

Problems in the Early History of Liturgy

Convener: Jim Sabak, O.F.M. (jimsabak@gmail.com) is a Franciscan Friar of the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Atlanta, Georgia). Jim currently holds the position of Director of Worship for the Diocese of Raleigh, North Carolina, and an episcopal emcee for the bishop of Raleigh.

Members in Attendance: John Baldovin, Paul Bradshaw, Harald Buchinger, Glenn Byer, Nathan Chase, Charles Cosgrove, Rick Fabian, Robin Jensen, Max Johnson, Vassa Larin, Lizette Larson-Miller, Martin Lüsttraeten, Anne McGowan, Anna Petrin, David Pitt, Jim Sabak

Visitors: Julie Canlis, Reed Miller

Description of Work: The work of this seminar involves a variety of topics on celebration and significance of the liturgy in the early centuries of the common era. At this meeting the seminar fielded papers on the Egyptian origins of the *Apostolic Tradition*, extracanonical tradition in the stationary liturgy in Jerusalem, public Christian psalmody in late antiquity, the use and purpose of the "oil of exorcism," what may have occurred in the transition of non-Christian spaces into Christian spaces in antiquity, and the category of "mystagogy" in Christian preaching and writing.

Papers and Presentations:

- Anna Petrin: "Reassessing Early Christian Mystagogy." This paper explored the category of "mystagogy" in early Christian preaching and writing. The paper first explored the challenges of defining mystagogy as a genre, and suggested that instead mystagogy be approached as a mode of theology. The paper went on to argue that this approach would help us to better interpret evidence suggesting that Christians other than neophytes were present at mystagogical preaching as well as evidence that the content of many mystagogical homilies exceeds simple description and offers instead a rich theological banquet.
- Robin Jensen: "Temples into Churches: Destruction and Conversion of Pagan Cult Sites in Roman North Africa." Documentary sources, including sections of the Theodosian Code indicate that, across the Roman Empire, altars, cult images, and even temples were destroyed or transformed into churches in the late fourth and early fifth century. However, recent scholarship has proposed a more nuanced survey of the evidence that includes archeological and mate-

rial remains alongside the often-conflicting textual references to such events. This study of pagan temple transformation, particularly in North Africa, considered the issues of date, the extent, and the specific features of such temple transformations in the fourth and fifth centuries CE.

- Martin Lüsttraeten: “The ‘Oil of Exorcism’: Its Preparation and Its Function.” The *Traditio Apostolica* is known for giving the pre-baptismal anointing an exorcistic function by first exorcizing the oil prior to baptism, then calling it the “oil of exorcism” and then directing an exorcistic/apotropaic formula to be spoken during its application. Seen in context it becomes obvious that the “oil of exorcism” is the invention of a late redaction of the *Traditio Apostolica*, that it is technically superfluous. The derivative documents such as the *Canones Hippolyti* or the *Testamentum Domini* retain the “oil of exorcism” but apparently reduce other pre-baptismal exorcistic elements. Different ideas about the reason for introducing an exorcistic anointing on exorcized catechumens were discussed but none of them seems satisfactory.
- Charles H. Cosgrove: “Singing in the Streets: Public Christian Psalmody in Late Antiquity.” In the decades following the Edict of Milan, the Christian church grew dramatically, and the public presence of Christians was increasingly apparent in various social settings. These included street parades such as funeral processions, episcopal advents, and martyr translations. Psalmody was a distinguishing mark of all of these. Mass public singing in Christian processions united the Christians of a city and its surrounding villages, drawing in people from multiple congregations and more than one language group. Indeed, the singing throng of a martyr parade was as large a body of Christians as someone of that era might ever encounter at a single event.
- Harald Buchinger: “Extracanonical Traditions as Heterotopias in Stational Liturgy: Ritual, Material Culture and Lived Religion in Late Antique Jerusalem.” Although the development of the liturgical year in late antique Jerusalem was not only “biblifying time,” extracanonical traditions (apocrypha) stand both at its early roots and played a role in its later development. It appears that Mount Zion was profiled in competition on the one hand with the Eleona church on the Mount of Olives with its early tradition of the handing over of the mysteries by Jesus to the Apostles, and on the other hand with an alternative localization of the Last Supper near Gethsemane.

While the throne of James the Brother of the Lord on Sion as symbol of the apostolic tradition competed with the burial of the actual bishops in the Eleona, other relics housed on Sion competed with the cathedral and other churches (such as St. Stephen's). Inventions of relics could be both the cause and the consequence of liturgical veneration, and respective literature often are cult aetiologies. Not least, the imposition of a Marian layer in late antiquity demonstrates the ongoing importance of parabiblical traditions and illustrates the interplay between ritual, apocryphal literature and material culture. Although changing attitudes in liturgical spirituality and pilgrims' piety can be observed, the distinction between “First” and “Second Church” does not

do justice to the complexity of ritual observances which offer varieties of options employed by all kinds of people.

- Nathan Chase and Maxwell Johnson: “The Egyptian Origins of the Canons of Hippolytus” (presentation of a draft of a forthcoming study). In response to the recent translation and commentary by Alistair Stewart, who claims a Cappadocian origin, with a possibly later Egyptian redaction, Chase and Johnson look at the relevant canons and argue for an Egyptian origin. There is no reason, they conclude, to revise previous assertions regarding the Canons’ Egyptian, though not necessarily “Alexandrian” origins. The Canons of Hippolytus thus remain the earliest derivative document of the so-called Apostolic Tradition.

Other Work and Plans for the Future: In addition to presentations on current research and publications, the seminar will consider discussion of current published texts in the field in future gatherings.