

## ANOTHER LOOK AT THE SOLID ICONOSTASIS IN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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### *Introduction*

It would not be an exaggeration to say that to date there are no conclusive studies on the development of the iconostasis in Russia. Indeed, this study does not claim to solve the problem. However, it does seek to offer questions, comments and some analysis on historical and theological data that might help further the discussion surrounding one of the most prominent features of Russian Orthodox liturgical art and architecture.

For the student of Russian history and culture, the appearance of the developed iconostasis in Russia marks an important development in church art and architecture. Though this study does not compare the development of the relatively low Byzantine iconostasis with its Slavic counterpart,<sup>1</sup> the first set of questions to be raised is why did such a prominent and at times overwhelming structure develop in Russia? Is it a cultural phenomenon brought about by the abundance of wood located in and around Moscow, Novgorod and Vladimir?<sup>2</sup> Did the high wooden iconostasis compensate for the lack of plastered and masonry walls in Russian churches?<sup>3</sup> Was it a "spontaneous" phenomenon?<sup>4</sup> Can the solid iconostasis be traced to Arthonite influences, including the *Diataxis* of Patriarch

1 On the development of the Byzantine iconostasis see *Thresholds of the Sacred*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington, DC: 2006).

2 See V. N. Lazarev, *The Russian Icon from its Origins to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. G.I. Vzodornov (Collegeville, MN, 1997).

3 Consideration is given to this idea by George P. Majeska, "Ikonoostas," a paper delivered at the Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies Symposium on "The Chancel Barrier," May 11, 2003.

4 Leonide Ouspensky, "The Problem of the Iconostasis," trans. A. E. Moorehuse, *SVTQ* 8/4 (1964): 186.

Philotheos of Constantinople?<sup>5</sup> Or was the development of the solid and multi-tiered iconostasis due to a combination of cultural and theological factors that led to an understanding of liturgical worship that parted from its Byzantine forerunner?

For the historian, the development of the Russian iconostasis could point to the shift of political and religious responsibility from Constantinople to Moscow. As the iconostasis began its vertical ascent in fifteenth-century Russia, Byzantium was in the last phases of political decline. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Byzantium's missionary responsibility to convert the world ended. Was the appearance of the multi-tiered Russian iconostasis a political/religious statement in which the community of saints gathered around the enthroned Savior reflected the "first fruits of [Christ's] universal reign" and which were now to be increased by the Grand Princes and Tsars of Moscow?<sup>6</sup> While these questions have been raised, the conclusions have not been altogether convincing.

Attention has already been drawn to hesychasm and its association with the development of the Russian iconostasis.<sup>7</sup> This study seeks to examine hesychasm from the perspective of an inner tension that created a polarity between unceasing prayer and the reception of the sacraments. On the surface, hesychasm, as it spread from Byzantium to the Balkans and finally into Russia, has often been perceived as a monolithic movement. Yet, like all spiritual movements it was not without its variations. In conjunction

5 Alexie Lidov, "The Iconostasis: The Current State of Research," *Ikonostas: Proiskhozhenie-razvitiie-simvolika / The Iconostasis: Origins-Evolution-Symbolism*, ed. A. Lidov (Moscow, 2000). Lidov proposes that the Diataxis of Philotheos was a channel by which hesychasm influenced the structure of the iconostasis to the extent that it became a "wall of icons concealing the sacrament and at the same time giving it a new mystical image," p 717. There is no mention of the solid iconostasis in the Diataxis. Cf. *AI TPEIS LEITOUFGIAI / The Three Liturgies*, ed. P. Trempelas, (Athens, 1935).

6 Nathalie Labrecque-Pervouchine, *L'Iconostase, Une Evolution Historique en Russie* (Montreal, 1982), 52.

7 See Maria Cheremeteff, "The Transformation of the Russian Sanctuary Barrier and the Role of Theophanes the Greek," in *The Millennium: Christianity and Russia 988-1988*, ed. Albert Leong, (New York, 1990), 107-40.

with these differences, questions raised in this study will focus on the conflict within the hesychast movement that may have played a role in the emergence of the solid and vertically-developed iconostasis.

What makes writing this study of the iconostasis particularly challenging is the difficulty in tracing its historical development due to the lack of both archeological and written sources. There are no treatises either of Byzantine or Russian vintage detailing the development of the iconostasis. Archeological evidence has been helpful, but it has not eliminated conjectures regarding the height and transparency of early partitions separating altar area and nave. Consequently, discussion of this topic can lead to waves of frustration. Yet, unless questions continue to be asked, and unless there is a willingness to search for and to interpret new sources or to re-examine familiar sources previously seen as unrelated to Russian religious art and architecture, the development of the iconostasis will remain an enigma leaving both the historian and liturgical theologian with a severe handicap for interpreting one of the most imposing features to impact Orthodox worship and, dare I say, local Orthodox culture and life.

### *Architecture and Worship*

To set the historical context for the emergence of the Russian iconostasis a brief review of Christian architecture and worship will be helpful.

The Christian edifice emerged out of its Jewish and pagan antecedents. The synagogue, particularly those influenced by Greek art together with the pagan basilica contributed to the creation and organization of space needed to properly accommodate the development of Christian worship.<sup>8</sup> In addition to Jewish and pagan influences, the house church and catacombs also contributed to the formation and use of liturgical space.<sup>9</sup>

Prior to the Constantinian era, architecture and liturgy had already been joined in an indissoluble bond. Space, movement

8 See Robert Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture* (Berkeley, CA, 1988), 9-56.

9 Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London, 1970), 16ff.

(including processions), the chanting and exposition of scripture, hymnody, liturgical symbols and iconography had from the earliest times created a liturgical symphony or liturgical synthesis<sup>10</sup> necessary to convey the message of the Gospel culminating with the celebration of the Lord's supper.

The earliest organization of Christian liturgical space can be traced back to the Roman house churches of the pagan empire. Given the extant archeological evidence, house churches were arranged in ways that accommodated the rites and functions of the local Christian community.<sup>11</sup> Delineated spaces for baptisms, catechetical instruction and the celebration of the Lord's Supper were the precursors to the division of space in what became the established Christian building made up of narthex, nave and sanctuary.<sup>12</sup>

The practical and therefore intentional division of liturgical space leading to the separation of the nave and sanctuary played a significant role in how liturgy and architecture were understood. If one carefully approaches the relationship between space and worship and if *lex orandi est lex credendi*, then architecture, including the chancel partition and its subsequent development into the solid iconostasis expresses a theology or theologies that are either

10 The concept of liturgy as the synthesis of art was used by Father Pavel Florensky in "La Liturgie comme synthèse des arts" in *La Perspective inverse, L'Iconostase et autres écrits sur l'art* (Lausanne, 1992), 54–62. Russian text in *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol 1, 41–56. Though Florensky writes his article in 1918, his insights into the relationship of worship and art should not be perceived as a modern contrivance or imposition on the thought of the past. This particular work of Florensky should be received as an attempt to articulate the inherent dynamic between art and worship.

11 See Bragio Pace, "Nuova ipotesi sull'origine dell'iconostasi" *Byzantion* 19 (1949): 198–201.

12 These three areas are what basically remain of the Christian building today. It should be stressed that by the sixth century the urban church complex consisted of more than one building including the church proper with attached sacristies and separate structures for baptisms. This complex of buildings also applies to the urban monasteries which, in addition to being centers of prayer and study were also centers for caring for the poor and infirm. See Vincenzo Ruggieri's *Byzantine Religious Architecture (582–867): Its History and Structural Elements*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* (Rome, 1991), esp 135–86.

consistent with or divergent from an orthodox understanding of prayer and sacramental life. This is not to imply that culture and politics had no influence in the process leading to the appearance of the solid iconostasis. Culture and politics, however, are components of a complex process that does not preclude the need to discern the role theology holds in the development of the iconostasis.<sup>13</sup> Though the need to include theology in the discussion may seem obvious, it is often overlooked. Furthermore, archeology, culture and politics joined to historical commentary are also linked to movements and symptoms that may be the result of theological and spiritual dispositions.

### *History, Eschatology, and Maximus the Confessor*

Though this study does not intend to provide a detailed analysis of the historical and eschatological dimensions of Byzantine worship, it is necessary to discuss how the interplay of time and eternity are revealed in the organization of liturgical space. One of the earliest texts of the New Testament which shows the interrelationship of history and eschatology in a liturgical context comes from St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (written ca 55). This letter, which contains some of the earliest references to a local celebration of the Lord's Supper, ends with the liturgical exclamation *Marana Tha* ("Come Lord," 16:22). Linguistic analysis of this Aramaic term shows that within the context of the Lord's Supper there is the strong sense that Christ's coming again is both an event to be anticipated as well as a present reality. This concept of inaugurated eschatology is also expressed in the Gospel of St Luke, where the disciples know the resurrected Lord in the (liturgical) breaking of bread (24:35). The Apocalypse of St John (22:20) also preserves the grammatical imperative of *Marana Tha* in its Greek form (*Erchou Kyrie Iesou!*).<sup>14</sup>

13 See for example Nicholas P. Constatas, "Symeon of Thessalonike and the Theology of the Icon Screen," (note 1), 163-83.

14 Related and diverging opinions on *Marana Tha* can be gleaned from Hans Conzelmann, *I Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, tr. James

The vision of history and eschatology in Christian worship provides a useful lens through which to examine the development of the iconostasis in Russia. The Lord who is to come again and is already present in the breaking of the eucharistic bread is a fundamental feature of Christian worship and the Christian *kerygma*. In the context of worship all things are being made new (cf Rev 21:1ff). Given this liturgical and biblical affirmation, the question as to whether or not the iconostasis in Russia might have obscured the relationship between history and eschatology needs to be raised. In other words, does the iconostasis as a solid partition enhance the understanding and experience of the interpenetration of time and eternity, or does it convey another liturgical vision which divides and even polarizes matter and spirit, man and God, mind and body, earth and heaven, male and female, prayer and sacraments?

Saint Maximus the Confessor (580–662), in his *Mystagogy*,<sup>15</sup> offers one of the most stimulating theological expositions on Christian worship and liturgical space. More than the other well-known liturgical commentators coming from Byzantium,<sup>16</sup> Maximus stresses to his audience the inseparable relationship of history and eschatology and how it is expressed in liturgical space.

At this point the historian may rightly question the use of the *Mystagogy* of Maximus in a study of the Russian iconostasis, since there appears to be no evidence that the *Mystagogy* was even known in fifteenth-century Russia. Two responses can be given to the astute historian. The first has already been made: i.e., Maximus speaks about liturgical space in relationship to history and eschatology. Secondly, if we can trust the *spirit* of the account of Russia's

W. Leitch (Philadelphia, 1981), 300–301. See also G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St John the Divine* (New York 1996), 288.

15 *The Mystagogy of St Maximus the Confessor*, tr. George C. Berthold, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, 1985).

16 See St Dionysius the Areopagite (5th c), *Ecclesiastical Hierarchies*; St Germanus of Constantinople (8th c), *Ecclesiastical History and Mystical Contemplation*; St Nicholas Cabasilas (14th c), *On the Divine Liturgy*, and St Symeon of Thessalonika (15th c), *On the Divine Liturgy* and *On the Holy Temple*.

conversion to Orthodox Christianity as described in the *Primary Chronicle*, it appears that more than any other conduit, Byzantine worship ultimately influenced the culture that would ensue from Vladimir's conversion.<sup>17</sup> Maximus is important because he articulates for the contemporary reader a vision of liturgical worship—a vision of the historical and eschatological—that was simply and eloquently expressed by those perceptive emissaries who most likely stood in the nave of the Great Church of Hagia Sophia during the celebration of the divine liturgy: “We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth.”<sup>18</sup>

For Maximus, liturgical space and choreography or liturgical movement show how time and eternity interpenetrate. Here the importance of open and delineated space cannot be overlooked, since it is the organization of space which enables liturgical movement to express the ascent of the material world into the world to come.<sup>19</sup> Space and its accompanying liturgy *re-present* the dimensions of history and eschatology which, while being distinct, are one and inseparable.

The *Mystagogy* describes the church building as an expression of diversity in unity and unity in diversity. As a Constantinopolitan, Maximus knew Justinian's Great Church and the older churches that utilized space to reveal rather than conceal the age to come. One can sense Maximus turning to the Council of Chalcedon and its defense of the divine and human natures of Christ being united in one person yet “without confusion, without change, without

17 See *The Russian Primary Chronicle, Laurentian Text*, trans and eds Samuel H. Cross and Olgerd P. Shervowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, MA, 1953), 110–11.

18 *Ibid.*, 111

19 “Thus the holy Church [building]... is the figure and image of God inasmuch as through it he effects in his infinite power and wisdom an unconfused unity from the various essences of beings, attaching them to himself as a creator at their highest point, and this operates according to the grace of faith for the faithful, joining them all to each other in one form according to a single grace and calling of faith, the active virtuous ones in a single identity of will the contemplative and Gnostic ones in an unbroken and undivided concord as well. It is a figure of both the spiritual and sensible world, with the sanctuary as symbol of the intelligible world and the nave as symbol of the world of sense.” (*Mystagogy* 24, 208)

division and without separation.” This basic definition of Chalcedon, together with the council’s incorporation of the Tome of Pope Leo, which maintained the uniqueness and interpenetration (*perichoresis*) of each nature, is an important key to understanding the *Mystagogy*.<sup>20</sup> It allowed St Maximus to speak about the uniqueness of altar and nave as well as their mutual interpenetration or exchanging of properties. Unity and diversity co-exist in the context of the renewed and transfigured cosmos. Maximus stresses this reality by stating that the church

... while ... one house in its construction...admits of a certain diversity in the disposition of its plan by being divided into an area exclusively assigned to priests and ministers, which we call a sanctuary, and one accessible to all the faithful, which we call a nave. Still, it is one in its basic reality without being divided into its parts by reason of the differences between them, but rather by<sup>21</sup> their relationship to the unity it frees these parts from the difference arising from their names. It shows to each other in turn what each one is for itself. Thus, the nave is the sanctuary in potency by being consecrated by the relationship of the sacrament [i.e., *mystagogia*] toward its end, and in turn the sanctuary is the nave in act by possessing the principle of its own sacrament, which remains one and the same in its two parts.<sup>22</sup>

Quoting the anonymous elder to whom he is writing, Maximus refers to the church building as both imprint (*typos*) and image (*eikon*) of God.<sup>23</sup> Thus, entering the church (ch 9), the reading of the Gospel, the kiss of peace and the dismissal of the catechumens with the closing of the doors separating the nave from the narthex (chs 13–15) are all joined to what Maximus refers to elsewhere as the “new mystery” (*to kainon mysterion*) which is the celebration of

20 Cf. Tamara Grdzeldze, “Liturgical Space in the Writings of Maximus the Confessor,” *Studia Patristica* XXXVII (ed. Peeters, 2001): 499–504.

21 See Berthold, 217 n.33.

22 *Mystagogy*, ch 2.

23 *Mystagogy*, ch 1. See also Irénée Henri Dalmais, “Mystère liturgique et divinisation



the eucharist.<sup>24</sup> It is the celebration of the eucharist which actualizes in time and space the economy of salvation. This historical actualization fulfilled in the “new mystery” constitutes for Maximus the re-ordering and deification of the cosmos.

The transfiguration, and therefore the sacredness of all creation, culminates in the distribution and reception of the eucharist. In the context of this mystery the communicant becomes one with the divine without mixture or confusion. By extension the unity between God and humanity includes history and eschatology.

The confession which is made by all the people at the end of the sacred celebration (*mystike ierougia*) ‘One is holy’ and what follows, manifests the reassembling and union which being beyond reason and intelligence will come about in the mysterious unity of the divine simplicity of those who were led by God to perfection by a mysterious wisdom... [After this confession] comes the communion of the mystery [i.e., the eucharist] which transforms by grace and participation those who will be judged worthy of taking part to appear similar to the original.... The participants become God by grace. Nothing will remain empty of his presence.<sup>25</sup>

### *The Templon*

The significance of the *Mystagogy* lies in its attempt to describe the relationship of architecture and liturgy in light of history and eschatology. It is this relationship that facilitates the contemplative and physical ascent of the faithful into the mystery of the Lord’s Supper which, from earliest times, was an historical and eschatological event. An integral feature of liturgical architecture which aids this ascent was the templon. This structure separating as well as joining sanctuary and nave, generated a liturgical dynamism which drew the attention of both clergy and laity to the altar table.

The templon existed before the appearance of the solid

<sup>24</sup> Dalmais, *ibid.*, 56, who is quoting from *Quaest. Ad. Thal.* 42, 63–64.

<sup>25</sup> *Mystagogy*, ch 21, quoted by Dalmais, “Place de la Mystagogie de Saint Maxime le Confesseur dans la théologie liturgique byzantine,” *Studia Patristica*, vol. V, n.3, (Texte und Untersuchungen 80) (Berlin, 1962), 287.

iconostasis and the long and complex reorganization of liturgical space. Along with the ambo prominently displayed in the center of the nave, the templon helped to maintain the dynamism between history and eschatology. Thus, from the ambo, the word of God announced the incarnation as both fulfillment and turning point in history. Receiving this "good news" was a *sine qua non* for the liturgical participation in the banquet of the world to come.

The templon with interspersed columns capped with an architrave is both frame and base for what became the solid iconostasis. It served as the frame for the lower Byzantine-type iconostasis, in which icons eventually fill the open spaces between columns, including the side entry ways. The templon also becomes the foundation for what develops into the multi-tiered Russian-type barrier. By examining the templon, we can begin to establish three stages in the development of Byzantine worship that will point to the emergence of the solid Russian iconostasis.

The first stage begins with the templon itself. Its origin can be traced to the waist high partition that helped to "set off" and protect the emperor and his retinue from the surrounding crowds. Excellent examples of the imperial templon can be seen in the *bas relief* on the base of the obelisk of Theodosius in the hippodrome in Istanbul.<sup>26</sup> This protective structure was eventually incorporated into the partition that would occupy a prominent place in the churches of Constantinople, including Justinian's Hagia Sophia.<sup>27</sup>

Two examples pre-dating Justinian's Great Church are the churches

26 See Maria Cheremeteff, "The Transformation of the Russian Sanctuary Barrier and the Role of Theophanes the Greek," *The Millennium: Christianity and Russia 988-1988* (New York, 1990), 108.

27 See Robert F. Taft, SJ, "The Decline of Communion in Byzantium and the Distancing of the Congregation from the Liturgical Action: Cause, Effect, or Neither?" (see note 1) 27-50. Recalling an unpublished lecture by Cyril Mango, Taft stresses the practical purpose of the templon in Byzantine liturgical worship: "Rather than hiding the ritual, the templon merely controlled the audience in the 'catholic churches'... So the chancel barrier originates from the concern for decorum and security in late antiquity, when church congregations were sometimes little better than an unruly mob" (38).

of St John the Baptist, often referred to as Studios,<sup>28</sup> and the church of the Mother of God in Chalkoprateia. The latter became renowned for keeping the *zonē* or cincture of the Virgin. By the 9th century, all Marian liturgical celebrations either began or ended at the Chalkoprateia. Both churches date back to the 5th century but, without question, Studios is the older and better preserved.<sup>29</sup> From 1907–09, the Russian Archaeological Institute did a survey of Studios. The expedition is responsible for uncovering the marble pavement and the excavation of a cruciform crypt under the altar. The crypt probably held the relics of the monastery. Thanks to the work of archaeologists and architects, the existing fragments of the sanctuary have provided us with the earliest sanctuary plan in Constantinople. This means that prior to the building of Justinian's Hagia Sophia the  $\pi$ -shaped altar partition was in use in what became one of the great monastic centers of Eastern Christendom.

At the dedication of Justinian's greatest basilica, Hagia Sophia, Paul Silentiarius (6th c) describes the chancel partition as a structure of twelve interspersed columns joined by an architrave on top with connecting templons on the bottom. Silentiarius is our primary source for knowing what the arrangement of space and liturgy was like in Justinian's Hagia Sophia. With his *Ekphrasis*, a poem of some 1,027 lines written in iambic hexameter<sup>30</sup> we are aided in allowing our imaginations to enter the sacred space of Hagia Sophia:

...there is a separate space for the bloodless sacrifice, not of ivory or portions of cut stones or appointed copper, but this

28 Studios was a senator who had the church of St John built ca 463. By the 9th century the Studite monastery, under the guidance of abbot St Theodore, became a major center of monastic and liturgical reform. Cf. Robert F. Taft, SJ, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History* (Collegeville, 1992), 52–56.

29 For an introduction to the architecture of these two churches, see Thomas F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople, Architecture and Liturgy* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), 11–41.

30 See Ruth Macrides and Paul Magdalino, "The Architecture of Ekphrasis: Construction and Contest of Paul the Silentiary's Poem on Hagia Sophia," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 12 (1988): 47–82.

space is entirely surrounded by quarried silver and in this space covered by silver are the initiates distinguished from the harmonious voices of the crowd.

Naked silver is also cast upon the floor, and the pillars also are entirely of silver, twice six these pillars are ablaze giving light to those afar.<sup>31</sup>

In his *Ecclesiastical History and Mystical Contemplation*, St Germanus of Constantinople (†733) speaks of railings (*kagella*) which separated the altar area from nave.<sup>32</sup> No mention of height is given to these partitions, but the term *railings* points to a series of low (perhaps waist high) structures connecting interspersed columns at the bottom. This reference complements the description of Silentarius, the depiction on the hippodrome obelisk and the reconstructed partition of Studios. The prominence of Hagia Sophia influenced the arrangement of liturgical space in and outside Constantinople, even though it cannot be assumed that the templon design of this basilica was universally adopted in the Byzantine Empire.

Though Hagia Sophia and churches similar in scale and spatial arrangement possessed a three-sided  $\pi$ -shaped partition extending from the apse with appropriate entry ways in the west, north and south sides, not all chancel partitions maintained this three-sided configuration.<sup>33</sup> But whether the partition was three-sided or a simple, one-sided horizontal structure, connecting opposite sides of the apse, transparency remained a consistent feature. Thus, by the middle Byzantine period (8–13 c) the first stage of

31 *Descriptio ecclesiae Sanctae Sophiae et Ambonis*, lines 682–715 and 871–83. Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1972), 80–96; Rowland Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia: Architecture, Structure and Liturgy of Justinian's Great Church* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), 219; Mathews, op. cit., 169; George Majeska, "Notes on the Archeology of St Sophia at Constantinople: The Green Marble Bands on the Floor," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 32 (1978): 299–308. Still useful is Stephen G. Xydis, "The Chancel Barrier, Solea, and Ambo of Hagia Sophia," *The Art Bulletin* 29/1 (1947): 1–24.

32 See Greek text in Paul Meyendorff's translation (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1984), 62. Unfortunately, Prof Meyendorff translates *kagella* as barriers.

33 For example the monolithic churches of Cappadocia.

development had reached a certain level of consistency. Despite the paucity of evidence, A.W. Epstein suggests that the Constantinopolitan templon of this period could be conceived as "a colonnade closed at the bottom by ornamental parapet slabs and supporting an epistyle decorated with a figural programme, which often included a central Deesis."<sup>34</sup>

Although Justinian's Hagia Sophia did not provide the blueprint for subsequent ground plans of all Byzantine churches, S. G. Xydis does stress that the influence of the Great Church should not be minimized. Those areas of the empire that remained faithful to the Council of Chalcedon, and by extension to Justinian, had churches that followed the basic plan of Hagia Sophia including its altar partition. This can be seen in the churches of Asia Minor, the Crimea and Bulgaria.<sup>35</sup>

The second stage leading to the solid iconostasis is characterized by the liturgical activity within the altar area. The dating of this stage is difficult to determine since there seems to be some overlapping with the middle-Byzantine period. During this period there are significant developments in the use of liturgical space. With the renaissance of iconography beginning in the ninth century and the ever-increasing influence of the monks of Studios in Constantinople and St Sabbas in Palestine, liturgical worship and piety begin a new phase. At this time, the apse becomes the place where the concentration of liturgical movement and appointments is found. The sacristy or *skeuophylakion*, having had its own separate space, begins to disappear. The table of oblation, where the bread and wine to be consecrated at the liturgy are prepared, is now found in the apse. With the concentration of liturgical activity becoming increasingly confined to the altar or sanctuary area, the royal doors, which opened into the nave, eventually become located in the

34 "The Middle Byzantine Sanctuary Barrier; Templon or Iconostasis?," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, vol. CXXXIV (London, 1981): 15-16. See also p. 6 with descriptions of partitions by Theophanes Continuatus and Michael Attaliates.

35 See Xydis, op. cit., 18.

central opening of the chancel partition. At this time, the episcopal throne and *synthronon* disappear from the back of the apse and the ambo disappears from the center of the nave.<sup>36</sup>

These changes, along with the immediate aftermath of post-iconoclastic Byzantium, should not be associated with the solid iconostasis. The victory of the icon is to be discounted as a primary contributing factor since transparent partitions separating altar from nave continued to be an important feature of liturgical architecture after the ninth century. The same caution must be applied when trying to connect the practice of infrequent reception of the eucharist with the solid barrier. Even if one were to factor in Thomas Mathews' observation that by the time of the Council in Trullo (692) infrequent communion was the rule,<sup>37</sup> the chancel partition, as an established structure, nevertheless remained transparent. However, the work of S. Gerstel shows that by the 11th century the curtain begins to make its way as a fixture of the chancel partition. The purpose of the curtain was to separate and obscure what was being done by the clergy during certain parts of the liturgy from the eyes of the faithful. A letter of a certain Niketas, an official of Hagia Sophia, to Niketas Stethatos, abbot of Studios, discusses the use of the curtain presumably in and around Constantinople:

In other places I have seen with my own eyes even a curtain hung around the holy bema at the time of the mysteries. It is spread and conceals, so that not even the priests themselves are seen by those outside. This is what the Lord Eustathios (1019–1025), most blessed among the patriarchs, did.<sup>38</sup>

How pervasive was the use of the curtain in Byzantine churches

36 See Robert F. Taft, SJ, *The Byzantine Rite* (Collegetown, MN, 1992), for a well outlined history of these liturgical changes.

37 *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, 173.

38 Niketas Stethatos, *Opuscles et lettres*, ed. Jean Darrouzes (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1961), 232–34, quoted by Sharon Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary* (Seattle and London, 1999), 8. Unlike scholars such as A.W. Epstein, op. cit., who date the solid iconostasis after the 12th century, Gerstel suggests that the solid altar partition begins to appear in Byzantium at this time.

is hard to determine. Nor can it be determined if the use of the curtain remained a permanent feature of worship in a particular church structure. Nevertheless, changes to the altar partition were beginning to appear.

While the templon during this second stage continued to be transparent, a new feature of the chancel partition begins to make its appearance. In the twelfth-century Pantocrator Monastery in Constantinople, a range of images was fixed to the *top* of the architrave.<sup>39</sup> How widespread this development was is difficult to determine. Was it common in churches of major metropolitan centers? Did it find its way to the churches of the provinces?

During this second stage, iconography corresponding to the evolving festal cycle of the Orthodox Church also begins to appear. Based on Epstein's research the Pantocrator templon displayed scenes from the life of Christ, including Palm Sunday, the Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost.<sup>40</sup> The earliest mention of a (possible) festal icon being made available for veneration in liturgical celebration comes from the *typikon* of the Monastery of Keharitomenis in Constantinople founded by Irene, wife of Alexis Comnenus (†1118).<sup>41</sup> There is also the *menologion* of Basil II (†1025), which contains the codification of the liturgical calendar including the festal icons and their respective celebrations.<sup>42</sup> In addition to scenes from the life of Christ, there were other chancel partitions of this second stage of development that displayed the deesis icons. From the *diataxis* of the Monastery of Christ the All

39 The Pantocrator Monastery was founded by Empress Irene (1118–24) and completed by her husband, John II, after her death. See Epstein, 2–10.

40 Epstein believes that these and other icons from the Pantocrator now make up the "uppermost enamel plaques of the Pala d'Oro of San Marco in Venice," *op. cit.*, 5.

41 It should be stressed that other than reference being made to the icon of the Mother of God which was accessible for veneration during the feast of Dormition there is no mention of venerating icons corresponding to the other feasts. However, since the Dormition is the first and most detailed of the feasts listed in the *Typikon*, one can surmise that it is the model for the others. Cf John Thomas and Angela Hero, eds, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, 5 vols (Washington, DC, 2000), vol 2, 696–97.

42 See Nathalie Labrecque-Pervouchine, 39.

Merciful (*Paniktirmos*, ca 1078), it is known that the “templon has in the middle of the Deesis and (on either side?) the narrative of the honorable and holy Forerunner.”<sup>43</sup> At the Russian monastery of St Panteleimon on Mt Athos an inventory list dating ca 1142 refers to ninety icons,<sup>44</sup> including a deesis and twelve festal icons. By the fifteenth century, the deesis and the festal icons will become fixed tiers of the solid iconostasis in Russia.

The fifteenth century marks the beginning of the third stage of development for the iconostasis. This is the stage in which the most dramatic changes leading to the solid and vertically developed iconostasis in Russia occur. This is also the most difficult stage to outline.

Coinciding with the metamorphosis of the transparent chancel barrier into a multi-tiered solid structure is the hesychast controversy of the fourteenth century in Constantinople. The remaining sections of this study will suggest that the development of the Russian iconostasis might be linked to the clash that occurs within hesychasm, i.e., the sectarian dualists who upheld unceasing prayer while rejecting or minimizing the sacraments and those who sought to maintain a balance between prayer and sacramental participation.

### *Hesychasm and Sectarian Dualism*

By the time of the Palamite controversy in fourteenth-century Constantinople, hesychasts—those practicing silent prayer or prayer of the heart—were being accused by their opponents, specifically Barlaam of Calabria, of practicing a form of Messalianism.<sup>45</sup> Generally speaking the Messalians stressed continuous prayer over participation in the Church's sacramental life. Though Palamas had contacts with Messalian monks, he strongly stressed

43 Epstein, 6.

44 Labrecque-Pervouchine, 39.

45 The best study on St Gregory Palamas and the hesychast controversies is Fr John Meyendorff's *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris, 1959). For a history of the Jesus Prayer, see Irenée Hausherr, *The Name of Jesus*, tr. Charles Cummings (Cistercian Publications, 1978).



the importance of sacraments to his flock in Thessalonika.<sup>46</sup> In addition to his sermons, the *Tomos Hagioriticus*—a kind of hesychast manifesto also composed by Palamas in defense of the monks on Mt Athos—distanced itself from Messalianism by condemning it.<sup>47</sup>

Here it is possible to suggest that consideration be given to the idea that movements within (and without) mainstream hesychasm may have helped to create the spiritual and therefore theological climate for the development of the solid multi-tiered iconostasis. The roots of some of these movements extend as far back as the fourth century and the emergence of the monastic movement. Usually, when these movements are categorized they fall under the heading of *dualism*. But, as Father John Meyendorff has rightly stressed, there is a “vagueness” that accompanies the term.<sup>48</sup>

Often *dualism* has been associated with the incompatibility of matter and spirit. While this was the case in some movements, including Messalianism, there is also a broader usage which helps to serve our purposes. While dualistic movements varied in practice and manifestation, they shared a common trait: the emphasis on continuous prayer over sacramental life. This certainly was the case with Messalianism (cf the next section), and hence its association with hesychasm by those who perceived the prayer of the heart as dualistic and sectarian. Characterized by ascetical effort and unceasing prayer, sectarian dualism sought to supplant liturgical worship and sacramental life. By the time of Palamas, *dualism* had developed into a movement that stressed the polarization of prayer and sacraments more than that of matter and spirit. Given this emphasis, sectarian dualism may provide an important theological perspective from which to see how the iconostasis in its completed

46 See e.g., *Homilies* 8,15,20 trans by Veniamin, *The Homilies of St Gregory Palamas*, vol 1 (St Tikhon's Press, 2002). Also homily 56, ed Oikonomos (Athens, 1863), trans Jerome Cher, *Grégoire Palamas: Homélie* (Paris, 1987). A separate study is needed to compare and contrast Palamas' teachings on unceasing prayer and sacramental life vis á vis his monastic and parochial audiences.

47 *Patrologia Graeca, Sources Complètes*, vol CL, col 1229Aff.

48 “St Basil, Messalianism and Byzantine Christianity,” *SVTQ* 24 (1980): 227.

form obscured not only the relationship between prayer and sacraments but also the relationship of history and eschatology. All this, of course, is contingent on whether it can be shown that sectarian dualism existed in fifteenth-century Russia.

It was Dmitri Obolensky who has shown that Messalianism or sectarian dualism spread from Byzantium to the Balkans.<sup>49</sup> Did it also spread to Russia? Unfortunately there are not many written sources to guide us. But Obolensky does offer some "scattered hints" which may support the idea that "individual Bogomils," the Balkan counterpart to Byzantine Messalians, "may have proselytized in Russia between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries."<sup>50</sup> Even if sectarian proselytizing was unorganized and intermittent, four hundred years seem to be enough time to create local movements that could generate enough energy to form a liturgical and social ethos that would clash with the balanced spirituality of Palamite hesychasm.

The dualism coming into the Balkans and Russia sought to reform both culture and Orthodox Christianity. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Strigolniki and Judaizers made inroads into northwestern Russia. The Strigolniki stressed moral purity and ascetic rigorism. They refused to recognize the established church hierarchy and rejected the sacraments.<sup>51</sup> How widespread the Strigolniki movement was cannot be accurately ascertained. But that it had become a movement of considerable influence is known by its penetration into Moscow and its subsequent condemnation by the Russian Council of 1490. In addition to the Strigolniki, Judaizers were also numbered among the Novgorodian heretics. In a letter dated 25 February 1489 to Ioasaph, Archbishop of Rostov and Yaroslavl, Gennadii, Archbishop of Novgorod, identifies the Judaizers with the Messalians.

49 *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge, 1948; reprinted by AMS, 1978). Also his *Byzantine Commonwealth* (New York/Washington, 1971), 121.

50 *The Bogomils*, 277.

51 Speransky, *Istoriia drevnei russkoi literatury*, 3rd ed (Moscow, 1921), vol. II, 51-53. Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, 279.

Joseph of Volokolamsk (†1515) also listed the Judaizers as Messalians.<sup>52</sup>

Moving south to Moscow from Novgorod, sectarian dualism had a local social appeal. According to Obolensky, dualism infused Slavic society with a renewed thirst for “personal righteousness, a desire for social justice, and pity for innocent suffering.”<sup>53</sup> Given the social appeal of these sects coupled with their rejection of the sacraments, is it possible that they could have had an impact on Orthodox worship including the use of liturgical space?

Strictly speaking, these sectarian dualist movements cannot be directly traced to hesychasm. However one should not be too hasty in assuming that there is an unbridgeable chasm between Russian dualism and those who practiced *hesychia*. The fact that St Gregory Palamas had to defend the hesychasts from being accused of Messalianism might also suggest there was some truth to the accusations. Given the theological refinement of Palamas and his articulation of the distinction between the divine essence and energies, it is not unlikely that some of those practicing hesychasm were unable to keep abreast of his teachings and polemics. Consequently, the historian and theologian can venture to assume that the official hesychasm of the Orthodox Church as it was defended by Palamas may not have been universally accepted by the hesychasts themselves. This would also imply that, as with any spiritual or theological movement, the spread of hesychasm also included its aberrations, particularly those disregarding the place of sacraments in Christian life. A re-examination of Palamas’ writings may show that a battle with two fronts was being waged as to the practice of hesychasm. On one front, Palamas sought to demonstrate that the opponents of hesychasm were not only arguing against an established practice of Orthodox spirituality but were also opposing Orthodoxy itself. On the other front, Palamas sought to articulate, especially in his sermons, the importance of sacramental life and to correct the extremes of sectarian dualism.

<sup>52</sup> Obolensky, *ibid.*, 280.

<sup>53</sup> *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, 121.

*Hesychasm and the Russian Iconostasis*

In order to appreciate hesychasm as a spiritual movement that played a role in the formation of culture—both Byzantine and Slavic—it must first be liberated from the confines of the monastic cloister. Indeed, hesychasm was a movement that originated among the monks. But by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it had become associated with and even considered as a driving force behind the Palaeologan renaissance. This burst of spiritual and artistic creativity breached the walls of the monastery and extended itself into the Balkans and Russia.

Seen from this broader perspective, hesychasm permeated Byzantine and Slavic culture to the extent that it helped to create the basis for what can be termed Orthodox Christian humanism. Unlike the humanism of the West, the Christian humanism of the East focused on the transfiguration or deification of the person made possible by participation in the uncreated light of God. The transfiguration of Christ before his disciples described in the synoptic Gospels became, for the hesychasts, the biblical affirmation par excellence of human participation in the life of God.<sup>54</sup>

With and apart from its dualistic tendencies, hesychasm in fourteenth-century Russia was to become a driving force behind a developing spirituality. This meant that, as in Byzantium, hesychasm in Russia was becoming a cultural phenomenon with spiritual/theological, artistic, and political dimensions. This is clearly seen in the aftermath of the Palamite controversy. From 1350 to the beginning of the fifteenth century, six of the seven patriarchs of Constantinople were hesychasts.<sup>55</sup> Though the political waning of the Byzantine Empire was already in full swing, the patriarchs of Constantinople still wielded, on behalf of the emperor, political influence that helped to hold the commonwealth together.

<sup>54</sup> See Mark 9:2 and parallels.

<sup>55</sup> Callistos I (1350–1354/1355–1363); Philotheos Kokkinos (1354–1355/1368–1376); Macarios, a non-hesychast (1376–1379/1390–1391); Neilos (1379–1388); Antonios (1389–1390/1391–1397); Callistos Xanthopoulos (1397); Matthew I (1397–1410).

Orthodox Christianity, including hesychasm, was a political adhesive that helped to maintain Byzantine hegemony over Russia in the fourteenth century. This also helped hesychasm make its way into Russia.

The relationship between Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos of Constantinople—a friend, disciple, and biographer of Palamas—and Cyprian of Kiev and Moscow personify the political and ecclesiastical bonds forged between Byzantium and Russia. By the time Cyprian became Metropolitan of Kiev and Moscow (1390–1406), maintaining unity with Constantinople was a primary concern given the political and ecclesiastical climate that had previously threatened to draw Kiev and Moscow into the sphere of Lithuania. Given this tension between Constantinople, Lithuania and the Metropolitanate of Kiev and Moscow, political and ecclesiastical stability was the concern of the day.

As a sign of his political and ecclesiastical fidelity to Constantinople, Metropolitan Cyprian sought to introduce Russia to the expanded *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*. Read on the first Sunday of Great Lent, it affirms the teachings of Orthodoxy while listing and anathematizing its opponents. Originally the *Synodikon* marked the final defeat of iconoclasm in Constantinople in 843.

Coinciding with the first Sunday of Great Lent, the celebration of Orthodoxy's triumph over the iconoclasts was both a political and ecclesiastical event. By seeking to use the expanded *Synodikon* of Constantinople, Cyprian's fidelity to New Rome sought not only to maintain the political bond between Byzantium and Russia, but to also ensure theological continuity with the mother Church. This unity and continuity of faith included the acceptance and defense of hesychasm, since the expanded version of the *Synodikon* upheld the teachings of Palamas and condemned his opponents. Hence, rather than being an exercise associated with the mental and bodily techniques practiced in the monastic cell, hesychasm, as it was taught and defended by Palamas, was a fundamental component of Orthodoxy to be embraced, at least theoretically, by all the faithful.

For Cyprian, the *Synodikon* was a standard of theological and political solidarity with Byzantium. Writing to the clergy of Pskov in 1395, Cyprian states with some irritation the need to adhere to the Orthodoxy of Constantinople: "I sent you the correct text of the *Synodikon* of Constantinople, which we also follow here [in Moscow] in commemorating [the Orthodox] and cursing the heretics! You should also conform yourself to it."<sup>56</sup> Was Cyprian's letter due to a political or theological breaking of ranks on the part of the Pskov clergy? In any case, we are given the impression that Russian conformity to Byzantine Orthodoxy was not universally established. This in turn would make possible the existence and development of a type of hesychasm that deviated from Palamas and orthodoxy in general.

Since the *Synodikon* was perceived by Cyprian as a means to secure a stronger theological and political bond between Constantinople and Moscow/Kiev, is it possible that he was using the updated *Synodikon* to address the problem of sectarian dualists? The question is raised for two reasons. First, given the various strata and recensions of the *Synodikon* added over the course of three dynasties,<sup>57</sup> sectarian dualism appears as a recurring heresy. What had been condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431 continued to exist and spread. And second, as the *Synodikon* maintains, dualists—in particular Messalians and Bogomils—are associated with the detractors of hesychasm and Gregory Palamas. Among the six anathemas hurled at the opponents of hesychasm, the Messalians are among the company of Barlaam and Akindynos who maintain that the divine essence is visible.<sup>58</sup> This accusation lends itself to the idea that because the divine essence is visible, it too is able to be apprehended intellectually and physically.<sup>59</sup> Because the divine essence was considered by the detractors of

56 *Russkaia Istoricheskaia Biblioteka*, VI (St Petersburg, 1880), col 241, trans John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (Cambridge, 1981), 260, n.119.

57 Macedonian (867–1056); Comnenan (1081–1185) and Palaeologan (1259–1453).

58 *Le Synodikon de L'Orthodoxie*, critical ed. Jean Gouillard, in *Travaux et mémoires* (Paris, 1967), lines 579–80, p. 81.

59 Gouillard, 240, n.10.

hesychasm to be knowable, and since it was their goal to apprehend the essence of God, one is given the impression that by the fourteenth century the core of dualism no longer adhered to the strict ontological polarity of matter and spirit, created and uncreated.<sup>60</sup> Is the *Synodikon*, in its defense of hesychasm and Palamas, referring to some other polarity?

According to the manuscript tradition of the *Synodikon*, sometime between the tenth and eleventh centuries, sectarian dualists are implicitly tied to a clandestine movement. Converts, including clergy, from Orthodoxy to sectarian dualism were more or less able to remain undercover, since they feigned membership in the official Church. According to the *Synodikon*, this meant that these converts continued to participate "in a hypocritical way" in the Church's sacramental life. Thus, they would not accept the eucharist as the "precious body and blood of the Savior" but as "mere bread and wine."<sup>61</sup>

Given the tenacity of sectarian dualism to survive and spread, can we detect in Cyprian's desire to have the Russian Church follow the updated *Synodikon* of Constantinople a need to confront dualism on his own turf? As a clandestine movement with no visible parallel institution, sectarian dualism would ironically find its breeding ground in the Orthodox Church. By the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries, can we find in Russia a type of sectarian dualism that was in a new stage of development where the core belief stressed the polarity between prayer and the sacraments?

All this brings us to two iconographers, Saints Theophan the Greek and Andrew Rublev. Their iconography has often been associated with the early stages of the Russian iconostasis. But before their work can be placed within the conflict between balanced and

60 The polarization of matter and spirit/created and uncreated have Gnostic antecedents to which Messalianism was attached. See, Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (New York, 1961), 5-25.

61 Line 367ff, p. 69. See also *Codex Bucaristiensis slav. 307*, fol 15v-16, which issues anathemas against the fourteenth-century Bogomils on Mt Athos. Gouillard, 237 and Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 55-57.

dualistic hesychasm, the question to be raised now is whether they were hesychasts themselves, and if not, were they influenced by the hesychast movement?

It has already been stressed that Byzantine hesychasm was a movement that went beyond the confines of the monastery. In the case of Theophan, even if he wasn't trained as a hesychast monk, one cannot easily dismiss the fact that he was aware of the hesychast controversy in Constantinople and that he also knew and studied the iconography of the Paleologan renaissance that filled the churches of the Byzantine capital and neighboring areas. The words of Father John Meyendorff concisely outline the career and contributions of Theophan.

... by far the most famous Byzantine master working in Russian is undoubtedly Theophanes 'the Greek.' His career is known to us from the chronicles, but also, quite interestingly, from a letter written around 1415 by Epiphanius the Wise, author of the *Lives* of St Sergius and St Stephen of Perm, to the abbot Cyril of Tver. Having first worked in Constantinople, Chalcedon, Galata and Caffa, Theophanes came to Novgorod and decorated, in 1378, the Church of the Transfiguration, and other monuments. He also worked in Nizhni-Novgorod and, finally, in Moscow, particularly in the Church of the Annunciation and the Archangel Michael in the Kremlin.<sup>62</sup>

The vibrant colors used by Theophan and his ability to depict the inner movement of the human person towards God point to his personal genius as an iconographer and his familiarity with hesychasm.

Little is known about Rublev. Nevertheless his relationship with Theophan and with the Russian monasticism influenced by St Sergius of Radonezh (†1394) no doubt added to Rublev's knowledge of the life and thought of hesychasm. Perhaps the best source that helps to establish a hesychast context for Rublev is the *Life of St Sergius* by Epiphanius the Wise. Though the text makes no

<sup>62</sup> *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 140-41.



mention of hesychasm as a movement, there are strong signs that point to the connection St Sergius had with a balanced hesychasm. According to Epiphanius, it is Patriarch Philotheos of Constantinople who instructs Sergius to form his monks into a cenobitic community in which everything is to be held in common. Cenobitic monasticism also extended community life beyond the cell and refectory, so that the rhythm of prayer and work was regulated for all. *The Life* by Epiphanius also stressed the centrality of liturgical and sacramental life. References to the daily celebration of the eucharist and the appearance of light surrounding St Sergius even at the time of his death are more than minor traces of hesychasm. "The saint's face, unlike that of other dead, glowed with the life of the living..."<sup>63</sup> *The Life of St Sergius* calls for further investigation into the liturgical and theological influences of Byzantine hesychasm on subsequent hagiographies in both Greek and Slavonic.<sup>64</sup>

Given the above, it seems unlikely that Theophan and Andrew were *oblivious* to or *unaffected* by the hesychast movement. Could it be that the unusually large panels of the deesis row<sup>65</sup> on the iconostasis of the Annunciation Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin were an attempt by Theophan and his assistants to defend a balanced hesychasm, i.e., a hesychasm in which there was no polarity between prayer and the sacraments? The same question can be raised with regards to Rublev's Trinity icon, which stresses the centrality of eucharistic life. Was this icon an attempt to balance and clarify the understanding of Byzantine hesychasm, as it was expressed in the *Synodikon*, within the walls of the monastery founded by St Sergius and dedicated to the Trinity? Can we see a joint effort on the part of these two artists to articulate through their iconography a hesychast response to sectarian dualism? Is it more than a coincidence that Moscow's palatine chapel with its

63 Tr. George Fedotov, *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality* (Boston, 1969), 54–84.

64 See A. E. Tachaïos, "Le Mouvement hésychaste pendant les dernières décennies du XIVe siècle," *Kleronomia* 6/1 (1974): 114.

65 Each panel measures 6 feet by 3 feet.

imposing deesis and the Trinity monastery, one of the great centers of Russian spirituality with its engaging Trinity icon, were formulating through iconography a balanced hesychasm of prayer and the eucharist? Can we detect an alliance between the Russian Church and its Grand Princes to establish a balanced hesychasm that would maintain political and theological unity with Byzantium?

If we venture to offer affirmative answers to the above questions, then we can begin to see two theological movements in conflict with each other within the same church. It seems that we cannot separate the results of this conflict from the transformation of the transparent templon into the multi-tiered solid iconostasis. As icon panels began to fill the spaces of the templon, the solid iconostasis continued its structural ascent, so that by the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries the solid iconostasis basically consisted of six tiers. In descending order these tiers are 1) Forefathers, 2) Patriarchs, 3) Prophets, 4) Feasts, 5) Deesis and 6) icons for local, i.e., accessible, veneration.<sup>66</sup>

As this transformation takes place, the place of the eucharist in Orthodox worship becomes visually obscured. As for the frequency of eucharistic reception, we know that by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the chalice was rarely approached by the laity. Based on the *Izmaragd* manuscripts dating back to the fourteenth century, we are given the strong impression that liturgical life became the context for moral exhortation. Penance and ascetical discipline presented in these texts resonated with the moral rigor of the sectarian dualists. Coinciding with the enclosure of the altar from the nave, can the ethical displacement of the eucharist also be seen as a contributing factor to the development of the solid ico-

66 Cf. Labrecque-Pervouchine, 89. Also, Irina Zhuravieva, "The Forefathers Tier and the Completion of the Symbolic Structure of the Russian Iconostasis," 490ff, English summary, 737–38; and Marina Bobrik, "The Last Supper Icon above the Royal Doors of the Iconostasis: The Early History of its Semantic Development," 525ff, English summary, 739–41, *Ikonostas*.

nostasis?<sup>67</sup> If so, then moral improvement and perfection became the goals of the Christian. The panoply of saints depicted on the iconostasis showed themselves as the model Christians.

Given the appearance of the solid iconostasis and the "decrease of interest in the eucharistic significance of the Liturgy,"<sup>68</sup> what changes occurred in the semeiotics of both liturgy and icon? Can we detect a shift in the understanding of the function and purpose of liturgical worship? Answers to these questions require a separate study. To conclude, however, it is possible to say that the solid iconostasis helped to create a vision of liturgy and icon that had little, if anything, to do with the interpenetration of history and eschatology.<sup>69</sup>

The transformation of liturgical space into one new and deified reality held within the mystery of the eucharist was seriously blurred. The divine/human synergy necessary for the *re-formation* and *transfiguration* of the cosmos became obstructed. The emphasis on Christ's coming again as both an inaugurated and anticipated reality slipped into the background of liturgical worship. *Marana Tha* was displaced by the quest for individual perfection. The accent on unceasing prayer, participation in the essence of God and ethics considered the icon as the depiction of a moral person deified by his participation in the uncreated light of God, which precluded participation in the deified bread and wine of the Eucharist. The world as sacrament and therefore the *perichoresis* of matter and spirit, divinity and humanity, became obscured. The solid iconostasis disrupted the balanced hesychasm of Palamas articulated and seen through the iconography of Theophan, Rublev and their disciples. From what has been observed, another theology/spirituality continued to develop which would be manifested in the tensions, struggles and schisms that ensued over the course of Russian ecclesiastical history.

67 Cf George Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, vol. II (Belmont, 1975), 108–12.

68 *Ibid.*, 357.

69 For an opposing view of Conzas, *op. cit.*, 179–83. Concluding his defense of the iconostasis with the insights of Fr Pavel Florensky's *Iconostasis*, the author overlooks the fact that the solid altar partition did not in any way contribute to the recovery of eucharistic life for either the Byzantines or Slavs.