timeline is identical to his foster-brother's except that from 743 he was elected/appointed as bishop of Maiouma, the ancient port city of Gaza, a see he headed until his death in a very old age. So, both men, as monks of St Sabbas for about 40 years, became the most prolific melodists of Orthodoxy, apparently following a commonly agreed plan of compositions as it will now be presented.

Following the abbot Nilus case pattern, John's first job was to compose stichera troparia idiomela for both resurrectional Saturday Vespers and Sunday Matins on all eight modes, to be recycled every eight weeks; three for the former and four for the latter. That was the "Octoechos" (eight modes). John also composed two sets of Kathismata at the end of the two sections of the Matins Psalter. A hundred years later, a legendary personality, Anatolius, allegedly a Studite, added four pieces for each mode's Saturday Vespers stichera and Sunday Matins lauds, and his works were and are still labelled "Anatolika".

My opinion is that these were John's pieces too or, at least, a St Sabbas' monk's with a poetic pen very close to his, given they reveal someone of regular contact with the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem – not in Constantinople (St Sabbas Monastery lies only 20km away from the Holy City). Once "Anatolika" mean either "related-to-the-east" or "of sunrise" they could be labelled as such, a) as per Vespers: for they were chanted with both choirs joining from their podiums at the north and the south sides of the Church to face the sanctuary to the east, by the time sun was setting, and prepare the vesperal entrance for the clergy, still standing at the narthex; b) as per Matins: because they were the last to be chanted short before sunrise and its doxological encounter with the Great Doxology "Glory to Thee Who has shown us the Light".

Truly, there is an Anatolius (without the epithet "Studites") undersigning a good part of idiomela troparia of Lord's, Theotokos's and major and minor saints' feasts. He might have started his monastic and composing career at St Sabbas and later moved to the Studion Monastery in Constantinople. Yet, it is not clear why Octoechos does not name him in full ("Anatolius") whereas the rest liturgical books do. To strengthen my stance of someone of Sabbaitic relation, there are accounts of an "Andrew the Blind" (Andreas Peros or Tyflos), a St Sabbas monk flourishing in late-8th century, who is mentioned as "Anatolius", an epithet he could have been attributed to after the popularity his Octoechos's "Anatolika" had brought upon him. So, Andreas the Blind's "Anatolika" attributed to him the epithet "Anatolius" which he then used interchangeably as an artistic pseudonym with his real name. But as per John's Octoechos, and as per Vespers stichera troparia and Matins Lauds counterparts in specific, he may be deemed a co-author who met a demand for more music by monastic brotherhoods in late-8th century and beyond.

John's parallel task to troparia idiomela were canons, with an overall production of approximately sixty. First, twenty-four for the Octoechos Matins with three canons for each mode: one for the Resurrection, one combining Crucifixion and Resurrection, and one for the Theotokos. Second, for almost all the Lord's and the Theotokos' feasts in collaboration with his foster-brother Kosmas, who himself composed either the first or the second of the two canons. Two and only two are these feasts' canons not undersigned by both or either melodist: the entrance of the Theotokos in the Temple (November 21st) and the Circumcision of our Lord (January 1st), something suggesting that both feasts were set after the duet's deaths.

³⁰ Papadopoulos, 1904, pp. 44, 46-47

John's source of inspiration were St Gregory's the Theologian festal homilies with the latter's first phrases characteristically transplanted intact on the former's hymnographic canvases and a handy example the Paschal canon. John is also the author of the Paschal stichera, making him the exclusive producer of the Paschal Matins service – except, possibly, for its doxastikon.³¹ Anecdotaly, Cosmas had written his own canon for the service in the second mode. When he read and heard John's, he tore his canon apart admitting that John's as both lyrics and a first mode melody was the appropriate selection for such a triumphant feast, whereas his, on the largely mournful second, was not.³² This is the reason why Pascha, out of most of Lord's feasts, and the feast of feasts, does not feature a second canon. However, the typicon for the day stipulates that the sum of each ode's troparia should be 14 to 16, thus, making it for some odes' troparia to be sung five times apiece. So, the lack of a second canon does not make the service briefer or less grand; on the contrary, by repetition the canon is easily memorised, as well as its doctrinal concepts.

Cosmas, unsuccessful with his Pascha canon, compensated with a sublimely organised project of annual calendar canons for the Lord's feasts, starting with Christmas' in 1st mode and ending with the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in the 8th, in that sequence: Epiphany 2nd mode; Presentation of the Lord in the Temple 3rd mode; Palm Sunday 4th mode; Holy and Great Monday to Wednesday, eirmologikos 2nd mode (sounding like 6th); Holy and Great Thursday to Saturday eirmologikos 6th; Pentecost 7th mode, allowing John to conclude with Transfiguration with a canon in the 8th mode whereas his was in the 4th; John's was also the Ascension feast 1st canon in the "missing" 5th mode, which was deliberately placed after the Holy Week as joyous.³³

The MELODISTS' DUET's PALESTINIAN SUCCESSORS

The foster-brothers' production was continued by St Stephen, monk of St Sabbas too (725-796 or 807; commemorated on July 13th), from Gaza, probably acquainted with Cosmas after the latter was appointed bishop of the city, with the latter sending him to St Sabbas to be tonsured a monk. He is also mentioned as from Damascus and John's nephew. Either way, Stephen was tonsured at St Sabbas' and continued the duet's hymnographic production, which was troparia idiomela for feasts like the Nativity of the Theotokos and various saints' canons.³⁴

A generation younger to Stephen three personalities came to the foreground: Michael (770-846), syncellus of the Jerusalem Patriarchate (811-813) and two brothers, later "inscribed" for their iconophily: Theodore (ca775-842) and Theophanes (ca775-845), who ended his life as metropolitan of Nicaea (842-845). All three were born in Jerusalem or close, and the latter two were also definitely St Sabbas monks, thus daily users of John's and Cosmas's canons and troparia. All three, alike Andrew of Crete 130 years before, were sent by the Patriarch of Jerusalem Thomas I (807-821) to Constantinople on a special mission, possibly carrying in their baggage copies of John's and Cosmas's works. Alike Andrew they did not return to Jerusalem, probably sensing that the gravity was shifting to Constantinople or afraid they would be treated as traitors by the Arabs. However, they got caught in the second phase of iconoclasm (813-843) and because of their iconophily they suffered a lot, imprisoned into state-run Monasteries, exiled from Constantinople and having on their forefronts

³¹ Papadopoulos, 1904, pp. 50-51

³² Papadopoulos, 1904, pp. 50

³³ Papadopoulos, 1904, pp. 54-55

³⁴ Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 55

inscribed with incandescent iron a set of verses informing anyone encountering them their iconophile stance, hence their epithet.

All three during this 30-years-long hardship proved highly prolific melodists, especially the “inscribed” brothers with a production of many troparia idiomela and approximately two hundred canons, chiefly for basically celebrated saints’ Matins services. Theophanes also composed 32 prosomoia (four for each mode) for the Parakletike Saturday Matins Lauds aposticha, dedicated for the repose of the souls of the departed.³⁵

STUDION MONASTERY MELODISTS

Contemporary to the three Jerusalemites were two brothers, St Theodore (ca759-826; commemorated November 11th) and Joseph (ca765-832; commemorated July 14th) the Studites, with the latter also briefly serving as Archbishop of Thessaloniki (807-815). Born in Constantinople as children of a high officer during the reign of the iconoclast Constantine V (740-775), and highly educated, chose monastic life, first at the Monastery of Sakkoudion and then at the Studion (ca785-ca807) under the abbacy of their uncle St Plato (ca735-814; commemorated April 4th), whom Theodore succeeded after his death. Copies of John’s and Cosmas’s works must have already reached them, possibly as a part of their education; however, the Jerusalemite trio’s arrival in Constantinople must have enhanced their knowledge. Respectful of the theological depth and the poetic and musical artistry of the pioneers’ works, Theodore and Joseph did not double them (with the only Octoechos addition by Theodore being the Anabathmoi in the Sunday Matins).³⁶ Rather they used them as inspiration for their own unique work of Lenten daily services, the Triodion. Further, they copied the pattern of the services John’s and Cosmas’s works were chanted, to produce their Monastery’s own typicon, which later replaced the secular across the Empire’s parishes. Theodore wrote most of Triodion’s weekday canons, idiomela and the Holy Saturday Lamentations; Joseph Triodion’s Saturdays’ tetraodions (canons with four odes, from the 6th to the 9th), as well as some canons for basically celebrated saints.³⁷

The triumph of iconophile Orthodoxy (843) coincided with the repose in the Lord of the Jerusalemite trio with the Studite brothers having already preceded them. The latter, however, had bequeathed a legacy of adept students as Studion Monastery monks and abbacy successors. Clemens, Cyprian, Nicholas, Petros and Symeon the Studites, between 830 to 860, continued their mentors’ work in mainly writing canons for basically celebrated saints, troparia idiomela and canons for the Theotokos, which later were compiled in the Theotokarion and are used in Lenten weekdays’ Great Compline.³⁸ However, the most impressive hymnographer of the second half of the 9th century was Joseph the hymnographer.

Born in 816 in Sicily, at the age of 15 and until 24 he related to the Monastery of Latomos, Thessaloniki. In 840 he moved to Constantinople and became a Studite until 855. From 855 until his death (886) his exquisite education, talents and skills resulted into appointments to a variety of ecclesiastical offices under the very important patriarchs Ignatius (847-858 and 867-877) and Photius (858-867 and 877-886). Joseph somehow comes as the final ring of a full-circle chain starting with Cosmas the Calabrian,

³⁵ Papadopoulos, 1904, pp. 57-58

³⁶ Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 50

³⁷ Papadopoulos, 1904, pp. 55-56

³⁸ Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 57

John's and Cosmas's teacher, showcasing the significance of south Italy legacy upon Orthodox letters and arts.

A Studite for fifteen very important and formative years, Joseph had noticed the Triodion's daily didactic value across Lent, and he strove to apply it onto the rest of the calendar year in composing overall 385 canons and eventually limiting the usage of the Psalter in two to three sets of readings (or kathismata) daily. In specific, he wrote 68 canons for the Parakletike book, almost 1.5 out of the daily 2 used for the Monday to Saturday Matins services for all eight weeks following the preceding Sunday's respective mode (1st to the 8th) of John the Damascene's Octoechos.

Parakletike book was/is used for half a year or 27 weeks, except for the seven weeks before and the eight after Easter; and: 7th to 21st of September; 20th to 25th of November; 20th of December to 14th of January; and 5th to 24th of August. With John the Damascene's Sunday Octoechos as his model, and in simplified, weekdays-ordinary-type, Joseph filled the gaps for the weekdays services, also composing or overseeing the composition by his Studion brothers of vespereal prosomoia (six troparia chanted at the final six verses of the 141st psalm) and their three idiomela aposticha; and as per Matins, three sets of three kathismata after the Psalter readings and three Lauds aposticha. Joseph also filled the gaps of daily celebrations of basically celebrated saints with his approximately 300 canons; to him are also attributed six complete Triodion canons and 34 triodions and tetraodions of the same book; also, two complete canons and 24 triodions and tetraodions of the Pentekostarion book, which is used from Pascha to All Saints Sunday, the Sunday after Pentecost.³⁹

Post-843 IMPERIAL MELODISTS

By late-9th century, almost two hundred years after John the Damascene had composed his first Octoechos troparion, hymnographic production had reached its limits, unless a) older parts-sections of the increasingly unified typicon were to be replaced; but this was inconceivable, as it hit the sensitive core of who their melodists were, especially as per iconoclasm and what their teachings through their works had achieved in defeating the heresy and correctly indoctrinating the populace; or, b) few more to be added, to the detriment, again, of readings (Psalter, scriptural, synaxaria), in order to keep the length of the services unaffected. It was the latter to prevail, also out of respect of the office of their authors: head of the empire.

Leo VI the Wise (886-912) and his son and successor Constantine VII (912-959), highly-educated and cultured men, completed John the Damascene's Octoechos in respectively writing eleven troparia doxastikons and eleven exaposteilarions, one apiece for the eleven Sunday Matins resurrection gospels.⁴⁰ They comprise a brief repetition/exegesis of their source (the 11 pericopes), possibly for that part of the congregation which had not been early enough to Church to hear it with their own ears (their authors included).

Both imperial novelties (doxastikons and exaposteilarions) were copied by late-9th and 10th century melodists like Cyprian the Studite, Cassiane the Nun (with the most famous the Holy Wednesday Matins aposticha doxastikon, and the Christmas Vespers sticheron doxastikon), Arsenios monk, bishop of Kerkyra, Ephraim bishop of Caria (his is, for example, Peter and Paul Feast's, June 29th, Vespers aposticha doxastikon), George bishop of Amastris, George bishop of Nicomedia (his is, for example, Sunday of the Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Synod's Matins doxastikon), Ignatius of Constantinople,

³⁹ Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 60; [Joseph the Hymnographer - Wikipedia](#)

⁴⁰ Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 60

Photius of Constantinople, Sergios Agiopolitis (his is, for example, the Entrance of the Theotokos in the Temple feast's, November 21st, Vespers aposticha doxastikon) and the legendary Anatolius (for example, the Epiphany Matins two doxastikons).⁴¹

From the 11th century and beyond there was seldom anything needing composition with the Three Hierarchs' service (by St John Mavropous, bishop of Euchaita) the most characteristic example after the fixing of their common celebration on January 30th as a means to attenuate a schism among Constantinopolitan secular and ecclesiastical intellectuals as per who out of the three hierarchs was the most important.⁴²

⁴¹ Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 59-62

⁴² Papadopoulos, 1904, p. 65

CONCLUSIONS

A totally Jewish or Gentile background or a combination of both; persecutions, multicentricity, and the first tentative localised heresies: the factors for the emergence of a multi-fragmented pattern of liturgical customs within the first three centuries of Christianity. Antiphonic reciting/chanting of Psalter (psalms); non-extant, of-local-use, timely troparia (hymns); and spiritual odes of “Hallelujah”, “Glory to Thee O Lord”, “Lord have mercy”, “Grant this O Lord” and the “Triumphal Hymn” set the tone for both the Liturgy of the Word (psalms and hymns), as predominantly a copy of the Jewish “Matins” (Shacharit) or “Vespers” (Ma’ariv) services; and the Liturgy of the Faithful (odes), the novelty which Jesus Christ Himself introduced in the Upper Room as an attachment to Passover’s Seder and the fulfilment of the Old Testament’s promise to the chosen nation of Jews for the coming of the Messiah. So that, Eucharist after Eucharist, this novelty expanded upon and embraced the New Israel of converts: Jews, proselytes and Gentiles.

In post-313 or -324 Roman Empire, persecutions were replaced by heresies, which centrifugal political tendencies and an endemic ecclesiastical multicentricity used as a pretext to bolster the seats, sees and interests of myopic ecclesiastical and political elites and galvanise the local multitudes of newly illumined, whose Orthodoxy was ill-founded and rather blindly attached to what the local bishop or patriarch would pontificate. Monastics, monasticism and monasteries were willy rather than nilly involved in this motley pattern to either fight for by-Ecumenical-Councils-underpinned dogmas or fight with their fists against them – occasionally literally. The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Faithful continued to be the laity’s weekly focal point with Sunday Eucharist the par excellence service to attend/participate in. However, with chanters professionalism emerging as a weapon against heretical adulterations and with the construction of domus ecclesiae from the capital to the smallest village, liturgical spontaneity rapidly decreased and with it the populace’s lively participation: the faithful were increasingly becoming a pen to demarcate rather a flock to shepherd.

St Basil’s and Chrysostom’s Liturgies emerged as late-4th century editions of lengthier local ancient originals with, again, anti-heretical troparia the main novelty, the Holy-Thrice Hymn included. It was not before mid-6th century that emperor Justinian, sensing the impact of the Eucharist upon the laity by all aspects, made it a gorgeous ensemble with several poetical/musical additions/alterations, at the top of which stood the new Cherubic hymn replacing that of St James’s Liturgy.

But the heart of the real evolution was now beating at Monasteries with the introduction and setting out of several daily extra-Divine-Liturgy services by structure and content, with Vespers and Matins the most important. A development of Jewish counterparts, first in Syria and later in Palestine, in both renowned and village-based monastic establishments, Vespers and Matins started to increasingly adopt more troparia to embellish an otherwise monotonous reciting of the Psalter, the nine biblical odes and the lengthy priestly prayers. And to instruct the brotherhood and its immediate secular circles on difficult-to-grasp-and-comprehend doctrinal truths, as well as showcase a general ethos of ascetic virtues and values to be embraced by monks and laity alike.

That was the monastic typicon, which despite Justinian’s efforts to keep it at bay by strengthening the use of its simplified secular counterpart within Constantinople and the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s Thrace, Asia Minor and Pontus dioceses, with the daily officiating of extra-Divine-Liturgy services, the latter never stole the hearts of the laity, who kept on focusing on (Sunday) Eucharist. Hence, 6th century’s Kontakion’s exegetic and didactic influence was short-lived and not continued beyond a one and only generation of state-supported melodists: after Romanus’s and Justinian’s deaths, not even a contemporary manuscript of the former’s works survived; only later copies.

Seventh and eighth centuries found the Eastern Roman Empire battling at all fronts for political survival, thus, charismatic emperors, with the assistance of some Ecumenical Patriarchs, thought it fitting to revisit dogmatic issues estranging Syria, Palestine and Egypt from Chalcedonian Constantinople and coin nuances of Monophysitism in the hope to gain them back from Muslim Arabs, to whom they had more than easily capitulated. It was a largely unsuccessful attempt, as per both the interior and the exterior front, and two Ecumenical Synods, the 6th and the 7th renounced Monothelism and Iconoclasm respectively to the elation of the Orthodox and the dismay of a small number of statesmen.

Yet again the seeds of heresies needed to be decisively tackled, and the task was shouldered by a streak of Damascus/Jerusalem personalities, largely 8th-century St Sabbas' Monastery, Palestine, and 9th-century Studion Monastery, Constantinople, monks and melodists of an exceptional education, linguistic skills, musical background and composition artistry. St Andrew, Archbishop of Crete, St John the Damascene, his foster-brother St Cosmas, bishop of Maiouma, their protégé St Stephen, monk of St Sabbas, Sergius the Agiopolitis (of the Holy City of Jerusalem), Andrew the Blind, and the trio of Michael Syncellus, and the two brothers Theophanes and Theodore the "inscribed", bequeathed the Orthodox Church with melodic masterpieces: canons and troparia idiomela. These, pleasant to the ear and with largely digestible lyrics, explained to everyone, from the sophisticated upper clergy and bureaucrats to the elementarily-or-if-at-all-educated farmer, the basic truths of the Nicene/Constantinopolitan Creed, which might have been weekly repeated in the Divine Liturgy and even learnt by heart, yet again its truths had not become a second nature.

With the Palestinian trio Constantinople was brought even closer to the unfathomable wealth of St Sabbas' melodic production and its regular usage chiefly within Vespers and Matins. Theodore and Joseph, the brothers and monks of Studion Monastery, bearing but not surviving the brunt of the second phase of Iconoclasm, managed to put together their own liturgical book: the Lenten Triodion. Which, at first was exclusively used by the brotherhood, but, within the next two to three generations, was widely copied and disseminated across the Empire, Monasteries and lay parishes alike, effectively cancelling the secular typicon by its monastic counterpart as exemplified by Triodion.

Theodore and Joseph became the spiritual fathers of a good number of secondary Studites melodists, who worked diligently and upon a plan to provide the Orthodox Church across the Empire (and gradually beyond) with a consolidated ensemble of extra-Divine-Liturgy services for the whole of the calendar year. Their pinnacle, Joseph the Hymnographer, originally from Sicily and a Studite from 24, completed every imaginable gap in composing almost 400 canons, leaving almost nothing to be done for the next generation of melodists.

With emperors Leo VI and his son Constantine VII the most important, they merely added some gorgeous pieces through their doxastikons and exaposteilaria, and were imitated by late-10th and 11th century composers filling-in scanty gaps in daily services, usually by "elevating" the status of the celebrated saints from a basically- to less-grand one, to please local civic prides.

Strict and inescapable formulas had already eased within an Empire witnessing a flourish in urban demographics, with the respective populace eager to please their ears more with melodies and less with lengthy didactic texts, a tendency culminated in the absolute absorption of the once secular urban typicon by the monastic, sometime before Constantinople's fall to the Fourth Crusade's assemblage of opportunists (1204). Which again, even within Monasteries, resulted in the increasing scissoring of readings to the benefit of the chanted. But this may be the scope of another essay.