

CHRISTIAN CULT AND LITURGICAL BOOKS AFTER THE EDICT OF LIBERTY (313)

Assist. PhD. Rev. Cosmin SANTI

Faculty of Orthodox Theology and Education Science of Târgoviște

Abstract

This research highlights the hymnographic work from the Orthodox service books, source of Sacred Tradition, of inestimable value, made up of hymnographs Christians of the first Christian centuries. It is indicated the emergence and evolution of pre-Christian cult of Christians before being granted freedom by the Holy Emperor Constantine the Great by the Edict of Milan in 313, and the flourishing and development of the cult thereafter, all external forms of expression of the Christian faith (architecture, painting, sculpture, religious music, hymnographies, services, ritual books, religious fabrics etc.). The study highlights the importance and value of Christian cult ritual books and culture in general; poetic Byzantine literature is truly one original and creative direction of the religious and epic poetry. Church hymns, fully used in public Orthodox activities, are the expression of the doctrine of faith or dogma exposed in the form of poetry to be sung during religious services.

Keywords: cult, book, hymnography, edict, Christianity.

1. Introduction: Christian Cult and Jewish Cult

When we talk about religion in general, we consider any possibility that places man in connection with the most precious that he has with what he loves and respects more, something greater than himself, from whom he expected help and use in all circumstances of his existence.

Religion and cult are closely connected. Every religion has its corresponding cult in regards to its religious base. Cult is also the main element of any religion resistance, the last fortress that survives all religions and denominations in decline.

In other words, the main purpose of religion in general and of the Christian one in particular, is to create a connection more or less direct with God, on the one hand offering praise to God

(lateritic-Eucharistic function), and on the other the outpouring of God's sanctifying grace upon the faithful people (sanctifying or charismatic function), both supporting the believer on his way to salvation by faith externalization and internalization, which is understood to be found in connection with his Creator.

Fr. Prof. Ene Braniște stresses that „universal essence and foundation of Christian cult is the feeling that we are in front of God, and get in touch with him by invoking his name in prayer or by other means”¹, thus highlighting its doctrinal richness of symbolism and variety of liturgical gestures and acts of Christian cult, meant to show the extraordinary legacy left to us by the Saviour Jesus Christ, the Apostles, the Priests and the Church in general, until today.

Any religion envisages connection with divinity, bond that cannot be expressed only through gestures, acts, words, invocations, prayers etc., all forming what we call cult. Christian cult is a cult eminently rich and varied in terms of expression of human relationship with God, having the character of cult revealed by its founder Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ. Religion is a natural characteristic of our religious believes, planted in our beings as a natural ontological impulse to connect and to honour the Supreme Being, God, of showing respect, to worship and thank for all His blessings, asking for help and grace needed.

We distinguish an internal aspect of the cult, when we talk about human emotions and respect expressed in inner forms (piety, moral virtues), and an external one through this embryonic stage, incipient, inner need to externalize the visible, perceptible forms; so man can only achieve a genuine connection with God through the union and use two forms of cult in his life, cult that must express itself both through individual action, personal and through a public, collective Christian community by Eucharistic fellowship, genuine love and common confession.

Regarding the personal, internal side religious act is „a perfect synthesis of the highest qualities and functions of the Christian soul, serving two ideas: the idea of God and of man's relation

¹ Pr. prof. dr. Ene Braniște, *Liturgica generală*, vol. I, ediția a III-a, Editura Episcopiei Dunării de Jos, Galați, 2002, p. 41.

with Him"² „When faith generates facts, crouches and prayers of hope and love flow into blessings, only then it is an act of external cult”³.

Christian religion is closely connected with the Jewish. Jesus Christ, practicing forms of Mosaic cult of His age, strives to reform Jewish cult, condemning formalism, excessive ritualism practiced by the Pharisees, bloody sacrifices, and desecration of the temple. Therefore, in addition to this activity as a reformer of the Jewish faith, becomes the founder of the new cult of the new law he brought, Christian cult.

The Saviour did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, He came to strengthen it (Matthew 5, 17) to amend it, removing from it only exaggerated formalistic requirements.

Searching the origins of Christian cult, we must start from the structure and content of the Jewish cult practiced by the Saviour, that he had filled with a new meaning, a symbolic ritual marking the transformation of the Sacraments (the cult of the Old Law all liturgical acts had a symbolic meaning putting the man in relation to God always from the perspective of God's covenant with His people.) The Saviour reaches and committees all these act of the Jewish cult, but he brings their eschatological consummation of filling their content and meaning again.

The feeling that is expressed in all acts of Christian cult, is love carried to the ultimate sacrifice. Jesus Christ the Redeemer manifests this genuine perennial love through his Sacrifice on the Cross; this love is the specific mark of Christians: „By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you will have love for one another” (John 13, 35).

Jesus Christ establishes new forms of cult, some of which inherited from the old Jewish cult, but perfected in the new spirit of love, and new ones that remain the foundation, the foundation and nucleus of the new cult⁴ (ideal prayer model: Our Father,

² Pr. Ioan Mihălcescu, *Curs de Teologie Fundamentală*, vol. I, s.n., București, 1932, p. 84.

³ Arhim. Vasile Miron, *Semnificația și importanța religioasă-morală a cultului divin public ortodox*, EIBMBOR, București, 2003, p. 52.

⁴ Pr. prof. dr. Ene Braniște, *Originea, instituirea și dezvoltarea cultului creștin*, in „Studii Teologice”, XV (1963), nr. 3-4, p. 132.

establishment of Sacraments especially the Eucharist, blessing occurred at various times in His saving work, kneeling and invoking the name of God etc.).

Out of the Jewish cult, Christians kept the general elements with new meanings. Christian Church adopted the church year beginning on Jews fall, with divisions in months, weeks, days and liturgy hours. Although the Jewish liturgical days are numbered first day, second, etc., Christian Church brought fundamental changes replacing the Sabbath with Sunday, the weekly holy day dedicated to the Resurrection. The shift from Saturday to Sunday was done gradually, Mass taking place on the night between the two days. This practice was widespread in the first half of the First century.

Yet Christian faith has kept particular liturgical significance for Saturday, you do not fasted on Saturdays and Sundays, Saturday evening vesper is more special than in any other days of the week. According to the Jewish religion, Christianity in the liturgical day begins in the evening and ends the following evening. Liturgy Day is divided into seven parts, seven churches Praise, each with its particular ordinance. The 7 Praise have their origin in most of the Mosaic religion (Watches III, VI, IX), who received pure Christian significance, evoking moments of Jesus life. For example, Matins Lauds sticheron are taken from marked by hallelujah psalms (Ps. 148, 149, 150), which were read at the service of the temple and the synagogue ritual of Saturday morning⁵. In general, all have Praises Old Testament texts, used in Jewish cult at the temple.

In the Christian Church, Matins was first framed in the divine service in the night (vigil)⁶, which later split into three services: Vespers, Matins and the Midnight Office, the latter being part of the service of the last night of yesteryear, which especially dominated the primary Christianity times when he made the transition from Judaism to the new constituted cult.

⁵ George Bogdaproste, *Elemente din cultul mozaic în cultul creștin*, in „*Studii Teologice*”, XXII (1970), nr. 9-10, p. 728.

⁶ See Pr. prof. dr. Ene Braniște, *Slujba Utreniei. Istoric și explicare*, in „*Studii Teologice*”, XXIV (1972), nr. 1-2, pp. 70-89.

But Christian cult cannot be considered a continuation of Jewish cult. From the beginning it started to individualize, to self-determine, „appearing with Christianity aurora, with its constituent features not allowing being confused with the temple or synagogue”⁷.

Similarities between the two religions exist in which concern parts of the Jewish temple and parts of a Christian church, and in terms of painting that we find at the temple in the form of characters, scenes and episodes inspired by sacred history of the Old Testament. Liturgical people, church hierarchy, liturgical vestments, miscellaneous specific to the cult (incense, oil, water) and some religious objects (chalice, censer)⁸, can be found in the Mosaic religion, but all these old clothes were stripped, and They put the new robe, receiving directions and meanings we matched with Christian rules, thus fulfilling the scripture that testifies that Christ did not come to destroy what they had, but came to complete, to perfect them (Matthew 5, 17).

So, Christian cult borrowed a lot of elements from the Old Testament cult. This has not changed the spiritual background, the essential value of Christian cult because it concerns more the formal side. The most numerous borrowed elements are those relating to texts from the books of the Old Testament, which enjoyed the respect of the early Christians, being the first book of their religion. But Christian cult is not based on these, on the contrary shows that the relationship between the Old and New Testament is one close, they are sources of the same divine revelations. Certain forms of expression of worship, common to both, our worship does not alter anything, but this proves not only that the forms of expression of human feelings to God were the same in all times and everywhere. What separates fundamental Christian cult of the Mosaic is that in Judaism the man cannot unite again with God, whereas in Christianity, the man himself is blessed with the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, present in the bloodless Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, the centre of the Christian cult.

⁷ Dom Jean de Puinet, *La liturgie de la messe*, s.n., Avignon, 1928, p. 49.

⁸ See Viorel Chițu, *Cultul Vechiului Testament și cultul creștin*, in „Studii Teologice”, XIII (1961), nr. 5-6, pp. 297-320.

Consequently, Christian cult was, is and will be a distinct and independent reality from any religious denomination, as of the Jewish, being superior to them.

2. Christian cult in the apostolic age until the end of persecution

After the ascension of the Saviour, the Apostles could not physically touch Christ, but repeating the cultic acts left by the Saviour, they came to a new way of benefiting again of the presence of Jesus Christ crucified and risen. Holy Apostles and early Christians, continuing what the Saviour did benefit of His presence. The cult has retained that new meaning, but with time he found other forms of expression, so very early in the first century, the Christian church began to compile hymnography of their own liturgical texts because of the improvising aspect of the cult.

Christians kept improvising on a given scheme of the Apostles era and the one who had uttered the prayer had to have the ability to do it (primarily spiritual ability). Nocturnal character of the Primary cult is evident in Acts of Apostles.

Apostles have enshrined those received from Christ the Saviour, but they have added other new forms required by the new development needs of the Church and Christian communities. As the start of Christian worship is considered the Pentecost, when the Apostles were clothed with power from sky, being ordained⁹.

Within the first-century Christian Church was formed a clear idea and superior to the synagogue, about religious community and religious holidays in general. Although at first the Christian faith have many Jewish influences, being called the Judeo-Christian cult, however this was not as pronounced syncretism, Jewish forms were given from the beginning Christian overtones and nuances purely based on Eucharistic sacrificial love feeling. According to the New Testament, the first Christian community was born in Jerusalem, in the temple, in synagogues and especially in private homes. In the centre of Christian cult, like today, was Mass, the breaking of bread or the Eucharist. Holy Apostles imitated

⁹Pr. prof. dr. Ene Braniște, *Originea, instituirea și dezvoltarea...*, p. 133.

Christ in the night of Last Supper, they prayed, blessed the bread, cut it, sharing it. The early Christians had unshakeable confidence in the fact that, by sharing the body and blood of the Lord „occurs climactic encounter with Christ and His Holy Spirit, who turned the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord and they filled it with His presence. Encountering Christ in the church is experienced by believers as isolated individuals, but the community, reinforcing the unity between them without whom there is no salvation”¹⁰.

The cult consisted of religious books, like the Jewish cult which were parts of Scripture, the books of Moses being divided into small units called books, pericope of these books and the prophets' books were divided into units called heftier¹¹. Apology I of St. Justin, Martyr and Philosopher written in the year 150, the Apostolic Constitutions (IV century) and other supporting documents as regards liturgical life of Christians in the first centuries, shows clearly that at the beginning of Holy Mass were read Old and New Testament, Sermon or Homily followed by exegetic-moral character¹². Extensive readings at the beginning of Christianity, the books of Sacred Scripture were reduced over time, identifying in our church some Psalm of the 7 Laude, Kathismata, Old Testament readings of Vespers at St. Antiphons Mass, Apostle, St. Gospel and certain liturgical formulas.

It cannot determine the exact time when he pericope division in Scripture was done nor how was done. „But before the year 400, Evagrie is believed to have divided the Gospels into pericope or Lectionary readings and systematization of facts and Epistles of the Apostles is attributed to Eulalie deacon of Alexandria, in the year 458”¹³. This process ended at the same time with

¹⁰ Pr. prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Locașul bisericesc propriu-zis, cerul pe pământ sau centrul liturgic al creației*, in *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, Mystagogia*, EIBMBOR, București, 2000, p. 50.

¹¹ Pr. Spiridon Căndea, *Cultul creștin și unitatea Bisericii lui Iisus Hristos*, in „Ortodoxia”, XV (1963), nr. 3-4, p. 475.

¹² See the research of Pr. prof. dr. Nicolae D. Necula, *Sfânta Scriptură în cultul ortodox*, in vol. *Sfânta Scriptură și Sfânta Liturghie izvoare ale vieții veșnice*, Editura Trinitas, Iași, 2008, pp. 295-301.

¹³ Pr. Ioan Mihoc, *Sfânta Scriptură în cultul divin creștin ortodox*, in vol. *cit.*, p. 477.

the evolution of Christian cult, the eighth century by Saints John of Damascus and Theodore of Studios.

Also in the first Christian centuries, the cult focused as seen on word, the apostolic kerygma, preaches (Acts 20, 7-12, 1 Timothy 4, 13), accompanied by the religious singing mostly consisting of psalms and hymns but specific to Christian, what makes us believe that „with the psalter went in the church the chant, ie music or singing of psalms, with all its rules”¹⁴.

Alongside these forms of cult, in the apostolic era agape were used; in the spirit of communion force early Christians gathered at tables fraternal assemblies called agape¹⁵, for solidarity between people, out of love.

From this solidarity collections were organized, charismas manifesting in these meetings, as acts of God, acts of extraordinary cult.

At its beginning, the Liturgy of the first three centuries was „as a uniform type, but still fluid and susceptible to changes in detail”¹⁶. This Mass was nothing but unique rite of the early Church celebrated the Holy Apostles before turning to preaching the Gospel, attributed rite according to tradition, St. James the Lord's brother and first bishop of Jerusalem. The need for religious books containing Liturgy in the first period of Christianity was a stringent one because it boils down to a simple rite of the Eucharist. But with time, as the Christian cult began to develop and organize themselves independently of Jewish cult at the temple and synagogue, the need was felt for a book of ritual appearance to help the servants in the exercise of priesthood, work done in the century of freedom of Christians. Liturgical language in this

¹⁴ Pr. Petre Vintilescu, *Poezia immografică din cărțile de ritual și cântarea bisericească*, s.n., București, 1937, pp. 186-187.

¹⁵ The primary era of Christian Church, agapes took place with Holy Mass: at first, before Communion, later held after the Mass, because they had decided in the meantime that those who partake must do so on an empty stomach; out of the agapes' practice, today I remember only offerings brought by believers at St. Mass, the pieces brought for Easter meals for blessing given to a church feast day; see Protos. Gr. Băbuș, *Agapa și Liturghia în Biserica primară*, in „Studii Teologice”, VI (1954), nr. 7-8, pp. 458-472.

¹⁶ Arhim. Vasile Miron, *Semnificația și importanța religios-morală...*, p. 33.

period was Greek, but since the second Century Latin became the official language also, first for the Church of North Africa and then of Rome, where in the third Century Greek was still used¹⁷.

In addition to the Mystery of the Eucharist, called the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table or cup of blessing is also in the apostolic era were performing the Sacrament of Baptism, Ordination, Confession, Confirmation and Chrismation was done by anointing and touching by hands of the Apostles¹⁸.

In the third century we do not have something to inform us on Christian cult in that time, as we noted in the First and second Christian Centuries. The reasons may be different, from the most simple of no opportunities and occasions to question the problems of Christian cult, treaties regarding this issue were not written, and there was the possibility that such sources of information to be there, but due to persecution they have been burnt or destroyed.

However, due to persecution against Christian's cult, the young Churches could not develop too much, leaving it to modesty, simplicity and the scarcity of external forms so far. The cult begins in places called underground catacombs.

„The church, now lives the era of youthful enthusiasm of all nascent religions, pre-institutional phase, the forms of cult are not so regulated by Church leadership, as the grace of the Holy Spirit Branch, which still flows in abundance, His extraordinary gifts (charismas) needed to supply and support of missionary zeal, faith and patience of the faithful in persecution”¹⁹.

But this time we can see some development of Christian cult, the Mass in which the first three centuries was uniform everywhere now fits increasingly more limited to the right to improvise freely liturgical prayers and cult is enriched with new forms.

By the end of this century systematization ordinances of divine service by those rules known as ecclesiastical law will be tried. It generalizes the old holidays (Sunday, Pentecost, Easter) adding new ones: Christmas and Epiphany. The biggest gain of the third

¹⁷Pr. Petre Vintilescu, *Cartea numită Liturghier*, in „Studii Teologice”, XI (1959), nr. 9-10, pp. 521-522.

¹⁸Pr. prof. dr. Ene Braniște, *Liturgica generală*, p. 60.

¹⁹Idem, *Originea, instituirea și dezvoltarea...*, p. 134.

century on Christian cult was developing the cult of martyrs²⁰, which underlies the cult of saints in general, every year dealing with the Divine Liturgy on their graves.

3. Christian cult in the era of Constantine the Great and its evolution

In the era of persecution, as noted, the cult has not developed its forms of expression, but began to appear first forms or liturgical written texts, appearing first collections of liturgical texts called Ecclesiastical procedures. There is a variety of liturgical texts which in time came to be uniform giving birth to the cult that we have today. After the Edict of Milan (313) Christian cult has become public and official cult has developed unprecedented forms of expression. Now, in the fourth century liturgical various families created by fixing cultic written text, unifies and variants of cultic texts less used or less known are eliminated, and local churches are grouped around the patriarchal chairs that come to impose the cult in all regions over which they have exercised jurisdiction. At first there was no uniformity of expression as you might think, being mentioned the existence of a written apostolic liturgy (attributed to the Apostle Jacob), but there was a uniformity in the structure of cult, but a diversity of forms of expression, given that until the fourth century cult was based on improvisation. Only after written texts appearing cult begins to flatten, to standardize the process so as homogenization of the cult began with the battles of the fourth century to be fulfilled by imposing Byzantine emperors cult metropolis so that many local liturgical traditions were replaced and liturgical texts preserved until today to be the law, accepted and imposed by ecclesiastical authority, and the Imperial one.

Age of Constantine the Great, and especially the period after the Edict of freedom for Christians (313), presented by historians as a turning point in religious life, but especially in the history of the development of the cult. Edict of Milan has an epochal significance by the consequences of the decisions. From impermissible

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 135.

and persecuted religion, Christianity becomes the religion permitted, even encouraged, as shown by subsequent acts of Emperor Constantine. History cult since the reign of Constantine the Great can be summarized in the following fundamental processes:

- development of the cult linked to external ceremonial church building;

- intensifying liturgical cycles: year, week, liturgical day; the emergence of new holidays, new church sermons;

- hymnography development which led to religious books, becoming a main element of the cult;

- increase in the cult of the number of martyrs and the saints²¹.

These directions show that by the fourth century, Christian cult hardly existed or that he was one poorly developed, but on the contrary we see an accelerated development of existing forms of cult; not talking about a new appearance, a recasting of the existing cult, which would mean a deviation from the legacy of the first three centuries, unacceptable and false.

„The phenomenology of religion is important to distinguish between the inner and external solemnity of cult. Inner solemnity consists of fullness attributed to an act of religious significance, no matter how simple it may be: cutting of bread, show of hands, or, more exactly, is the receipt of the complete knowledge and meanings by those who commit it are present at the ceremony or solemnity... External solemnity consists of sacred ceremonies and holy acts, in creating an ambience of religious holy fear that surely will influence how they are received and experienced by participants in the cult”²².

In the post Constantine development and liturgical changes it must be emphasized that freedom that the Church receives through the Edict of Milan was a fundamental and defining freedom of religion. During this period the Christian faith comes to light and glare due from the obscurity of the catacombs, in the darkness of paganism of the persecutors, through the beautiful and magnificent churches that are being built now. „The great

²¹ Alexander Schmemmann, *Introducere în teologia liturgică*, traducere de Ierom. Vasile Bârzu, Sofia, București, 2002, p. 145.

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 177-178.

and spacious churches are built, starting with those built by Constantine the Great himself and his mother, Saint Helena, to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Constantinople and Rome. It develops a Christian religious art: architecture (basilical style then Byzantine one), painting, sculpture, music, poetry (Hymns), cutlery and religious fabric²³, all having both aesthetic role, especially lateritic, charismatic and didactic.

Since the fourth century, iconography will experience a remarkable development. With the enthronement of Constantine the Great and the Imperial Edict of Theodosius, establishing Christianity the state religion, in 380, the church is entering a period of peace, the sacred art will develop. Religious freedom granted to Christians through the Edict of Milan (313), and finding the Saviour Holy Cross by Empress Helena in 324, favours the development of magnificent religious art. Christians come out of the catacombs and places of cult cannot satisfy neophytes' crowd. Great churches were build and their decoration with icons and sign of the Cross is promotes. Assumptions related to spring doctrinal initiatives underlie even when they are not the exclusive preserve of the Church (as in the first three centuries), going largely the responsibility of the Empire, with the campaign founders inaugurated by Constantine the Great. Sign of the Cross will be sewn flags as a sign protector soldiers in combat, after finding the Holy Cross on Golgotha research conducted by St Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine and then not accidentally sign of the Cross which is reflected, intentionally or at least felt in the plans of places of cult starting with the first buildings. After moving the capital of the Empire in Byzantium, East will become the centre of gravity of the development of the arts and especially painting. Constantinople, favoured by its location between East and West becomes the crystallization of new art, Byzantine art and Oriental Christian in its essence because its roots²⁴. Byzantine art will be a mystical and symbolic art. Foundations of Constantine the Great, will lay the foundation monumental tradition and several archetypes or prototypes canonical architecture and painting.

²³ Pr. prof. dr. Ene Braniște, *Liturgica generală*, p. 61.

²⁴ Gavriil Hoțoleanu, *Curs de artă creștină*, partea I, s.n., Zăbriceni, 2007, pp. 17-19.

The most important source of the divine cult of the IV and V Christian century is Constitutions or Settlements of the Apostles. In this paper we find the oldest liturgical form known until today. Because in this period appear liturgical rites-sources identified in Syrian type liturgy called Clementine Liturgy²⁵, followed by a presentation of the liturgies from which it appears that the essential elements of the Mass were the same as in the first Christian centuries.

In this period of triumph of Christianity, the old forms of cult add new ones aimed at bringing an increase of beauty and brilliance of the cult or express new feelings of joy for the victory against the paganism. An important part in this development process is the organization of the catechetical education, through beautiful mystagogical homilies for catechetical purpose to explain the Mass, the sacraments of baptism and initiation of candidates for the neophytes, with authors like St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, St. Ambrose of Milan.

Now appear Byzantine liturgies used up to this day in our church namely Liturgy St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil the Great, both derived from the apostolic Liturgy St. James; it concludes and summarizes the Seven Laude or sermons of daily liturgical service: Matins and Vespers alongside Watches III, VI and IX, already in use is added I watch, Compline and Midnight Office. The three major periods of the church year are now decided: Octoechos, Triodion and Pentecostarion, Easter celebration after the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325) it is uniform generalized, thus beginning the period of the ecumenical councils. The emergence of new festive feast, celebrating Mariological and the Saints appears, the general celebration throughout Sunday Empire since 321, as well as new rules of fasting during the ecclesiastical year.

The cult of Saints starts to develop by the veneration of martyrs increasing the importance of relics; since the fourth century churches and chapels on the graves of martyrs (martyria) are built, their bones are dug up and carried in processions to be honoured at the new church. Pilgrimages to holy places and

²⁵ Pr. Spiridon Căndea, *Cultul creștin și unitatea...*, p. 482.

holy martyrs' graves increase. During the era of the ecumenical councils, new forms of cult are becoming more common, leading to standardization of Christian ritual its completed development which we consider essential and fundamental in its forms, with the conclusion of the patristic period or the last Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787)²⁶, it is permanently established the cult of holy icons, which led to the development of iconography and Christian churches establish an iconographic program, the appearance of ermine Byzantine painting, painting which has become an invaluable tradition of the Eastern Church.

4. The importance and value of the ritual books of the Christian cult and for world culture

The Scripture unites with Tradition and Church being together an expression of the continuous work of the Holy Spirit in the world. In Orthodox cult there is a balance between the functions of religion: didactic, lateritic and charismatic. The Eucharistic sacrifice brings exaltation of God the Father, and prepare for understanding biblical readings and receiving grace through the sacraments. The age of prayers, of the liturgical hymns indicates the real value of the Sacred Tradition. Many hymnographic embodiments and prayers were drawn up by hymnography Christian Fathers, being sprung from living and meditating on the Word of God. Orthodox Church is profoundly biblical, not only by the abundance of biblical texts in content but prayers and liturgical songs are nothing but a theological synthesis of a full hearing of the doctrine of faith of the Church and a guide to living in Christ. Through its cult, the Orthodox Church made clear that the *lex orandi* is one with *lex credendi*²⁷, which is a church of prayer, but also a Church of true faith, confessing it over the centuries to the faithful ones.

If the first three centuries there may be a general liturgical uniformity, i.e. to have a unified church in regards to its services

²⁶ Pr. prof. dr. Ene Braniște, *Originea, instituirea și dezvoltarea...*, pp. 136-138.

²⁷ Vasile Coman, *Însemnătatea Scripturii și a Tradiției în cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe*, in „Ortodoxia”, XXXII (1980), nr. 4, p. 599.

throughout the Christian world, starting with the fourth century, with the progressive development of cult, we are witnessing a diversification of accentuated increase: so-called liturgical rites arise, specific Oriental Orthodoxy, the Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian-Jacobean and Armenian. Such differences also existed in the first three centuries of the Christian liturgical uniformity period, without shaking the dogmatic and spiritual communion between the Churches and their mutual love and respect²⁸, this situation lasted throughout the ecumenical unity of the Christian Church up to the great schism of 1054.

In the IV and V centuries arises Christian hymnographic splendid poetry, chants in the form of poetry, which give a new breath of cult, religious books; thus, they are exposed Christian teachings. „The liturgical books of a church as part of Sacred Tradition of utmost importance... as yields hymnographic and prayers which includes all exposed theological thought, based on Sacred Scripture, the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, the works of the Fathers, the clergy and faithful devotion”²⁹, to be known and identified as such, had a content and specific form of the beginning of the Church, that is based on Scripture. The momentum inspiration, deep piety, wealth theological ideas and lyrical expression of religious sentiment expressed in Christian hymnography drew admiration and intellectual satisfaction of theologians and literary historians.

Scripture and cult coexist at the beginning of the Church's life; Scripture and cult overlap and work together without losing its identity, because in Orthodox cult pericopes are read from Scripture, and this act itself becomes an act of cult. Scripture generates acts of cult, standardized, the use of Scripture in the community gathered by the cult, gives the character and quality of actual religious books.

The new forms and acts of Christian cult, in order to be registered and included in books of ritual or liturgical books, „must

²⁸ Pr. prof. dr. Ene Braniște, *Uniformizarea tipicului și a textelor liturgice în cult și în săvârșirea Tainelor*, in „Studii Teologice”, XV (1963), nr. 2, p. 216.

²⁹ Pr. prof. dr. Nicolae D. Necula, *Doctrina și viața religioasă a Bisericii Copte reflectate în textele ei liturgice (rugăciuni și imne)*, teză de doctorat, in „Ortodoxia”, XXVIII (1976), nr. 3-4, p. 490.

express the clear teaching of the Church's faith, to cultivate and strengthen the religious and moral life of the faithful and to enhance the beauty and external ornament of the cult, because the worship is external mirror in which we see the truths of the supernatural order, as we see the truths of the natural order in the physical world"³⁰.

Christian hymnographs and Fathers, helped by favourable period of freedom of Christians after the Edict of 313, have dedicated part of their lives to compile beauties which include the orthodox religious books, especially the multitude of tropes, sticheron, verses, condacs, prayers etc.; in them we find expressed with extraordinary craftsmanship and a great synthesis power, the whole teaching of faith of our Church the entire Eastern theology, cosmology continuing with anthropology, Christology, ecclesiology, pneumatology and eschatology and ending with the new creation.

Byzantine poetic literature was truly original and creative in the direction of the religious and epic poetry. Hymnographic Christian poetry which developed from the fourth century, peaked in the late sixth century by Holy Roman³¹ by groups of hymns on the Nativity („the Virgin”).

So, in celebrating the divine services, Church follows a certain order, a pattern, which was fixed in writing in special books, liturgical books.

Byzantine liturgical books are either employed in liturgical texts celebrating the divine services, Christian Hymns or typical ordinances indicating how to use these hymnographic embodiments. Texts contain two factors: the basic or common which form an invariably skeleton of jobs, and especially one of the holidays that change depending on holidays or day.

Systematization and fixing written ordinances of cult and sacred text of prayers do occur as early as the fourth Century, the oldest service books, since Typikon (St. Chariton the Confessor - III century , continued by the Saint Sava- fifth century), and the Missal - Molitfelnic Evhologionului type of Serapion, the fourth

³⁰ Arhim. Vasile Miron, *Semnificația și importanța religioasă-morală...*, pp. 35-36.

³¹ See Mihail Voicescu, *Nașterea Domnului în creația imnografică a Sfântului Roman Melodul*, in „Studii Teologice”, XXXV (1983), nr. 1-2, pp. 18-27.

century. Books of worship will increase gradually and will diversify the fixed prayers for daily service jobs - Horologion - then we enter into worship hymns - Tropologhion - followed by priceless treasure texts that make up Octoihul, Triod and Pentecostarion, having as main composers the leaders of the VIII century and Ninth centuries St. John Damascene, Theodore and Joseph Studium, and finally appearing Antologhion and Menaion encoded in its present form – X and XII centuries³².

The purpose and the skill with which these texts were written show love, commitment and devotion of hymnodist Christians to God, primarily because glorify Him through these songs, then our neighbour, who, listening to these words written under the supervision of the Holy Spirit, will understand and perceive the high theological ideas contained in these verses made accessible to everyone and metaphors used to raise the soul to what God has done with us and for us, from creation up to its end when he come again to live with those who listened to His commandments, and preserved them, transfiguring the world and creating a „new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21, 1), in which justice and truth will endure.

Books of cult of our Church uses the following forms: tropar, which is the oldest and simplest form of hymnographic poetry; stihira - designates stanzas, or a group of several verses, often preceded by many verses or verse from the Psalms, which is sung recitative; to the category of sticheron belong also hymnographic embodiments and are called idioms; another group are kathisma which is sung at Matins; sticheron is an isolated ipeccac; there are certain tropes shorter, called earplugs, which is sung at Matins holidays before reading the Holy Gospel; a particular category of sticheron are svetilnes, which is sung at Matins before Laude; kontakion is a poetic stanza which is used in several church services; Canon is a composition of several songs forming a whole and Katavasia are a summary of the canons they belong³³.

Of Christians hymnographs we mention Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (century II), and philosopher Justin Martyr († 163), Clement

³² Pr. prof. dr. Ene Braniște, *Liturgica generală*, p. 269.

³³ *Ibidem*, pp. 320-326.

of Alexandria († 215) Antinoghen Holy Martyr Bishop of Sevasta († 311), Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria († 373), St. Ephrem († 373), St. Gregory the Theologian († 389), St. Ambrose of Milan († 397) etc. A major role in the development of Orthodox cult plays St. Basil the Great († 379) via Divine Liturgy composition and by a large number of prayers and hymns entered into Evhologhiu and Ceaslov; alike merit to be attributed to St. John Chrysostom († 407) for the composition of Divine Liturgy and by a large number of troparia during night. There were many other hymnologists Christians who have left their mark in our religious books, as Anatolie, Patriarch of Constantinople († 458), St. Cyril of Alexandria († 444), Roman of the fourth century, and creators of kontakions, along with other authors of condacs: Gregory, Cosma, Chiriac and Dometius. Of course we cannot forget the beauty of the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete Jerusalemian († 740) consisting of 250 troparia remarkable shape and depth of thought and spiritual living. St. John Damascene († 749) wrote Resurrection canons of the eight voices of *Octoih*³⁴, followed by many other hymnologists, equally important, mentioned in our books of Orthodox cult.

Books of ritual were overwhelmingly important for the Church and for its believers. All theory of the Church, all dogmas are explained and translated for the ordinary believers, accessible to them through text books of cult. They have as main purpose catechetical teaching; then aim to introduce the believer into mysterious atmosphere, become closer to God, thus having a charismatic purpose; a third goal in that we can highlight these liturgical embodiments having lateritic role; and not least aesthetic purpose, beauty cult, along with the church music have led to a unique art and rare beauty.

Therefore, as one of the 8 sources of Sacred Tradition, the book of cult is meant to convey us across the century's truth revealed by God, and is in desperate need of our salvation and of those who listen every ecclesial event of texts contained in this chrestomathy their pages. Moreover, as painting is the bible for the illiterate of the Church, offering comfort to those who cannot

³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 328-333.

read, and for those who cannot see with the eyes of the body, having „open” predominantly eyes of the soul tasting of honey and sweetness of these sacred compositions.

Hymnal had from the beginning a dogmatic-apologetic character, greatly helping in the fight against heretics of the first Christian centuries. Christian songs are generally characterized by profound expression of love of man to God and God’s love to people. Christian hymns goal is to be able to establish a bond, a communion between man and God. From this love sprang hymns of glory, Christian doxologies³⁵. In all their work, Christian hymnographs were led by the zeal of faith and also deep knowledge of Scripture and the teaching of the Church’s faith.

The existence of dogmatic ideas, including those eschatological cult books of the Church from the earliest centuries, shows that orientation to the future world and the resurrection hope was a living phenomenon which animated the life of the first Christian communities. Christian’s express desire to unite heaven and earth to live the angelic life even now, shows that Eschaton was, is and will be always conceived as a reality that is not foreign to the present life, understood as’ already, but not yet. Therefore, all these dogmatic teachings come to emphasize and demonstrate the indissoluble connection with the Christians of the first centuries, the tradition of bi-millennium of the Church of the East, as it sees in its authentic sources they belong and its books of cult, this treasure trove of Orthodoxy preserved and transmitted to us from generation to generation, thus continuing the uninterrupted thread of historical and eschatological mission of managing them and keep them, that the Holy Church, through its faithful servants and all members of the same Body-Christ; this work of the Church sought to see the dawn of Christian dogmas, lights a unique perspective by highlighting them through texts with doctrinal content of orthodox religious books, which apostolic and patristic attached to Christian teaching, give breath to the kerygma Apostolic link with the practical aspect, the dynamic tradition of the Eastern Church; i.e. dogmatic teachings are supported and presented in poetic form by the text of our books of cult, the same length as the church itself which preserves and teaches them until the end of time.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 333-335.

Conclusions

After those 700 years that have elapsed since the free expression of Christian cult, Orthodox soul can be found in its ritual acts or forms, without which you cannot define Eastern Christianity. Orthodox Church cult includes all the essential elements of Christian cult of the first Christian centuries, the ritual having in the centre the Holy and Divine Liturgy. Masses preserved until today are the result of a long process of evolution and polishing, as chief hierarchs of the Church, such as St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom embroidered on their time liturgy, enriching the liturgical text with dogmatic content. Masses of these Saints Hierarchs called not because they are their authors, but because they are the ones who gave the final speech. Mass, as the cult, springs from the tradition of the Church. It is the work of the whole Church, the ecclesial fullness. And the task of Christianity today is to rediscover and relive fully the experts of the presence of the Spirit through cultic text so as to impose Orthodox cult for them and not to be imposed by external means.

For the vast majority of believers, religious life manifests and translates through participation and attendance forms of cult. For the Orthodox Christian orthodoxy means right faith or infant baptism in holy water in the font, then put on the head groom weddings in church, kneeling in epitrachelion for confession, received Holy Communion means holidays, Easter Light of the night, holy water from Epiphany, attending church services either Laude, sacraments, religious services or the Holy and Divine Liturgy, the seasons care for the dead etc. This explains the commitment of Christians to the Church, the hardest trials, persecutions, principalities, due to printing their souls cult acts, acts that make vibrate their whole being, which lists acts as God's creatures and creations; simple believer knows no dogmas and Christian philosophy, but faith, his identification with Christ, with the vast community of Christians gathered in communion – that is the Church, his active participation in the church life, obedience embodiments of hymnographic ritual books, chanting effective participation of church, turning into a man of deeds and attitudes of authentic life as willed by God since creation. Christian hymnography considered the spiritual bread of Orthodox religious

life, was dressed up in traditional melodies of the eight church voices, including moral and dogmatic teachings, written for the understanding of all believers.

In Orthodoxy, religious books constitute a full treasure, alive, present and eternal of Christian religious experience, the answer given by the believer of his word to God's call.

Coming from the former Byzantium, the Romanian culture is deeply connected, and hymnographic liturgical books bear the endorsement of the Church Fathers, as copies handwritten arrive in Romanian, following a trajectory quite difficult, since the days of church organization in Ungrovlahia, it is strictly necessary for carrying out the liturgical cult. Although Romanian countries remained for a long time under the influence of Slavic culture, Romania's Member founders, out of a superior instinct culture have knotted ties with Byzantium Slavic. After the historic moment in 1453 (fall of Constantinople), that brings unexpected mutations to Byzantine culture the centre of gravity moves north of the Danube, in the Romanian Countries whose princes assumed the role of protectors and followers of this spiritual heritage.

Christian cult developed around the Sacrifice of Christ Redeemer and is increasingly decorated with florid language of poetry and harmony of musical sounds. The life and power of these songs are dogmatic in their content, moral and mystical³⁶, as well as religious books which depict the embodiment's hymnographic systematic and understandable faithful teaching of Christ, Divine economy with the consciousness of man's salvation.

So the authentic Christian life is expressed by the liturgical tradition of the Church and the Church manifestation environment is represented by the eminently ecclesial community. Christological and community aspect of Christian cult, are based on the feelings of brotherhood and love that is amplified and reinforced by attending the same place of cult, by participating in the same jobs, the externalization of faith using the same forms of worship. This uniformity within a parish, not only lead to a religious unity of the community, but also to one identity, experience and

³⁶ Pr. Gheorghe Butnariu, *Jertfa Domnului în cărțile de ritual ale Bisericii*, in „Studii Teologice”, VII (1957), nr. 7-8, p. 561.

thinking of the believers, who feel bound together in sacred space not only ecclesial, but also in all circumstances of extra-cultic life. We must therefore believe and feel that the externalization of faith, its confession in acts of worship, we can always say: „*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* - outside the Church there is no salvation” (St. Cyprian of Carthage).