

The Creation of Holy Space

and the Rise of Drama as Worship

Church growth Prior to Constantine (2nd-early 4th c.)

Worship in the book of Acts - The first and second centuries after Christ saw an astonishing growth of conversions and congregations as the gospel readily spread among the Gentiles throughout the Roman Empire. This early growth was particularly in Asia Minor, due in large part, humanly speaking, to the missionary work of the Apostle Paul; but it also pushed west to and past Rome and even toward Spain and the western Isles with astonishing speedⁱ. Within the first hundred years of such expansion, the witness and testimony of the Christian faith was a force to be reckoned with even if some historians dispute the actual size and scope of the Church at that time.

The character of the early church and her worship should be regarded more carefully than is typically done in historic conversation. Some historians use the word “primitive” to describe this age but that seems merely to be a self-justifying word to excuse some of the man-made trappings that have been added to the Church and her worship later. Still, this is not to say that the achievements of the early Christian councils, for example, in their dealing with heresies, did not grow the Church in her understanding; or to suggest that such maturing in

the use of language and precision which resulted in the early Creeds and Confessions was not necessary.

The early Church quickly possessed the gospels and the letters that would make up the New Testament, and the faith given it being complete – being given “once for all” for the saints. In the earliest of Paul’s writings, he confronts the arguments of the Judaizers and rejects their call for the continuing practice of the ceremonial aspect of the law which radically defined the nature of worship. On the basis of this, we think it an essentially incorrect conclusion that Christian worship legitimately evolves, matures, grows, develops or changes in any way that exceeds the patterns and guidelines that we read of and are instructed by in Scripture.

Still, this is not merely an idealistic call back to the days of the Apostles, as if that were possible. What we are saying is that the Church’s worship has been allowed to go astray in many ways and for many reasons which cannot be accepted or continued any longer. If we are to be Reformed and continually reforming, the Scriptures must always be the place we return in order to find our way.

The earliest descriptions we have of Christian assembly and worship (cf. Acts 2:42ff) reveal three primary aspects we need to take note of: the ones leading the worshipping community, the participation of the community in worshipⁱⁱ, and the place where worship was held.

The leadership of worship was initially the responsibility of the apostles, which was recognized in Scripture to be an exclusive office. But when we read in Paul's letters to the churches (typically addressed in care of the elders of those churches), and in letters to individuals – specifically, the men that Paul trained to follow him, Timothy and Titus - we learn that the Spirit-led vision for church leadership and worship after the age of the apostles was to be limited to the office of elderⁱⁱⁱ. Behind the clear instruction in Paul's letters is the pattern of leadership by elder that existed in Israel going back before the day of Moses.

That worship consisted of attending to the apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread - which we interpret to speak of the Lord's Supper - and to prayers. The only Scriptural description of baptism in the early Church is that done in an evangelistic setting – Peter before the three thousand, Philip with the Ethiopian Eunuch by the river, Paul with Lydia and the jailor and their families in Philippi. The only possible exception would be the baptism of the household of Stephanas in Corinth^{iv}, which may well have been a covenantal baptism before the entire congregation.

It would appear that the liturgy of the ancient Church was rather straightforward, probably following a typical synagogue pattern. Not to put too fine a point on it, the teaching of God's Word through the apostles appears primary. In the presence of those who held the office of apostle there would have been no other teachers. Prayers (mentioned in the plural) saturated the worship time throughout, and the breaking of bread followed regularly.

What is clearly missing is any form of mysticism (clearly guarded against and rejected by Peter in Acts 8 in his dealing with Simon), Gnosticism and mystery (clearly understood and prohibited by John), undue attention to complicating symbolism, or the continuing role/practice of any sort of mediatorial role outside of Christ – any priestly activity, in other words, on the part of the apostles or anyone else. Even at a time when the apostles, themselves, were able to do miracles of healing, exorcism and even raising from the dead from time to time, none of the them allowed themselves any sort of elite status within the Christian community but were committed to being regarded by all equally as brothers.

However, as soon as within one generation, things began to change. Paul spent a good deal of time in his writings passing on the Jewish system of government by elders considering it proper for the New Testament church. Yet, after he passed from the scene, the unique office of bishop emerged as the primary leader and teacher of each of the individual Christian communities more and more^v. For better or worse, it was the office of the bishop that became the typical representation of God's authority among the followers in any given city^{vi}. This movement towards a formalized hierarchy may have been justified under some circumstances; it may have made expedient contributions in some cases; it may have been filled with good and faithful men in many congregations. Still, it would only prove with time to become a self-defining, self-justifying and self-perpetuating institution within the Christian Church^{vii}.

Identification with the community and its participation in the liturgy characterized the worship of God in Christ. "Simple" does not truly define such worship, for a proper liturgical formula also rose quickly. Christian worship was not merely casual, it was intimate and connective. One can readily envision a small body of believers gathered in faith first around the teacher for the reading of the Scripture and the message of hope, and then to join with one another in prayer, and finally, to gather around the table for the eating and drinking of sacramental symbols in their living hope of the Savior's return.

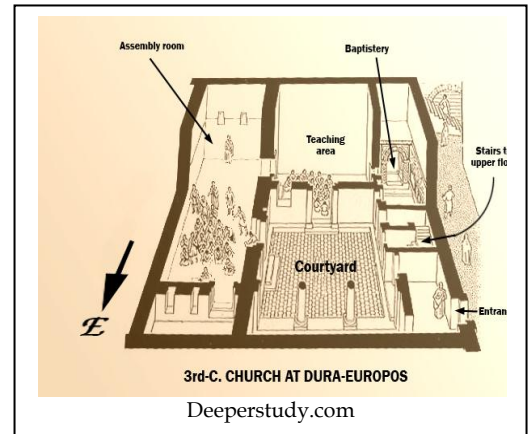
The place of gathering for Christians, initially, was still around the Temple. Acts 2:46 does not indicate precisely what the early Christians did there but the emphasis is on their attendance "together", suggesting that the Temple grounds were the best early place of contact with each other on a daily basis. Beyond that, the first gatherings of these congregations were in private homes and other informal meeting places, which included outdoor gatherings in quiet areas. However, as the number of Christians rapidly increased and the waves of Roman persecution and suppression began to threaten overt displays of the faith in the following centuries, more hidden recesses were required. It is amazing to think that with the onslaught of repeated persecution and cruel martyrdom of leaders and laity alike, Christians continued not only to seek the assembly of the faithful for worship but also to do in progressively obscure places and do so contentedly.

One such locale for Christian assembly was the *mithraea* (a natural cave-like opening which was used by a variety of cults from time to time) and catacombs (subterranean tunnels and rooms primarily prepared and dedicated for burials). This underscores for us the concept that the gathering of God's people was for sincere, heartfelt and Spirit-filled worship and that the practice and participation of the ordinances prescribed by Christ required very little in terms of hierarchy, furniture, or elaborate performance liturgy.

Dura-Europos: Form and Function – The first and best ancient evidence we have of an early place of Christian worship^{viii} is called Dura-Europos in modern Syria^{ix}. In this ancient city, perhaps with a population of six to eight thousand at its height but being abandoned by the middle of the third century, remains of various buildings have been excavated. Among the remains are a pagan temple, a *mithraeum* dedicated a Roman cult, a Jewish synagogue, and another house of worship concluded without doubt to have been Christian^x.

There is debate as to whether or not this Christian house of worship had originally been a private dwelling. If so, that is the same image we get from Scripture, even though this would have been a place for Christian gathering roughly a hundred years later. In analyzing the uses of the separate rooms by the worshipping community that occupied the house, it becomes evident that there has been some segmentation of activity – separate rooms were utilized for different purposes to accomplish different tasks.

It supposed that, at some point, the private dwelling finally gave way completely, making this a fixed house of worship. It would be only speculation to ask how, if at all, the previously existing residence had been modified for Christian worship; or, for that matter, if the pattern of Christian worship itself had been modified to fit the existing



house^{xi}. As it would seem evident that the last use of the house, at least, was that of being a Christian place of worship,^{xii} there is where we must begin.

“Outwardly, the church retained its domestic character, and the Christian community here seems to have continued its worship unhindered during a time of severe persecution begun by emperor Decius in 250” (Liturgy and Architecture, Doig, p. 12).

The ruins of this house suggest elements typical for residences of the period. There is a large courtyard immediately accessible inside the main entrance. Off the courtyard, there are three separate rooms of significance. As we examine each room separately, the question to ask is: did the worship of the community evolve so as to first utilize and then require the separate rooms, or were the separate rooms merely adequate for the already existing needs and separate functions of the congregation? Did the house define the worship or did the worship fit the house? Doig assumes the former: “Eventually, a part, or even the whole, of a house would be given over permanently to worship, when physical alterations would be carried out to accommodate changing practices.”

(L&A, Doig, p. 4) This only begs the question: what were the practices and why were they changing?

The first room to consider is the one in the back, opposite the courtyard from the main entrance of the house. The archeological findings indicate that it is empty of furniture, although it is likely to have contained wooden benches. It is presumed that this room was used for general teaching of catechumens and children. It would have served as a classroom, not only for children of believers, perhaps, but also of other interested and inquiring parties, who were interested in being instructed toward the end of receiving baptism before entering the worshipping community.

It is hard to ascertain when such a requirement of lengthy teaching prior to baptism began to be considered necessary and when the restriction of such schooling was allowed to prohibit interested parties from entering into the worshipping community. First, the rising threats of persecution, Gnosticism, and other wrongful influences would suggest a required such a sense of caution and education for reasons of safety and confirmation of faith. Safety was probably not a concern in this case because the education would have taken place in the same house where the worshippers of the community were known to gather. Second, superstition, the influx of other religious teachings, as well as the fear of actual demonic influences may have required an initial, spiritual quarantine.

The rites of initiation are known to have emphasized the every-day infestation of the unbaptized by demons, against whom the exorcists were directed. An early church manual, of a sort that needs explanation a little later, mentions a "shrine for those to be

cleansed", a catechumenion in common use; ... In any case, the dualism between God and the Powers of evil was brought home to the catechumens They were not to join the confirmed at those times. (MacMullen, p. 5)^{xiii}

One effect this may have had would be to concentrate the teaching and instruction to catechumens in a classroom setting and embellish the service of "worship" to include something else, something more. Justin Martyr describes the typical worship of God in the early 2nd century:

On the so-called Sunday everyone in town or countryside gathers together in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read out, for as long as time permits. Next, when the reader has finished, the president in an address admonishes and exhorts us to imitate these good examples. Then we all stand up together and offer prayers; when we have finished praying, ... bread, wine and water are brought out, and the president offers prayers of thanks, to the best of his ability; the people assent, saying Amen, and each person receives and shares in that over which thanks have been given, and a portion is taken by the deacons to those not present. (Justin Martyr, Translated in Beard, North and Price (1998), vol. II, p. 337) (L&A, Doig p. 3)

It would appear that beyond a light exhortation, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper has already become the single, primary element that gave worship its exclusive nature.

The second room at Dura Europos is a narrow one to the north which apparently served as a baptistery (perhaps originally a cistern for the house)^{xiv}.

The room was decorated with colorful paintings of episodes and characters from



the Scriptures and the receptacle is large enough that a catechumen might stand in it^{xv}. Baptism had been the rite of initiation into the Christian faith since Christ. Yet, already the procedure of baptism had begun to be changed from being a

rather simple act readily done to an act done much more formally and

ceremonially. Yoram Tsafir even speculates on the early and formal development of the worship service in speaking of this: “As they were as yet unbaptized, they were prohibited from taking part in the Eucharist ceremony – the *liturgia*, or mass.” (Tsafir, p. 1) Baptism had become a separate, private affair and was used as the initiation rite allowing the catechumen entrance into the worship room and into the fellowship receiving the Lord’s Supper. So, the catechumen proceeded from the classroom to the baptistery on his way to the worship room.

That third room is a larger, longer hall to the south which, it is presumed, was used by the congregants for worship and for communion^{xvi}. That will be examined later.

If the uses of these separate and separated rooms are not to be disputed, the question here is: how did they come to be so used? Did form follow function or vice versa? Take the baptistery for example. None of the baptisms performed in the New Testament were secluded, private or elaborate by principle. Did the growing sense of ceremony dictate the need for a separate room and a receptacle big enough for a ritualistic bath; or did the room, already existing and furnished, perhaps, lead to the idea of protracted, ritualistic use? David Stancliffe, a contemporary Anglican, describes the ideas that quickly took hold during this period of time.

The new Christians found the dream of intimacy becoming reality as they stepped out of their old persona and entered in Christ. Their old nature stripped off and their past life sluiced away is the essential baptismal experience. Some churches – notably

those built primarily as baptisteries – convey that focused sense of personal change. Whether the movement is down into the waters (with overtones of the tomb) or through them (with echoes of the exodus); whether much is made of stripping off and re-clothing in the white robes of the new Christian (Colossians 3:9-10) or being anointed as you come up from the waters (Mark 1:10-11); all these images speak of personal encounter and transformation. (Stancliffe, p. 22)

Somehow, such thoughts can easily justify how the meaning and drama of baptism was being symbolically enlarged. Early teachings such as the *Didache*, circa late 1st and early 2nd c., reflected a more Scriptural approach and taught a much simpler, more pragmatic understanding and approach to the ordinance of baptism:

And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before. (Didache, ch. 7)

But clearly, within a very short period of time, a sense of mystery and significance seems to have taken over and enlarged the practice of baptism into an elaborate initiation rite. It might be surmised that the rationale went this way: if a little water is good, more water is better^{xvii}. If being clothed in Christ's righteousness is to be fully appreciated as a spiritual reality, then let us literally strip off the old robes that a person comes to his baptism wearing – portraying them as robes of spiritual uncleanness. Let him be baptized, washed naked, and then, upon emerging from the water, be given a new white robe symbolizing his new-found righteousness in Christ^{xviii}.

This baptistery was more than just a font: it continued to be a separate room for some centuries, as the majority of candidates for baptism were either adults, or adults

with their households, and they went down into the waters of baptism naked, emerging to put on the white robe of their new life in Christ. (Stancliffe, p. 37)^{xix}

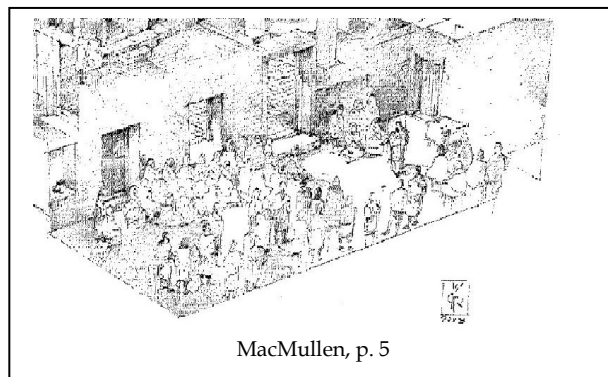
This enlargement of the baptismal rite makes even more sense when it comes at the end of a year-long catechetical instruction/preparation. Plus, the rite of baptism also began to be linked by this time with even more significance by being observed on the Easter anniversary of Christ's death, burial and resurrection^{xx}.

Once the Catechumen made that profession and was ritualistically so baptized, he was then allowed to enter into the third room of the church house and join the community of believers in their worship, now being characterized as a secluded, guarded and mysterious event in itself.

In the Dura Europos, that third room is long and narrow.

To show it in life, a reconstruction helps: the sexes separated with men to the right as one entered, in eastern fashion; the priest presiding with a wooden table behind him, standing as I suppose though it is possible that he had a chair to himself; and his clergy seated to one side, honored women, virgins or widows, to the other side. (MacMullen, p. 4-5)

MacMullen depicts the room being used lengthwise with the teacher positioned opposite the congregation against the narrow wall. Did the larger room dictate



the arrangement of the worshippers and their liturgy or was the room arranged to fit a desired procedure?^{xxi} A small platform has been uncovered against the narrower east wall^{xxii}. Was that new or was it a carry-over from a previous household use (such as the worship of family gods)^{xxiii}?

Strikingly, in the Dura church the permanent platform at the east end of the hall, being only 147 cm by 97 cm, was not large enough to accommodate both the president and a table. Being a permanent structure, the dais was of great significance, and lent that significance to whatever was placed upon it, and it was for the clergy – to be ordained was to be placed upon the pulpitum. Surely it was deliberate that the table for the eucharist was not placed on the dais. (L&A, Doig, p. 16)

So which way should we look at this? Did any of these separate rooms encourage new thought towards privacy, seclusion or elitism, or were they built to provide those things which were already considered desirable or necessary?^{xxiv}

These assemblies, linked in communion with one another, never inherited the sense of shrines, nor were they akin to the Jewish temple – a sacred space, unique and static. The liturgy of the church was designed to emphasize the unity of the community gathered into one in Christ, the new and living temple, by the one Spirit, and so each baptized Christian became a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). ... However, over the early centuries, the new faith found itself almost unconsciously adopting the ideas and imagery of its parent body. (Stancliffe, p. 21)

And how would the division between men and women in worship come to alter the use of the room?

In larger quarters, later, the space would more naturally be divided not crosswise in the nave, with women to the rear, but lengthwise in the fashion familiar to us, once we have church plans, with their rectangular shape and most often with aisles on either side. Where that is the case, the greater honor of the right hand, where Christ sits with God, and of the male sex generally, was never in dispute. (MacMullen, p. 7)

The building at Dura-Europos gives us several indications as to the direction the Christian worship of the church was headed. The most obvious hints fall toward formalism. Although we cannot tell how the worship service flowed in the inner room, it was already segregated, and the process even of entrance into worship reflected the individual's own pilgrimage in coming to Christ. While we cannot tell what role or influence the bishop or leader would

have had in all this, we must conclude that everyone else looked to him to explain the need and set the requirement for such procedures to take place.

Veneration of the Dead - Before moving on to the next critical period of development, there is one more influence on early Christian worship during the period of the persecutions that must be examined. This will have an effect on what is considered a proper place for worship and how worship, particularly the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, will be confused. This influence involves the importing and mixing of the Christian faith and worship with what was pre-existing pagan practices associated with the veneration of the dead. While many today know of the fascination with relics by the pre-medieval church, archeology is now revealing how far back the root goes and the extent to which the mixture of the popular Christian faith with other traditions and practices of families and communities that focused on the remembrance of their dead had occurred.

Ramsey MacMullen, a Professor Emeritus of Yale University, has written extensively regarding the subject of Roman paganism and its influence on early Christianity. He describes one such practice that became prevalent in Asia Minor during this time:

They are notable for a festival custom brought in by Italian settlers: the very pleasant "Roses" of no fixed date in May – simply whenever the flower bloomed – to be enjoyed in company with those loved ones that were lost. Wherever Rome had sent out its colonizers, the Roses settled in with them; families or burial-club members gathered their bouquets and brought them to the graveside, there to sit down and eat and drink and remember; and it was from Philippi that the custom seems to have spread further into eastern lands. (MacMullen, p. 37)

Fifty years ago my friend D.G. was doing something like this as a teenager in the local cemetery with his uncles, in a Greek setting. He remembers the experience very pleasantly. It was religion of the family. (MacMullen, p. 46)

Even long after conversion, Christians would continue, import, and even maintain the practice of such annual pilgrimages to the burial sites of relatives along with the formalized practices and rituals involved in such trips. As the period of persecutions brought the death and burial of faithful leaders, martyrs, relatives and brothers in the faith, the practice developed into more of a church-wide commemoration of them.

In the earlier years of this period, the focus of worshipful, Christian gatherings was on the resurrection and the anticipated return of the Lord. Indeed, that is what gave many believers the backbone to face the growing persecutions with courageous resistance.

It is important to remember that the dominant aspect of worship was the glorifying of the Risen One. ... The congregation was united by the Risen Lord; it was not the Cross that dominated. Christian worship naturally includes both these aspects of the mystery of Christ. But the accentuation and domination of one or the other completely changes the devotional atmosphere, the orientation of worship and the architecture of the place. (Bieler, p. 25)

That focus slowly began to change as the Lord's return tarried, the period of the apostles passed, and more Christians began to suffer and die in and for their faith - from disease and old age or, more deliberately and dramatically, in the face of persecution when death was faced in honorable and heroic fashion. Even more attention began to be given to the veneration of the dead, and for reasons which were by now a mixture of superstition, tradition, familiarity, as well as the hope promised in the Gospel.

Throughout the ancient world, by every city of which we know the customs, the dead were not allowed within the walls. They would pollute, their presence would invite some disaster. Only gods and heroes were allowed in and, of course honored as they

deserved at the very center, on some height, some acropolis or capital. Still, in law, any mortal burial in its proper place, suburban, was space set apart and sacred; therefore, space fit for worship. Most likely from the 80s, we hear of altars for divine worship placed directly above the resting place of the persecution's victims (Rev. 6:9). (MacMullen, p. 9)

A typical example of these buildings consecrated for Christians (sic) congregations is the "Capella Greca", crypt of the cemetery where Aquila and Priscilla were buried in Rome. This dates back to the first century. It is composed mainly of a small basilica with only one nave and three niches, of which one has a cradle-vault and the other two have apses. (Bieler, p. 29)

Another example worth noting is located north of the ancient city of Salona in Greece, at an incredible cemetery called Manastirine. It had not originally been an exclusively Christian cemetery but the earliest indications are that two specific areas of the entirety had been purchased for the burial of Christians particularly.

The larger piece adjoining it on the west side formed a court not quite square containing a little under 50 square meters, a corner of which was ad sanctos. Here [were] the raised gravestones of the most revered tombs of the bishop and four martyred soldiers ... They were the privileged, all, the martyrs and highest clergy equally revered; the date of their decease was marked on their memorials as instruction for their festal day. (MacMullen, p. 43)

We can animate this scene thanks in part to what the martyr-eulogies tell us, pronounced at similar eastern sites. Among some hundred persons shown, we can see women dancing before the holy burials in prayer and tribute to them, and men also to one side. ... Crowds watch and listen. Near the principal tombs beneath the ground just in front of him and to his left would be the bishop, presiding. He may have responded to the music with a conductor's wave of the hand. The mood of joy is contagious. (MacMullen, p. 44)

The proof of the practice in its broad outline lies in mensae: stone dining-tables to sit atop a burial. ... The round rim will [typically] be raised a few centimeters and a hole will be drilled right through the slab at its center. The whole is of a size to cover one third of a coffin, to receive a splash of wine from the glasses of a circle of family-members all together, while the hole in the middle allows the libation to run down into the coffin for the enjoyment of the beloved below; for, as everyone knew, the dead needed food and drink. Throughout the region of this chapter, stones of this cut are found and easily identified.

In many mensae there is a hole at the center, through which we must imagine the mourners pouring a little wine with a prayer to accompany it, themselves recumbent

around the tomb. After communication with the dead, the living could turn to their own meal, sampling whatever stews or casseroles they had brought. MacMullen, p. 45)

This is important because of where such gathering and celebration will lead.

The hey-day of such festivals at Salona, however, is not yet. There are later beloved bishops yet to complete their lives and terms. They will be buried under their own marble mensae pierced with holes for libations. Toward the end of the fourth century and more clearly in the fifth and sixth, the apogee will come with streams of pilgrims, eager to join in ... (MacMullen, p. 44)

Faith and fidelity sorely tried, the Christians sought to renew their strength and their courage; they found comfort in the veneration of these martyrs, a veneration that quickly became a real cult. Soon the presence of Christ in these relics became confused in popular belief with his presence at the Eucharist: in celebrating the sacrament upon the relics of a martyr, one was more certain to encounter the living God. (Bieler, p. 30)

Even during the latter stages of this period, entire buildings known as *martyrions* were being constructed – chapels built in round or square design with the table/altar in the center housing and protecting the martyr's remains.

Thus before the Peace of the Church (313), religious buildings followed two distinct patterns, corresponding to the two conceptions of worship. The more ancient conception derived from the synagogue had a square or circular plan and was suitable for the natural gathering of the community without clerical segregation. The other was the ritual conception, originally central in plan; but, with the consecration of a holy place or sanctuary, and then of a priesthood, the plan gradually became elongated and altered, and the worshippers were more and more kept at a distance. (Bieler, p. 32)

Putting these observations together, there are three important factors developing within the church by the end of the period of persecutions that match our three aspects of worship. First, the role of the singular bishop has already become prominent, even exclusive in prominence and in authority. Elders, as instructed by Paul, are not typically mentioned in the historical record either in terms of the leadership of the church or in the archeological findings of ancient Christian sites. Second, the exclusive nature of worship as well as the combination or merger of the Christian faith with the popular traditions of

family veneration for the dead and the martyr-cult has led to a formalism in worship. Worship sites became specifically places identified as being hallowed and revered. Places for gatherings and worship are even being constructed in ways to reflect these practices. Holy space is being created where the worship of God is done along with commemoration of those who have gone before. And third, the concept of preparing for, making pilgrimage to, and participating in a meal over the grave of the dead, including a votive offering of wine to the dead, is regarded as appropriate for Christian gathering and has begun to be incorporated into the Christian liturgy.

The Constantinian Revolution (early 4th - 15th centuries)

The Peace of the Church – The Edict of Milan (313 AD) - The Edict of Milan signed by Constantine and Licinius, along with a previous edict of toleration signed by Galerius, ended the persecution of Christians and called for a return of all confiscated property. That, along with the fame and influence of Constantine's own purported conversion to the Christian faith, meant a significant and rather sudden reversal not only of the conditions under which the Christian Church functioned but also of the identity and personality of the Church herself.

Constantine defeated Maxentius in 312 at the Battle of Milvian Bridge, ending what remained of the Tetrarchy and making him the sole emperor of his

dramatically changing empire^{xxv}. In demonstration of those changes, he moved his capital to Constantinople in 330 AD and abandoned Rome.

So when the new and only Emperor confessed the Christian faith, the effect was to make Christianity not only a legitimate religion within the empire but the national and even royal religion, to be preferred over all others.

Constantinople was not only to be redesigned and rebuilt as the new Rome, it was to be the Christian Rome - to be built from the ground up as the capital not only of the empire but of the Kingdom of God^{xxvi}.

The Transformation of the Church - The political pressures and influences brought on by these changes in circumstances not only transformed the empire completely, it also transformed Christianity extensively. For our purposes, there are three foci to discuss: the basilica, the priesthood, and the development of a pilgrimage form of liturgy.

a) *The Basilica* - The change in fortune and opportunity must have been hypnotic for the Christians in positions of power and influence at the time. To have carried the scourge of their faith, to have offered up many of their own to the sword, to have humbly and yet deliberately held forth both the worship and the hope of Christ for so long against growing opposition and the threat of extinction; and then, suddenly, to be given not only pardon but royal status, could only have been regarded as God's hand of victory and as God's charge and mandate to move forward boldly.

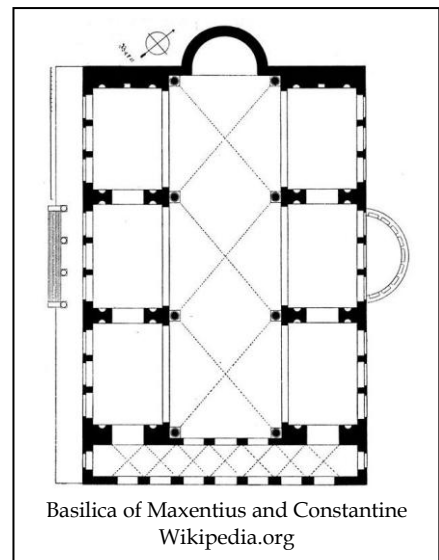
The first thing that simply had to mean was that the church not only may but must come out of the shadows and become a public and not just a Christian presence in the community and the nation. There may have been private homes or even small halls or *martyrions* in which to worship before; but now the number of desiring worshippers was greatly increasing and the ability to maintain the mystery of the faith was decreasing. Not only were the regional bishops feeling a new sense of grandeur with their rising status, but the King, himself, was now getting directly involved in raising the profile of what it meant to represent the Gospel in the new capital of the Roman empire. The obvious conclusion: royal buildings must be constructed that truly reflect the glory, strength and power both of the Emperor and of his God in the eyes of friend and foe alike.

The Shape of the Church

In exercising their newfound freedom and in displaying the favor of the royal court, the notion of “church” now fell to the question of the proper design of the building in which worship would be conducted. What had proven to impress the most within the Roman culture already, and which also was readily at hand, was the basilica.

The architects chose by preference the model of the civic basilicas, for these had the advantages among others of being the easiest, quickest and most economical of all public buildings to erect. (Bieler, p. 33)

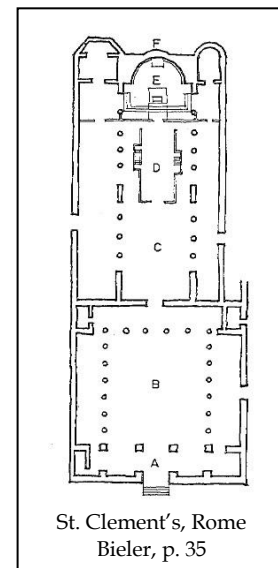
Roman basilicas can be dated back to 184 BC



and were always commissioned and built at royal instigation. The ruins of the Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine (started in 308 by Maxentius and finished by Constantine in 312 AD) can still be seen in the city of Rome today. The basilica was a form of building used for official purposes – whether judicial, political, etc. But to really understand it, it must be seen in its already religious light.

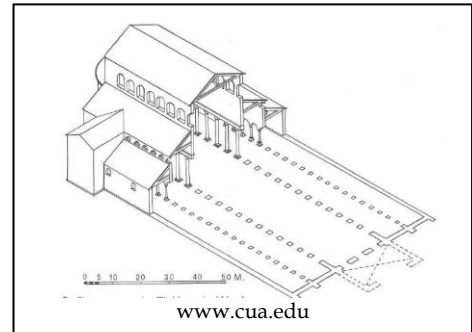
The Emperor cult had been a centripetal force as long as the imperial office was undivided. His image was to be found in all public basilicas. Contracts were validated before his image, justice could likewise only be dispensed in his 'presence', and at given times all had to sacrifice before his effigy. Whether the basilica was a market, an army drill-hall or the tribune of a governor, it was a religious building by virtue of the cult image of the Emperor in an apse on its end or even a side wall, and before it the swearing of oaths was religiously validated. Most of the great array of religions in the Roman world had no problem with this. (L&A, Doig, p. 22)

Typically, the basilica was a rectangular building with its main entrance on one of the narrow ends and a curved recess or apse on the other. In that recess or apse, the official would reside, holding forth his office, surrounded by his officials. The long hall, or nave, in between the entrance and the apse, added to the sense of prominence and prestige of the residing official and his power, helping to intimidate and humble the person who was coming before him. Entering the door at the far end, one would walk the full length of the nave in full view of said official. The apse in which the official sat was also typically a raised platform which communicated a visual sense of authority. Side aisles ran alongside the main hall or nave which allowed for the free flow of pedestrian



traffic as well as provide for extra office space for lesser officials to conduct their related business.

The design of the basilica was also pragmatic and functional. The interior rows of columns that separated the nave enabled the architect to widen the open space beyond what the technology of roof support could bear at the



time. By roofing the side aisles at one level but extending the roof to a second story in the middle, many more windows could be utilized thus bringing in much needed light and creating a “proto-cathedral” effect in the process. What would become an integral part of cathedrals in the future – the vaulted or “cathedral” ceilings, was already a part of the design even before the transcendence of God was in the mind of the architect. Also, the rectangular shape of the room along with the curved shape of the apse behind the throne or seat, meant that the voice of the speaker would carry throughout the building readily.

MacMullen states the obvious: this design became ubiquitous.

It was commonsensical; it suggested itself and so can be found absolutely everywhere, but it must also have been recommended and spread through the sharing of experience among bishops. ... It was not all theology, by any means. ... These exciting developments unfolded quite abruptly. (MacMullen, p. 12)

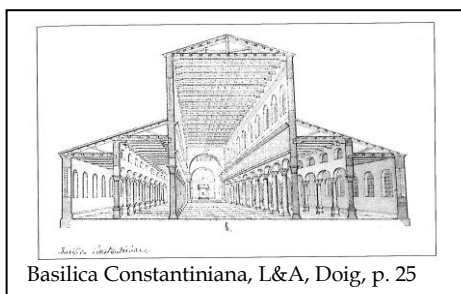
A. L. Drummond, in his survey of church architecture as art, sees the design, as do many, as simply evolutionary.

Thus, by the time the Christian church had evolved as a building in the reign of Constantine, there existed in Roman Architecture, the features which were to be further developed by Catholicism of East and West, each in their own way – the round-headed arch, the arcade, the dome. (Drummond, p. 3)

He cites the work of G. B. Brown in the latter's work, From Schola to Cathedral, to support the typical historical examination and conclusion of this development as nothing more than utilitarian and technological – as if there was nothing whatsoever in terms of theology or principle which might be either enhanced or eroded by it.

There is no evidence for the invention of any "Christian Style" in the Early Church. "Christian Architecture had, as it were, several root-fibres traceable back to non-Christian origins, and these unite to form the historical church of the age after Constantine, an architectural creation embodying features derived from different sources." (Drummond, p. 3, citing Brown, p. 66)

It proved an easy transition to make – if this is the way a Roman citizen approaches the seats of his own government – and with it, the sense of worship already having been given to the emperor as a veritable god himself - what better form could there be for the Christian to approach the King of kings?



The cathedral of the Bishop of Rome was to be a structure worthy of his performance of the liturgy before the 'universal King', to equal or surpass the basilicas where ceremonial was performed before the Emperor at his ceremonial entry or adventus. ... It was 333 Roman feet long and 180 wide (100 m by 53 m), and despite its size it was built quickly and copied widely. ...

Performing the liturgy in such a grand context drew it irresistibly towards formal elaboration. The long naves encouraged processions, and bishops and clergy were vested according to their magisterial dignity. (L&A, Doig, p. 24, 25)

Such buildings as were now being considered proper to house the church of Christ were already in the minds of some even before the Edict of Milan. One

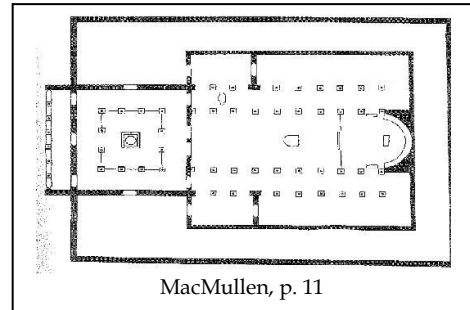
of the earliest example we have record of is a basilica built in Tyre and dedicated in 315 AD.^{xxvii}

We enter first the wooden precinct wall that surrounded the whole and kept out hoi polloi, declaring as it did, here are holy things, ... Inside, the church had two pairs of side aisles ... reserved for those who were undergoing instruction, the catechumens separated by sex, right and left. (MacMullen, p. 10)

Does this building teach us anything going on in the minds of the bishops before the advent of the Byzantine age? Before we can interpret this building, it must be observed that it stood on an earlier foundation.

[T]o save costs and as the usual thing where remodeling was to be undertaken, no doubt [Bishop Paulinus] made use of the foundations of what had been destroyed in the persecutions.

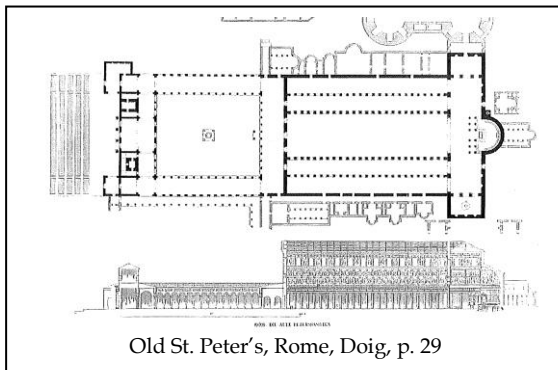
Consequently, the basic plan, the plan of the nave at the very least, would have been resurrected from that of the original construction dating to the latter part of the third century. This copying, to us, must seem entirely natural; ... What he needed was a structure big enough to hold some predictable number of people, all attending to what would be said by the person or persons presiding; therefore, a rectangular shape, and a curved, cupped end for acoustic purposes, and perhaps a raised area before it so that everyone could see and hear the important person sitting there. Serving these common needs, most cities of the empire had exactly what any church leader would have in mind, namely a basilica as a model, used for many public purposes; and more than one church in the period subsequently originated in a civil basilica, with quite minimal changes. (MacMullen, p. 11-12)



However, the building Bishop Paulinus constructed, which may have been built on an earlier church building, shows a more traditional aim. The floor plan suggests that it really did not fit the basilican model. It was not rectangular but square in shape, the Bishop's chair was not in the apse recessed into the wall but pushed out into the room where the congregation could stand on three sides around it. In the center was a desk or pulpit on a raised platform that would become known as a *bema*. This more closely resembled the typical synagogue-

shaped room which conveyed something very different than the basilica plan modified for church construction would in the future. This was the type of building where the people could congregate, gather around the preaching of the Word and share in the meal. Such a building as this demonstrates that the desire and vision for the basic (primitive? no, essential) worship of God was still the aim of some who wanted to maintain the true worship of God^{xxviii}.

That kind of thinking of church and worship were fast changing. At the same time the Cathedral at Tyre was being constructed, Old St. Peter's in Rome was also going up. It becomes very plain to see how dramatically the focus has already taken a new direction.



St. Peter's is the first basilica built in the form of a cross with transepts. ... The apostle's tomb was on the chord of the apse, enclosed in white marble with porphyry bands and sheltered by a baldacchino on four twisted columns.

This basilica was an enormous covered cemetery and martyrium where the celebration of the eucharist was secondary to the memorial function. ... The two distinct architectural sections, nave and transepts, served the dual

functions of the building: the transept accommodated the rites associated with the martyr, veneration, the memorial eucharist and oblation tables; the nave and aisles were a covered cemetery where funeral banquets, or refrigeria, were held, a custom that continued until at least 397, ... In life and in death, thousands wished to be near Peter's special sanctity and touched by his miraculous power. (L&A, Doig, p. 28-29)

The Jewish synagogue influence was now very distant from mainstream Christianity; and the influence of Gentile culture - with its long history of both civic and pagan temple buildings - had become dominant. Not only did a political influence exist to change the thinking of the church but with the quick

expansion of numbers all across the Roman empire, there was an intermingling of the Christian gospel with the long-standing heritage and variety of pagan cults.

When Constantine became the patron of the Christian faith and elevated it to an official, honored status, the heads of the Church were obliged to adopt an elaboration befitting the imperial religion. The emperor encouraged the bishops to decorate the religious edifices to the same extent as the pagans had embellished theirs. ... Although the early Christians had been comfortable with the modest domus ecclesia and its atmosphere of intimate fraternity and humility, values in the time of Constantine changed in that there was a desire to absorb the masses into the Christian community, and to impress them by royal splendor no less than by spirituality. The interior of the church was decorated lavishly with carved columns, mosaics and wall paintings, expensive building materials, and gold chandeliers. The priests wore elaborate liturgical vestments. The shadowy interior of the building, with burning candles and incense, gave the finishing touches to an atmosphere of mystery characteristic of Christian worship. (Tsafirir, p. 3-4)

Andre Bieler sets the stage for the transformation already going on within the Christian Church by this period.

Oriental and Graeco-Roman pagan cults continually led Christianity astray. The principal characteristics of pagan worship, to whatever civilization it belongs, are as follows:

- 1. The presence among men of the venerated god is identified with his material representation in a given place. This representation is usually in the form of a statue or a picture.*
- 2. The place where this is kept becomes a sacred place, that is to say, a physical location with which the presence of the god is linked. This place is generally surrounded by a sanctuary, or part of a sanctuary. The presence of the god is thus linked not only with the statue depicting him, but also with the temple containing the statue, which too is considered sacred.*
- 3. The intercourse of the worshippers with the god with whom they seek communion is not usually possible in an immediate way. It demands the service of a privileged and initiated class, the priests.*

The architectural plan of a pagan temple generally had the three following characteristics, corresponding to the three functions enumerated above:

These were: -

- 1. A sacred place, properly called a sanctuary, where the presence of the venerated god was assured; his spiritual existence was identified with his material representation – his statue.*
 - 2. A place of ritual, into which were admitted only the priests, who entered into communion with the venerated god.*
 - 3. A public place reserved for the rest of the community, who were unable to enter into communion with the god except through the mediation of the priests.*
- (Bieler, p. 4)*

To sum these up, cultural influences coming from outside the faith included sacred places, sacred leaders, and sacred practices. One could argue

- because a cult is not empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit or led by the God of the Scriptures speaking His will, the pagan worshipper finds his man-made parallels in visual focal points, a place revered above others, and a ceremony communicating significance;
- because pagan religions are done in mere imitation of the exercise of the true faith, such patterns of worship ought not to be followed or imitated in the worship of the one, true, invisible God who does not dwell in buildings made by hands;
- even though one might see patterns of these elements found during the Old Testament dispensation, to carry them forward past the fulfillment of the Ceremonial Law in the death and resurrection of Christ is to deny their New Testament fulfillment in Christ and reveals the darkness of their character;
- that once those forms are established, the tendency in the heart of man is to continue to exalt and embellish those external items, developing symbolism to a virtual science, convinced that he is building the strength of the gospel with brick and mortar.

For the next millennia of Christian history, this logic would be assumed, employed, and never questioned in the minds of those who designed and built their houses of worship. In fact, as art and architecture continued to develop, these priorities were constantly kept and elaborated as the themes called for greater and greater expression.

The Location of the Church

As the Byzantine era progressed, church building expanded rapidly. Yoram Tsafrir observes the archeological remains of some 390 churches in Israel, all constructed between the fourth and seventh centuries (Tsafrir, p. 27). Once the notion of a proper church building held consensus, decisions on where to put such buildings quickly expanded away from the locale of the local congregation

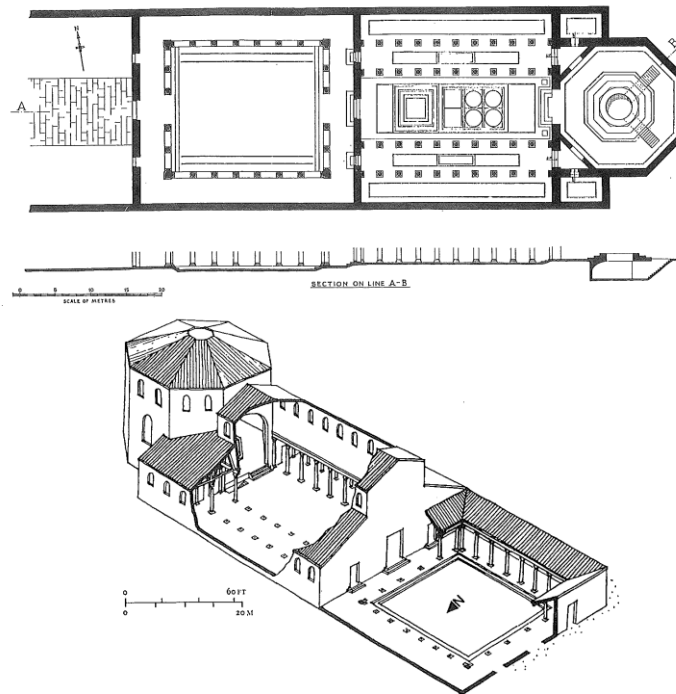
and toward the identifying and honoring of places of historical notoriety and of the dead.

[I]n 326 Constantine's mother Helena made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in her old age. Under her influence, Constantine endowed the building of the great basilicas in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, which were hugely influential on Christian building both East and West. For the first time in Christian thinking, Constantine's building programme in the Holy Land highlighted the idea that the church building was itself significant because of the site it enclosed and the events it marked. (Stancliffe, p. 26)

At first the basilican church building was not used in the identifying and revering of significant and historical landmarks. Such marking of historical places called for a different kind of building – not one suited so much for worship at all but for the preservation and adoration of significant locations and the utilizing of them for smaller, private affairs. The common form of building for such sites was the centrally-focused design – whether square, round, octagonal or even in the form of a Greek or equally-sided cross. These shapes were preferred for such sites: 1) as the setting for ritualistic baptisms, now being considered so formal, so procedural in its own right that it was often done privately and only on special occasions and, as such, have its own building; and, 2) to protect and house the site of a martyrdom, burial or historical event so it might be visited individually by pilgrims. Such buildings were characterized by the specific location upon which they stood rather than being facilities where believers already lived and regularly assembled for worship as a community. Instead, these buildings were for pilgrims who might visit such sites only once in their entire lifetime^{xxix}.

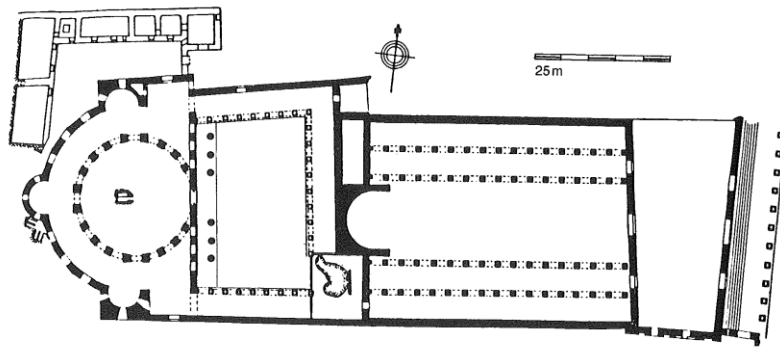
The basilican plan had readily become the standard, particularly in the

West – and was employed to further elaborate such important sites even if a smaller building already existed. In places, the two types would work together. Two buildings worth noting here^{xxx}, built at the instigation of the Empress Helena’s personal desire and inspiration, were in Jerusalem – the Church of the Nativity and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, or Anastasis Church.



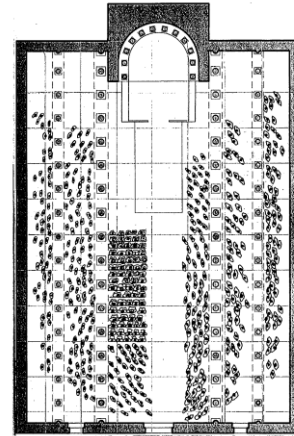
The Church of the Nativity, Jerusalem, Tsafir, p. 7

In the Church of the Nativity, the cave or grotto marking the traditional spot of Jesus’ birth, is identified and centered in an octagon-shaped building. It is not meant for worship in the formal sense but for pilgrims who wish to tour the site. In order to facilitate and accommodate worship – not so much as a congregation but as a gathering of individuals on pilgrimage - it is attached to a traditional basilica-shaped room. The octagon building replaces the apse and projects the attention of the worshipper forward toward that spot.



Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem: reconstruction of the Constantinian Anastasis and Martyrium based on V. Corbo's excavations

Tsafir, p. 25



MacMullen, p. 13

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is a similar combination. The drawing above and to the left shows the rotunda surrounding the traditional spot of Jesus' burial and resurrection and the basilica that is attached to it. Here, the basilica contains its own apse (the center of focus, in other words) but as the worshippers pray, they face the historic spot^{xxxi}. The drawing on the right demonstrates one possible scenario of how the basilica might have looked filled with worshippers - the more prestigious individuals in chairs and rows, the majority of pilgrims standing where they could, and all making way for a wide middle aisle for the clergy's processional entrance.

"Centrally planned memoriae, as at Golgotha and Bethlehem, took their architectural form from the imperial mausoleum. ... The mausoleum had a memorial, not a liturgical function, but its symbolic function and architectural form will be of importance when considering the development of the baptistery. ... [W]hat is important here is to note the close formal connection between the martyrium and the baptistery because of the theology of baptism: the dying to sin of the old Adam and rising to new life in Christ. (L&A, Doig, p. 39, 40)

b) **The Priesthood** – Along with the adoption of the basilica as a properly grand and noble building for the royal religion and its worshippers,

there also came the need for similarly royal and noble ministers who might function in them – now, not so much as pastors but as dignitaries – elites holding official positions of spiritual royalty as well as pastoral responsibility – who were charged with determining the direction that the form of worship would take in its own right.

We have already seen how, long before the period of Constantine, Paul's direction and instruction that the church be led by elders raised up from among their own number had been augmented and, in most cases, virtually replaced by the governance and ministry of the single, regional bishop. Even so, it had not resulted in a radical redefinition of worship or in the understanding of the gospel: "Much of the early Christians' experience of worship was shaped by their knowledge of the Old Testament, and their understanding that it was fulfilled in Christ" (Stancliffe, p. 31). Even with a growing influence of mysticism, of the veneration of the dead, and the urge to create a holy space, the bishop's concern lay primarily with the teaching of his people the Word of God and with the worship of God among the local community of the followers. We saw this with the focus of Bishop Paulinus in Tyre^{xxxii}.

Still, with the coming of the Constantinian age, the idea of church office began to change drastically. There began to be a demand and need for a position of dignity, royalty and loftiness before the general public along with the spiritual authority that one had been expected to represent and wield. This meant that the office of leadership within the church began to appear in much more of a

political and even economic role^{xxxiii}. Having a basilica as one's house of worship reinforced that image. Just as the official in the public chamber held forth his official duty in a civic basilica worthy of such authority, such was now duplicated by the official in the house of worship.

Bishops ranked with the illustres, amongst the highest dignitaries, and could claim the same rights, privileges and signs of rank: the pallium (a white woolen mantle), special shoes, headgear, ring and throne. Ceremonial attached to rank was to be performed in the presence of the bishop – he was to be greeted with a kiss of his hand and accompanied by candles and incense. (L&A, Doig, p. 38)

MacMullen describes how the architecture reinforced this impression and message.

[P]rotruding about a quarter of the way into the nave, a chancel with a wooden screen defining it and the area within which only the clergy might enter. The intent was to set them apart from the laity, in the fashion of the Temple in Jerusalem; and their space was raised by a couple of steps above the level of the nave as a reminder of their eminence. They enjoyed the honor of built benches in two pairs on either side of the apse, with a bench in addition that followed the curve of the apse and surrounded the throne, a moveable wooden one, I suppose, reserved for the bishop – one of those “towering thrones” that Eusebius mentions, “to honor the presiding priest”. (MacMullen, p. 10-11)

The above detail comes from the description of the basilica in Tyre, which demonstrates that this tendency was already growing and headed in this direction even prior to the Constantinian revolution. Clearly, with the embrace of a designated holy space came with it the beginnings of a holy order.

Once, in Dura's simple setting, there had been no great gulf between laity and clergy, so far as we can guess, and certainly no great physical distance at worship. A century later, a bishop had become a high and mighty figure, lodged in his own palace, commanding all sorts of benefits and powers; and the clergy beneath him were also set apart, invisibly, through the great respect of their condition. He is “the King” upon his entrance, his deacons are “the Angels.” ... Everyone awaited the bishop. He would be the last to arrive, the first to enter the church and with him in his train, all his inferiors. They swept past the laity, who next might then enter, everyone in an assigned place, everyone in due order, men and women alike, knowing their place. (MacMullen, p. 16)

With the building of many churches during this period of time throughout Rome, Greece, Asia Minor and Judea, the basilican plan was preferred and advocated not merely for the grand sense of holy space but also for the prestige and command it gave for the resident bishop. As designs became more elaborate so did the visible designations between clergy and laity. In reviewing the ruins of the basilica in Kharab Shams in north Syria, MacMullen makes this observation:

What is interesting about the reconstruction is the elaborate articulation it puts on display – the degree to which space has been chopped up by barriers and allocations Half of the whole interior was evidently out of bounds to the laity altogether, fenced off and super-sacred behind a screen at the edge of the chancel to control what was visible, and when. Here was the reserve of the priesthood, involved in their ever more complicated and dramatic rituals. (MacMullen, p. 20)

To facilitate this growing sense of royalty, and to add a sense of Scriptural reference and authority to it, there was a pronounced return in the approach to worship to the more formal and public ministrations that were found in the Old Testament priesthood during the age of the ceremonial law. This was not because it was deemed theologically proper in the age of the New Testament church, but more essentially because provided a “divine” direction and model - an example, if you will, of how such grand worship had been properly conducted in the past. Now that the church was, once again, in a position of such grandeur, following the pattern of Solomon’s Temple seemed proper. Thus the worshipful function of the priesthood returned, even though the Aaronic priesthood had been eliminated by the coming of Christ (cf. Heb. 10:11-18). And with its return, came all the trappings of the office, as well as the return of the

veil in the temple which once separated the laity from communion with God through the Holy Spirit. Now, there was to be a new separation of priest - and his divine worship and work - from laity which would become a pronounced and growing character of worship in the church of Christ^{xxxiv}.

We can at once see how a church which was becoming increasingly sacerdotal was able to make use of this plan. The bishop and his priests took the place of the judge and his jury. In front of them was the altar. The place formerly reserved for the members of the bar became a place of privilege for the priests and the cantors. ... In order to assist the activities of those who occupied the apse, they were given the means of dominating the congregation, in that the level of the apse was raised above the rest of the basilica (which later suggested the idea of placing a crypt under the apse). The congregation was pushed back into the nave. Thus the Roman church with its classical conception was born, and it underwent only minor changes right up to the Middle Ages. (Bieler, p. 36)

In essence, this is how sacerdotal worship virtually evolved. Political buildings required royal leaders who did high and holy things. Taking their cue again from the Temple worship of the Old Testament, the reenactment of the sacrifice of Christ became paramount in the minds of many as to what worship in the church of Jesus Christ was really all about. Preaching quickly took a back seat in terms of importance and the church buildings reflected that sense of low priority.

We must notice that the lay-out of the lengthened basilica, with the choir reserved for the clergy and the priestly apse around the sacred altar, exactly corresponded to the underlying requirements of the Roman liturgy. It faithfully reproduced the dogmatic trend of the Church, concerning priesthood and the material presence of Christ in the Eucharist, which marked ecclesiastical thought from that period on. This trend gradually displaced other ideas, and slowly but completely triumphed in the definition of dogmas in the following centuries. The doctrine of transubstantiation is inconceivable apart from the belief in a holy palace where the Divinity is present by means of the sacrament, and the idea of a priestly class privileged over against the lay members of the community. The material presence of the Divinity in sacred places and objects, which are thus accorded respect and veneration, means that they may be approached only by ecclesiastical officials who have been initiated into the sacred mystery. (Beiler, p. 37)

c) *Pilgrim Liturgy*: worship as procession and performance

One of the earliest and most basic of symbols of the Christian life is one of pilgrimage. “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Mt. 16:24 ESV) The church consists of these spiritual pilgrims who gather at regular times on their way through life and worship their God. But with the construction of sites of veneration and church buildings changing from simply housing the worship of God to actually creating the concept of holy space, the worship of God began to change into a form of pilgrimage itself.

Pilgrimage changed from the journey of the Christian through this life to the journeys the Christian takes during this life – visiting holy sites and relics for the extra measure of grace, forgiveness, prosperity, etc. that were sought by those in need^{xxxv}.

The fourth century was a time when Christians travelled to other parts of the world much more than they had tended to do before, and consequently were more aware of other ways of worshipping than they formerly had been. (Bradshaw, p. 222)

As we have seen, catechumens were already required to take a spiritual pilgrimage of up to a year in order to arrive at the point of baptism and reception into the community of the faithful. The teaching/indoctrination had begun outside until both faith and knowledge were considered verifiable and adequate. The ritual bath of baptism depicted in bold terms the passing from the death of the old life to the taking up of the new, dressed in the righteousness of Christ^{xxxvi}. And finally, the new Christian received entrance into the community of believers

through which he gained access to the worship of God and the sacrament of the Lord's Table.

By the Byzantine Age, the very worship of God itself began to take the shape of a pilgrimage - a traveling from the world toward the kingdom of God, a movement from outside the pale right into the Holy of Holies. The ordinary worshipper could not do this fully on his own, of course. The pilgrimage of worship was not one taken by the worshipper himself. It was done through a mediator. It was acted out by the priest on behalf of the worshipping body, in effect, leaving the worshipper behind^{xxxvii}.

The basilican style building, with its long nave and recessed focal point, lent itself not only to a progressive distancing and separation of laity from clergy but also for the increased grandeur and spectacle it offered which provided the sense of worship in terms of movement.

In a longitudinal hall, the focus is at the end, and the aisled building itself invariably provides a processional approach to the place that the emperor's throne - or later, the bishop's chair - was set. The goal of the journey, such as that at Porec was heaven itself; but what gave the worshipper a sense that the space was inhabited, that the throne was an icon of the throne of heaven, was the decoration of the apse, the semicircular east end of the church. It might be a Greek-style Pantocrator (Christ as ruler of all) as at Cefalu in Sicily; or a more abstract design, like the cross as the Tree of Life in San Clemente in Rome. (Stancliffe, p. 23-24)

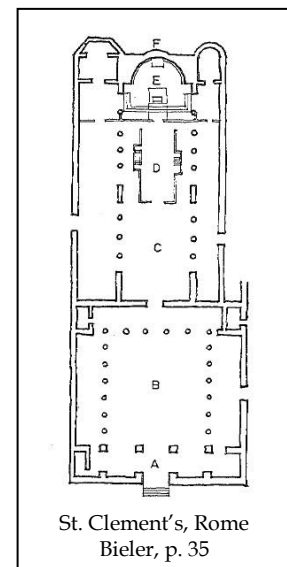
Behind this sense of processional movement up a longitudinally planned basilica lies a vision of our relationship to God that was to prove dominant for some 800 years or more. This basilica functioned like a gigantic throne-room, with little to impede the progress of the worshipper towards the apsidal end. (Stancliffe, p. 37)

In the period of the Constantinian church, the liturgy of worship still drew some distinct parallels with that of the synagogue worship of the Jews. This included the processional in some synagogues as the Torah was being carried.

The typical synagogue pattern, with the congregants gathered around the preaching desk, expressing community, did not convey to the worshippers a holy space, only a holy congregation gathered around a holy book. As the church moves into the Byzantine era, beginning the service with a processional would expand to carry through the liturgy itself and even move the clergy farther and farther in, which meant, farther and farther away from the laity who could only watch.

The basilican structure proved ideal for this. Such a fine structure must, by its very nature, be given a recognition and a prestige of being “holy”. After all, the Temple had its Holy of Holies; and the pagan temples of the Roman culture had contained their central locations where the idol proudly stood waiting for worshippers to enter. The rise of bishops, which came to the church virtually as soon as the New Testament canon was written, communicated the notion of position and rank of authority in the church over that of elders in leading the flock in worship as well as in governance. The position of bishop is accentuated by being seated in the apse, a place of singular authority and prestige. Already, the man and his actions have begun competing with the Word of God proclaimed.

One other illustration to note the development of architectural design and its compatible theological control on



the higher definition of worship can be observed in the first St. Clement's at Rome, which was built at the close of the fourth century.

The increasing importance given to the altar as a sacred place ... illustrated in a striking way ... the resurgence within Christianity of pagan and Jewish liturgical and sacerdotal conventions. ... We must notice that the lay-out of the lengthened basilica, with the choir reserved for the clergy and the priestly apse around the sacred altar, exactly corresponded to the underlying requirements of the Roman liturgy. It faithfully reproduced the dogmatic trend of the Church, concerning priesthood and the material presence of Christ in the Eucharist, which marked ecclesiastical thought from that period on. This trend gradually displaced other ideas, and slowly but completely triumphed in the definition of dogmas in the following centuries. The doctrine of transubstantiation is inconceivable apart from the belief in a holy place where the Divinity is present by means of the sacrament, and the idea of a priestly class privileged over against the lay members of the community. (Bieler, p. 37)

During the same period of time, the very definition of worship was, likewise, being formed. Whereas the New Testament shows evidence of war against the threat of Gnosticism and a call to stand apart from it, the church, during these opening centuries, moved the focus of its services of worship from open to reserved to ritualistic to mysterious. The preaching of the Word, which had been used by Paul to challenge, convert, educate, instruct and equip the saints, was slowly relegated to the sidelines of importance and in its place of priority, the observance of the Lord's Supper became the very meaning of worship itself^{xxxviii}. "Architecture was a powerful tool; after all, it shaped the spaces where heaven and earth met." (L&A, Doig, p. 30)

Church construction from the Byzantine through the Medieval Period

For our purposes, we may move quickly through the next several centuries. The reason for that is that the government of the church regarding these three primary areas - the basilican design being rather singularly adopted and suitable for performance liturgy done by Christian priests - only continues to tighten its grip of control, even as other corruption drastically deteriorates the integrity of the doctrine and teaching of the Christian faith. Also, the advent of Gothic architecture, which virtually explodes in the late medieval period, and which, in other architectural studies, would well be regarded as a watershed of significance in church history, is regarded for our purposes as only a crowning conclusion to the dominance of sacerdotal, formalized worship for which the Roman Catholic Church is so well known^{xxxix}.

During the same period, the Christian church continues in the east but will also not be a focus of our attention. Doctrinal issues of considerable substance deteriorate the relationship with the west until the schism of 1054 AD, after which their distinctions have kept this second largest denomination apart not only from the Roman Church but also from virtually all the influences of the 16th century Reformation or the cultural expansion into the United States.

Summarily, what is happening in the Eastern Orthodox Church architecturally is a much more ready embrace of the centralized building design. The gathering of God's people is seen as central. However, the worship is even more segregated than in the



west. Western screens are replaced with complete walls in Eastern churches separating the nave from the sanctuary to block even the visual inclusion of the worshipper.

The priesthood is upheld and revered as he officiates over the seven mysteries (sacraments) in a similar way as they are observed in Roman Catholicism. Baptism is usually done privately and is considered regenerative. The Eucharist, although not as precisely defined as it is in the West, remains sacerdotal and the primary activity of the worship service.

By and large the Orthodox churches have retained the tradition of the single altar-table, a practice different from that which developed in the West. Although early altar-tables were simple affairs, often made of wood, their dignity was sometimes stressed by placing a canopy above them. Gradually the sense developed in the Eastern Church of the eucharist (sic) as full of awe, dread, and mystery so great that the layman had to be shielded from it. ... In time a solid screen, the iconostasis, was added to the veil. This screen cut the church into two compartments, one for the laity and another for the clergy and the altar-table. (White, p. 62-63)

The Role of Preaching

Preaching during the Byzantine era was never completely ignored. Indeed, there are historical records of many fine and dedicated preachers during this period who took the instruction of God's people devotedly and seriously.

But preaching was readily allowed to be sidelined in terms of its priority in the actual worship service.

The language barrier also contributed to the difficulty in understanding the Scriptures. How can one do grammatical-historical exegesis when almost no one west of the Adriatic Sea could read Greek, let alone Hebrew? True expository preaching was almost impossible. No wonder the conscientious preacher found allegorical exegesis attractive! (Old, vol. 3, p. xvi)

Preaching was also going through periods of exploration and experimentation and varying influences were made upon what made good preaching, which is a study unto itself.

Toward the end of the fifth century, however, Christian theology began to take a new direction. ... Although there were voices of protest all along the way, the visions of the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchy would have a profound influence on the worship and piety of the whole Christian Church down to the time of the Reformation. The principle of hierarchy would become one of the foundations of Byzantine culture and, in fact, of medieval culture generally, both in East and West. The principles so obscurely advanced by Dionysius would become foundation stones for the building of medieval civilization. Theology headed in the direction of mysticism. (Old, vol. 3, p. 4-5)

One of the signs of strength during this period was the organization of the reading of the Scriptures called a lectionary.

What developed with the visual arts came to be true of preaching as well. The development of conventions was at the heart of the development of the art. The chief vehicle for bringing about this conventionalizing was the liturgical calendar. This was evolving rapidly, for the feasts and fasts of the liturgical calendar certain kinds of sermons came to be expected. (Old, vol. 3, p. 10)

This attention to the Scriptures helped to guide and maintain the substance and goal of preaching and give it form and direction by the time of the Reformation.

The Rise of Symbolism – With the arrival of Gothic architecture - and with it the rise in art and artful expression - and as liturgies became more invested in display/performance, more attention was given to the characterization of symbolism.^{x1}

We have already seen this in the administration of baptism, even since Dura-Europos. Symbolism was not only depicted in the artwork on the walls but had increasingly become entrenched in the execution of the ordinance itself. This included an exorcism of the individual – not because he was truly suspected of being possessed – but as a symbol of his being cleansed from sin; and the number of times he was to be washed – to represent the Trinity, as well as the undressing before and redressing afterwards – to symbolize newness in Christ.

“The ceremonial of the liturgy was becoming highly elaborate, and in the case of baptism, highly dramatic; but it was not merely theatre, it was the articulation of the fundamental truths of heaven and earth – spiritual, religious and political.” (L&A, Doig, p. 52)

In the assembly of the faithful for worship, new symbolism was applied to already determined architecture as if it now could be linked to Old Testament signs and meanings.

The first part of the service began in many places (both in synagogues and churches) with a procession, ... [T]he architecture of the church, like that of the synagogue, had symbolic meaning. In both, the part of the buildings corresponding to the sanctuary meant heaven. The same symbolism also applied to the nave and sanctuary (the Holy of Holies and holy place of the Tabernacle) in the Temple at Jerusalem. In fact, in most churches, the central space is divided horizontally, like the Tabernacle and the Temple, by either the steps of the sanctuary or the chancel rail. ... [In three specific churches discussed] the pulpit stood at the end of the nave and was joined by a bridge to the sanctuary from where it was entered. Thus, the divinely inspired Scriptures are drawn from the sanctuary into the nave, or, symbolically speaking, out of heaven unto earth. (Wilkinson, p. 18-19)

Yet, the greatest embellishment of symbolism was reserved for the focus of the worship service – the Mass. It is beyond our purposes here to review the background of this but simply to point out the end result. Even though the Greek word *mysterion* is used in a variety of ways, including the preaching of the

gospel, it is never used in Scripture to describe the Lord's Supper. Yet, as the Greek word yields to the Latin *sacramentum*, reference to the preaching is set aside and, instead, the focus becomes the observance of the Lord's Supper.

*Increasingly the mass itself became the subject of various allegorical interpretations. Though the laity took little direct part in the mass, they still were able to see much of it as it was celebrated by the priest. The allegorical significances taught in medieval manuals often had little if any direct relationship to the purpose of actions in the mass or furnishings in the building. So developed had these allegorical references become by the thirteenth century that William Durandus, Bishop of Mende, could give a detailed allegorical explanation of every item in the church building from the tiles on the roof (soldiers guarding the Church) to the steps to the altar-table (apostles and martyrs). His book, the *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, "constructed entirely on the basis of allegory, continued to be the liturgical handbook for the late Middle Ages and beyond." (Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, vol. 1, p. 115) Indeed it had abundant influence on the building of Protestant churches in the nineteenth century. Allegorical interpretations gave the people a subjective interpretation of the mass and the church building. Very frequently such symbolic thought completely obscured the actual purpose of actions of the mass or parts of the edifice. (White, p. 67)*

The Church Prior to the Reformation

Theopolitical influence within the church had become more acute and critical. The very definition of the worship had been transformed into the business of the church and the primary way of gaining economic power. The church had grown large and oppressive. The sacramental rites of the Church were submitted to under pain of eternal damnation.

Clearly the people had lost their active roles in the public worship of the Church, becoming deaf and mute spectators. The doing of common worship had been largely monopolized by "the priest and the clerks." ... The time of public worship is spent in private prayer. ... Excluded from an active part in the liturgy, the laity had become involved in a variety of personal devotions conducted while the mass was being said by the priest. ... In effect, the mass had become something which the clergy performed for the people, while the choir offices had likewise ceased to be the concern of the people. (White, p. 65)

After the (first) millennium bells had ceased to toll, the church world and life view settled in to the understanding that the kingdom of God was now on

the earth. With that, a new age of building began – which prompted the advent of Gothic architectural design and engineering - which resulted in the most fantastic cathedrals, abbeys and parish churches that man had ever seen.

Technological advances in construction, masonry and woodworking, plus the growing competition among cities and bishops to have greater and greater visible presences led to more and more impressive buildings. The purpose of these buildings was not to gather the people to worship God – they were to house relics, retain the tombs of the wealthy and the prominent, and to properly hold forth prayers and Masses for the living and the dead – all of which were income-producing activities.

The cathedrals and abbeys, built in the first three centuries of the second millennium increased and exaggerated the themes of hierarchy and sacerdotal worship.

The typical medieval plan was largely intended to meet the devotional needs of the clergy and to provide sufficient room for a number of chantry altars. ... An English medieval church is a mysterious succession of self-contained rooms, seemingly stretching away into infinity; there is a gradual unveiling of its character till at last the high altar is reached at the east end. ... The long chancel found its complete development in the aisled rectangular plan which the larger parish churches tended to assume after the middle of the fourteenth century in conscious imitation of such cathedrals as York and Lincoln. ... Originally the division in a church had been twofold; a sanctuary in which the altar was placed and a nave where the faithful could assemble. (Addleshaw, p. 15-16, 18)

Buildings designed in the overall shape of the cross seemed immensely suitable and succeeded in dividing the building into the three critical areas. The first was the nave for the gathering, the coming and going of the laity as well as for the locating of individualized centers of prayer and the performing of private

Masses. Next were the transepts, the natural dividing line between the laity and the clergy. Then came the chancel, the revered and holiest place where the altar resided, protected and honored, and where the worship of God truly occurred. Separating these three sections, for practical as well as symbolic reasons, were screens, walls, reredoses, quires, and smaller chapels, all of which tended to block the easy view of the mystery making it all the more substantial in the mind of the visitor relegated and restricted to the nave who only grew more and more superstitious in its thinking of all this.

Certainly one of the most important types of church buildings in the Middle Ages were the churches erected for the use of monastic orders. The primary function of these buildings was to provide a setting for the daily offices, the seven hours and the night office which the monastic community recited as their work of God. ... The most important part of the monastic church ... was the choir. The nave might be used on special occasions or, if it also served a parish church, frequently. But the choir was used several times daily and was a church within the church. ... (White, p. 68-69)

Another very significant building type was that evolved in the great cathedrals. The cathedral was distinguished from other churches wince it contained the bishop's throne and was thus the mother church of the whole diocese. ... [T]ypical medieval cathedral was far more complex than two rooms. Indeed it was often conceived of as a series of rooms, each serving a particular purpose and separated from the others by walls or screens. ... Thus the interior space of the medieval cathedral was broken up into a series of rooms, each having a specific function. (White, p. 70-71)

As does often happen, interpretation often followed symbolism rather than leading it. The entire length of the nave was now retrofitted with its own sense of pilgrimage – the stations of the cross – as a way that a layman might worship God on his own and individually, without troubling the clergy for assistance.

It is no meaningless irony that the Reformation was finally brought on by the Church's desire to build a new St. Peter's in Rome.

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- ⁱ Reliable tradition as well as history of areas such as the Persian Empire, Egypt and Russia bear witness to the amazing and Spirit-led work of other disciples as well.
- ⁱⁱ The significance of diaconal ministry among those in the ancient church is clearly demonstrable. But it is not germane to the subject at hand.
- ⁱⁱⁱ The Greek words *πρεσβυτερος* and *επισκοπος* are clearly interchangeable and refer to the same office and not to distinctly different offices (Calvin will defend this frankly later on: "But in indiscriminately calling those who rule the church 'bishops,' 'presbyters,' 'pastors,' and 'ministers,' I did so according to Scriptural usage, which interchanges these terms. (Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 1060))
- ^{iv} This last record could well have been done in the midst of a church service in Corinth. As the later letters of Paul do most of the clear instruction regarding baptism, it makes sense to conclude that the charge and authority to baptize is given to the elders and should take place before the congregation.
- ^v In Paul's writings, we see evidence already that such teachers were sometimes orthodox and functioned as part of a team. In other instances, such teachers were untrained, unorthodox and often self-appointed and Paul viewed many of them as enemies of the church rather than as fellow-workers.
- ^{vi} "And the ancients themselves admit that this was introduced by human agreement to meet the need of the times. ... [T] remove seeds of dissensions, all oversight was committed to one person. Just as the presbyters, therefore, know that they re, according to the custom of the church, subject to him who presides, so the bishops recognize that they are superior to the presbyters more according to the custom of the church than by the Lord's actual arrangement, ... " (Calvin, p. 1069) Calvin goes into good detail as to how officers were raised up in the ancient church and how that system was politically corrupted well before the time of the Reformation.
- ^{vii} "Long tradition connects the church of San Clemente with St. Clement of Rome ..., who died at the end of the first century. ... Wherever Clement performed his liturgy, it was already clearly ordered and the clerical and lay responsibilities differentiated. Around the year 95 he wrote to the Corinthians, presumably because they fell short of his ideal: 'We are bound to perform in due order all that the master bade us to accomplish at their proper seasons. ... To the high priest are given his special ministrations, a special place is reserved for the priests, and special duties are imposed upon the levites (sic), while the layman is bound by the ordinances concerning the laity.' ... Clearly, Clement will have been aware that the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed a quarter of a century before he wrote, so his appeal to the model of Temple worship is particularly interesting." (*Liturgy and Architecture*, Doig, p. 8)
- ^{viii} Tsafir (p. 28-29) discusses the archeological work done in Capernaum by Virgilio Corbo (1968, 1986) at a site referred to as "St. Peter's House". The gospels refer to this house as one with which Jesus, himself, frequented. Beginning, therefore, as a private residence, it shows remodeling done as early as the 1st century AD, and again in the fourth century, and total rebuilding in the fifth century. This last rebuilding, in the shape of an octagon, dominates the archeological remains, however, and fits the structural design typical for a Byzantine-era centralized plan.
- ^{ix} "The oldest remains that are traditionally identified as house-churches are to be found in Rome under the so-called 'Title Churches' (*Tituli*), though subsequent changes and wholesale destruction have removed what would constitute archaeological proof for either a house-church or *domus ecclesiae*. (*L&A*, Doig, p. 5)
- ^x *L&A*, Doig, p. 10
- ^{xi} Bieler claims the house was built in 232 AD. The city was captured and abandoned in 256-7 when the Sassanid Persians besieged the city and conquered it. At the most, it would only have been used as a place of worship for 25 years.
- ^{xii} *L&A*, Doig, p. 3.

xiii Even today, Greek Orthodox baptisms include an exorcism in which the sponsor is called upon to renounce Satan and all his works from the child to be baptized.

xiv MacMullen observes "the lack of any pipe into or out of the baptismal basin, from which it must follow that the ritual involved the sprinkling of the holy water, not immersion." (p. 3)

xv "With a depth of 95.5 cm and a length of 1.065 m, it is similar to the Roman baths at Dura, though not adequate for immersion. ... Syrian practice clearly didn't require full immersion." (L&A, Doig, p. 16)

xvi The most informative guide as to the purposes for these rooms are the remnant frescos still on the walls. The presence of such artwork in a place designated for worship should be noted as well.

xvii The rebuking words of Jesus to Peter in Jn. 13:8-10 seem not only to comment on this tendency but correct it.

xviii Doig comments on how this was very much on the minds of Christians during the time of Constantine: "It is widely held that the rite became more dramatic, even awe-inspiring, in order to bring about an emotional conversion in those amongst the great number being baptized, who were doing so for less good reasons, ..." (L&A, Doig, p. 43-44)

xix The author would assert here that with the requirement of nakedness in receiving baptism, a separation of the sexes would have been required for the sake of modesty. This would have led to the temptation of adding even more of a mystical element to the baptismal ritual as time progressed.

xx "Practice appears to have varied according to circumstance, resources, local tradition and theology." (L&A, Doig, p. 18)

xxi MacMullen seems to suggest there is evidence that a dividing wall was removed at some point making two smaller rooms into one larger one (p. 3). Also, the priority of east in terms of orientation was culturally accepted and widely used. The fact that the room was arranged so that the worshippers might face east, which would have been the direction of Jerusalem, does not necessarily mean that the occupants chose this strictly for religious reasons.

xxii "The only permanent fixture of the hall was a bema or platform with masonry foundations at the eastern end. ... In other words, the liturgical focus in the Hall was on the worship and readings conducted from the pulpitum, which gave authority both to the clergy and their teaching, without images around the dais which might suggest idolatrous practices". (L&A, Doig, p. 12, 13)

xxiii MacMullen envisions it this way: "the sexes separated with men to the right as one entered, in eastern fashion; the priest presiding with a wooden table behind him, standing as I suppose though it is possible that he had a chair to himself; and his clergy seated to one side, honored women, virgins or widows, to the other side. ... As to the practice of facing east for prayer, prescribed by the *Didascalia*, at Dura this would mean toward the altar, since Room 4 [the worship room] was 'oriented'. (MacMullen, p. 5, 7)

xxiv The *Didache*, one of the earliest post-New Testament writings we have, speaks of directions for a proper Christian baptism but does not go into any instruction as to its being a separate ritual requiring its own room. Likewise, there are prayers suggested for use during the observance of the Lord's Supper but nothing more to indicate further ritual or even the need/presence of a priestly office. And then, in chapter fourteen, instructions for Christian assembly on the Lord's Day is totally nonritualistic, but focused singularly on fellowship in worship.

xxv "Within weeks of his triumphal entry into the city, he commissioned the vast Lateran basilica to be built on the site of the barracks of Maxentius' guard, the *equites singulares*, on the Caelian hill beside the Sessorian Palace. It was to be 'an audience hall of Christ the King'. (L&A, Doig, p. 23-24)

xxvi "To most of his subjects, the Emperor was divine; now even the Christians conceived the office in sacred terms and recognized Constantine as the instrument of God's purpose. For

Eusebius, the Emperor was God's representative on earth, and just as Christ as God's instrument in Creation, so was the Emperor God's instrument in governing the peoples of the earth." (L&A, Doig, p. 24)

^{xxvii} This building does not exist anymore but, as MacMullen puts it, it is "rapturously described by Eusebius, so that its plan can be easily reconstructed." (MacMullen, p. 10)

^{xxviii} There is evidence of other pre-Constantinian buildings that tell a different story. "There is considerable evidence that the fourth- to fifth-century basilica of San Crisogono incorporates a pre-Constantinian hall, probably the earliest known, built *de novo* as a church building perhaps as early as 310. [It] indicates a work of public architecture hierarchically arranged, setting apart clergy from people. ... It was against this more public architecture that Porphyry wrote in his accusation *Against the Christians* that they were now 'imitating the construction of temples, erecting great buildings in which they meet to pray, but there is nothing to prevent them from doing this in their own homes since, of course, their Lord hears them everywhere.'" (L&A, Doig, p. 10)

^{xxix} Old St. Peter's was such a pilgrim church, not having its own set congregation. Instead, it was like the churches in the Holy Land and its influence helped to standardize the developing liturgy and vestments as well as the building of future church buildings.

^{xxx} Others known of to have been constructed under Helena's direction included the church at the traditional location of Mt. Sinai, the Mt. of Olives (Eleona), and the Mamre Church near Hebron.

^{xxxi} There is a common notion or tradition that Christian worship rooms are typically built facing east – a symbol of Jesus' resurrection with the rising of the sun. But this does not seem to be consistently true throughout church history (McNamara, p. 83). Hence, rather than speak of the "east" wall or the "west" wall, I simply refer to the narrow wall vs. the broad wall in discussing room layout.

^{xxxii} It should be noted that Eusebius preached at the dedication of the Cathedral at Tyre.

"Friends of God, and priests clothed with the sacred vestment and the heavenly crown of glory, the divine unction and priestly garments of the Holy Spirit. ... Shall I call you a new Bezalel, the master builder of a divine tabernacle, or a Solomon, king of a new and far nobler Jerusalem, or a new Zerubbabel, who adorned the temple with the glory that was far greater than the old?"

(L&A, Doig, p. 27) Even with such trappings, it still stands to reason that the intent of Paulinus was more pure in terms of worship than was Constantine's.

^{xxxiii} "Imperial imagery had been taken up in the decoration of churches; imperial forms dominated ecclesiastical architecture, and imperial ceremonial, dress and badges of office exerted a powerful influence over both the liturgy and liturgical dress. In 318 Constantine gave bishops jurisdiction over legal cases involving Christians, beginning a process of integration of the clergy into the legal, civic and social structures of the Empire." (L&A, Doig, p. 38)

^{xxxiv} "An almost inevitable consequence was the loss of intimacy of the small Christian group. Increasingly the clergy performed the acts of worship, with the laity becoming more and more passive." (White, p. 56)

^{xxxv} The Pilgrimage of Etheria is an interesting record of an individual woman's own pilgrimage through the Holy Land during this age.

^{xxxvi} "In Rome, pre-baptismal ceremonies took place as the candidate progressed through the architectural spaces on the way to the font in the light under the 'monumental baldacchino' of the dome with its drum resting on eight columns; in Aquileia, it is tempted to speculate that the pre-baptismal ceremonies took place as the candidates entered through the south-eastern door ..., via a small room previously associated with baptism, which may have been for undressing the candidate, with full anointing of the body perhaps taking place in the first bay of the southern hall. The renunciation of the devil in the Eastern rite was performed facing west, reflected in the orientation of the mosaic in the next bay, if the orientation is as for the officiant. The candidate

then turned back towards the east in the next bay to undertake the 'contract with Christ' implied in Ambrose's description." (*L&A*, Doig, p. 48)

^{xxxvii} J. White shows in his observation here how the transition toward sacerdotal worship demonstrated itself: "In the earliest period the altar-table was usually a table, ... and quite distinct from the solid cube of the pagan altar. Usually the Christian altar-table was rather small, often almost square in shape, through some were possibly shaped like the letter 'D,' reflecting the banqueting table of the Romans. Beneath it might be a *confessio*, a repository for relics of martyrs and holy persons, and the whole might be given grandeur by a stone canopy (*baldachino*) above. In the first centuries the altar-table was always free-standing. The major clergy stood behind it, and the lesser clergy, singers, and congregation would stand in front and on either side of it. The bishop and presbyters celebrated the eucharist (*sic*) from behind the altar-table, facing the people It thus permitted a considerable intimacy and visibility." (White, p. 58)

^{xxxviii} "In this they very wickedly corrupt the ancient institution, because they create by their ordination not presbyters to lead and feed the people, but priests to perform sacrifices. Similarly, when they consecrate deacons, they do nothing about their true and proper office, but ordain them only for certain rites concerned with chalice and paten." (Calvin, p. 1088)

^{xxxix} There will be three, historic eras of Gothic architecture. In spite of how significantly massive and permanent such buildings are, all three eras pass fairly quickly from the scene in terms of popularity and usefulness.

^{xl} J. Wilkinson, *Ancient Churches Revealed*, p. 17.