

# THE FRACTION IN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX LITURGY

## Preliminary Note

This is the first in a series of articles on the Ritual of the Liturgy of the Coptic Orthodox Church. In preparing an account of the ritual of the Coptic Orthodox Church, a number of difficulties arise, not the least of which is the lack of a definitive account of the ceremonial of the Coptic rite in English. Indeed, it is to be doubted whether anything like a definitive rituale exists in either Arabic or Coptic. There are some works which seek to prescribe, in varying degrees, the rules of liturgy. The most notable are both from the 14th century: *The Lamp of Darkness for the Explanation of the Service* by Ibn Kabar, and *The Precious Jewel in Ecclesiastical Sciences* by Youhanna ibn Sabaa. It is far from clear when the Coptic Liturgy was standardized; King (1947:417) suggests it was during the Patriarchate of Gabriel II Ibn Tarik (1131-1145). Patriarch Gabriel V (1409-1427) further regulated the liturgical practices, and published *The Ritual Order*. The Arabic texts of these works have been published in modern times, although, as far as is known, no English translations exist.

Whereas in the West, prescriptive rubrics are relatively easily obtained, in the East it seems that this has rarely, if ever, been the case. Rubricated liturgical texts in English of the Coptic rite do exist, but the rubrics they provide tend to be extremely vague or else of uncertain authority. The only significant work published in English by the Church which endeavours to describe the ritual of the Liturgy is that by Bishop Mettaous (1977). These difficulties can be seen in any attempt to describe the ritual of the Fraction in the Coptic Orthodox rite. The accounts of scholars who have studied the rite (most notably, Burmeister 1948-56, who makes use of Arabic sources) or those who had seen or had the liturgy described to them (most notably, as far as ceremonial associated with the bread is concerned, Drower 1956) are helpful, but they seem to be limited by their use of a very narrow range of sources to whom they (but possibly not the Coptic Church) appear to ascribe authority. The accounts of the Fraction given by King (1947:468) and Brightman (1896:180-1) and the description given by Butler (1897:vol II:290) are inadequate and probably inaccurate. Lady Drower (1956:181-182) provides a detailed description, complete with diagram, of how the Coptic Fraction was described (and probably demonstrated) to her. Bute, in his text of the Coptic Liturgy (1908:116) provides only minimal rubrics for the Fraction, and those largely inaccurate. A relatively detailed description of the Coptic Fraction is found in Mettaous, 1997, and rubrics are included in *Coptic Theological College* (Sydney), 1994. The very brief account given by Day (1993:104) is inaccurate, and confuses the Consigning and the Commixture with the Fraction; he is equally inaccurate in stating (1993:103) that there are only six Fraction Prayers. Some writers (including Day 1993) seem to confuse the Liturgy of St Basil as used by the Catholic Copts (that is, members of the Coptic Catholic Patriarchate of Alexandria) with that used by the Coptic Orthodox; for a description of the Liturgy of the Coptic Catholics, see Liesel 1960:3-15 and Attwater 1945:72-93. Observing the Fraction during celebrations of the Liturgy may be helpful, but it may equally be confusing. While consistency in some elements of the ceremonial has been found amongst the many Bishops and Priests whose celebrations have been observed, there has also been significant variation. Because Coptic Orthodox Priests usually receive their instruction in ritual after their ordination, during the period known as The Forty Days, during which they spend time in a monastery being instructed by a senior monastic Priest, there will inevitably be differences in practice. What one senior Priest may teach a novice as correct practice, another may regard as inadequate or even erroneous. Even the 'secret' (that is, inaudible) prayers of the Liturgy were only written down until relatively recently, and certainly there remains a sense in which the 'mysteries' known to the Priests should not be readily accessible to others. Yet, as Burmeister notes, the rubrics "are of the greatest importance for the proper understanding of the performance of the Liturgy and of the manual acts of the officiants." (January-March 1949:3) His own series of articles in the *Eastern Churches Quarterly* (1948-1956) published many of the rubrics from the Arabic in English for the first time. The question, of course, arises as to whether there was ever (or could ever have been) a single, 'officially correct' form of the Liturgy. While it may be possible to assume a single approved text, essentially in the age of printing, it is difficult to accept the existence of a single approved ritual, particular in the absence of the sort of detailed (and published) ceremonial regulations are as found in the West. The very structure and text of the Liturgy is known to have developed and to have changed over the centuries, no matter how much what might be thought of as 'Orthodox fundamentalists' may argue for a single, unchanging and unchangeable practice from the beginning to the present. There is no definitive, nor even, one must note, satisfactory, translation into English of the Coptic Liturgy. There are versions in English translations which distort the Coptic original, and there are versions in virtually illiterate English. Most English translations are based on the Arabic, rather than the Coptic, texts. As yet no version has been produced in which accuracy of the meaning of the Coptic (as opposed to just a literal word-for-word translation, or a translation of the Arabic) has been combined with an appropriately liturgical (and therefore at least minimally poetic) style of English. The closest to a traditional English liturgical style is the translation by Bute (1908, 1973), although this omits much material (particularly the 'secret' prayers), and may be inappropriate for contemporary use. Most existing translations contain passages which either do not mean in English what the Coptic text means or have no intelligible meaning in English. These problems are greatly compounded when a poor English text is chanted to tunes intended for the Coptic text; the result can be unidentifiable as the English language.

The ceremonial description and liturgical text contained in this article, therefore, can hardly lay claim to final authority. It is based on the author's own ritual instruction during The Forty Days, enhanced by the inestimable advantage of being instructed by and being able to ask questions of the very senior monastic Priest-instructor for several years thereafter. The instructions received were recorded in detailed notes and diagrams, and have been carefully compared with texts of the Liturgy published by the Church and with scholarly studies. No official status is, or can be, claimed for the rubrics described herein, although they are, to the author's knowledge, accurate. Since this account is intended for the use of English-speakers, traditional, and common, English liturgical terms have generally been used. Where Greek, Coptic or Arabic terms are included for reference purposes, they have been transliterated. It may be noted that there are few liturgical terms which possess a discrete Coptic name; for most, Greek terms have been employed, although with particularly Coptic accentuation.

## The Fraction

The Fraction is the ceremonial breaking of the Eucharistic Bread, and derives from the Lord's own actions at the Last Supper (Matthew XXVI:26). It was a sufficiently significant element of the Eucharist to make 'the breaking of bread' (Latin: *Fractio Panis*) a title for the Eucharist itself (Acts II:42). (Cf. Warren 1897:109) As Ball (1912:360) notes, the Fraction can be of three types: the imitative, the mystical or the utilitarian, or in combinations of these. The imitative Fraction follows the words of the Lord, with the bread being broken at the words: 'He broke it.' The Coptic Liturgy includes an element of the imitative Fraction in that the Priest, while saying the words 'He broke it', partially breaks the Oblation. The mystical Fraction, "found in almost, if not quite, all Liturgies of ancient descent, takes place after Consecration at a varying point in the service; it is frequently accompanied by words and ceremonies of highly mystical import, which include the mingling of a portion of the broken consecrated Bread with the consecrated Wine in the Chalice." (Ball 1912:360) In the Coptic Liturgy, the Fraction properly so-called, is essentially mystical. The utilitarian Fraction is simply the division of the Body into portions for the Communion, and is the form of Fraction mentioned by the earliest writers. The Coptic Liturgy includes a utilitarian Fraction in that the Body is broken - albeit without any specific rubrics or accompanying words - immediately prior to Communion being distributed to the clergy and the laity. In the Roman Catholic and some Anglican and Lutheran churches, the utilitarian Fraction is not necessary, since Communion is given in the form of separate and individual 'breads' (that is, wafers). In the Orthodox churches, the Bread is always in the form of a single loaf, and must therefore be divided (as it is in the

Coptic Liturgy) for the purposes of Communion. "Originally the fraction was entirely utilitarian and so Augustine refers to the bread being 'broken small for distribution' (Ep. 149.16). It soon attracted a symbolic interpretation, Paul paving the way with his argument for unity on the grounds that the communicants have all partaken of the fragments broken from a single loaf (1 Cor. 10.17) - so it was a sign of the gathering into one of the children of God (cf. Didache 9.4)." [Davies1986:246]. However, by the second century the symbolism tended to be that of the breaking of the Body of Christ in the Passion. Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople (552-582AD), declared that the Fraction represented the supreme moment of the death of the Lord. (Eutychius, *De Paschata et SS. Euch. Pat. Graec.*, t LXXXVI, vol. 2396A) In the earliest liturgical texts, reference to the fraction is minimal, and there is usually only a passing note to the fact that it has occurred. For example, The Didache (probably written sometime between 102 and 180AD) includes a prayer 'concerning the broken loaf', but no rubrics for the breaking. (Text in Sparks, 1978:314) Justin Martyr (c.100-c.165AD), describing the Eucharist in his First Apology, says only that, after prayers and thanksgivings, "there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons." (Text in Roberts and Donaldson 1987:186) The prayerbook attributed to Bishop Sarapion (probably 350-356AD), the rubrics read only: "After the [Lord's ?] prayer (comes) the fraction, and in the fraction a prayer." (quoted in Wordsworth, 1923:65) In his teachings on the ritual of the Eucharist, St Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-386AD), for example, makes no mention of the Fraction, although giving detailed instructions as to how the Communicant is to receive the (presumably broken) Body and the Blood. (Text in Schaff and Wace 1983:156) In the early church, it appears that the Deacons often broke the Bread (cf. Dix 1978:131) prior to its distribution by the bishop or priest.

In the ancient Liturgy of St James, "an apostolic rite of undoubted antiquity" (Abba Seraphim: 1996:193) the rubric for the Fraction is specific and very simple: Then the Priest breaks the bread and holds the half in his right hand, and the half in his left, and dips that in his right hand in the chalice, saying: The union of the all-holy body and precious blood of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Then he makes the sign of the cross on that in his left hand; then with that which has been signed the other half: then forthwith he begins to divide. (Text in Roberts and Donaldson 1985:548; cf. Neale and Littledale 1859:58-9) The Liturgy of St James "appears to have been the result of a fusion of the old Jerusalem rite with the anaphora of St Basil in its earliest form" (Jasper and Cuming 1999:88) and was widely used in Jerusalem until the twelfth century. In the Western liturgical tradition generally, the Fraction is quite simple. In the Roman Rite, the Host (that is, the Body in the form of an unleavened wafer) is broken in half, and a fragment is then broken from one half and placed into the chalice at the Commixture. Indeed, there is some evidence that complex and symbolic arrangements of particles of the Body had been regarded with suspicion by Western authorities. For example, Pope Pelagius I, Bishop of Rome, in a letter of 558AD, "condemned the superstitious practice of arranging the particles in the form of a human figure" (King 1959:178), and the Council of Tours (567AD) legislated on the matter, declaring non in imaginario ordine sed sub crucis titulo (ibid). However, in the (Western) Gallican Rite (in use in Gaul prior to the adoption of the Roman Rite under Charlemagne in the latter quarter of the eighth century), the Fraction was, according to Duchesne (1923:219) "a complicated matter." King comments: "The complicated ceremonial connected with the fraction, as we find in some of the Eastern liturgies, occupied an important place in the Gallican rite." (King 1959:177) The fragments of the Body were arranged on the paten to represent the human face, that is until the Council of Tours (567AD) decreed that they should instead be arranged in the form of a cross. In the Mozarabic rite (in use in the Iberian Peninsula until the eleventh century, and which many scholars hold derives from the Gallican rite), the Fraction is extremely elaborate, with the Host being broken into nine fragments which are arranged in the shape of a cross, each fragment having particular symbolism in relation to a mystery in the life of the Lord. (Shepherd 1961:44) The rubrics of the Stowe Missal, probably describing the liturgy used in Ireland in the ninth century, prescribed that the Fraction should occur in seven different forms, according to the Feasts of the Church, but the broken Body was always arranged in the form of a cross. At ordinary Masses there were five fragments, on Feasts of the Apostles eleven, and during the Feasts of the Nativity, Pascha and Pentecost sixty-five. "Each of the numbers was given a mystical significance. At Christmas and Easter, there was a complicated arrangement of the particles on the paten, figuring a kind of wheel-cross, such as we see in Celtic art. The particles were apportioned to different classes of people." (King 1959:269) Traditionally, in the Western rites with complex Fractions, special antiphons, responsories or hymns were sung during the Fraction, varying according to the season, and concluding with the Lord's Prayer. In the Ambrosian Rite (used in the province of Milan from around the fourth century), the Fraction antiphon was called the Confractorium (that is, the chant at the Fraction). (Duchesne 1923:219-221; Shepherd 1961:34) In these chants, a parallel may be seen with the Fraction Prayers of the Coptic Liturgy. In the Orthodox, and particularly the Oriental, Churches, the Fraction is highly complex and takes on complicated symbolic meaning. A major, albeit in places inaccurate, study of some of this complex symbolism is to be found in Lady Drower's classic study, *Water into Wine* (Drower, 1956). The Syrian Rite involves the fraction of the Body and the arrangements of the fragments into forms variously described as 'The Sheep' (at Pascha), 'The Youth' (from Pascha until the Feast of the Cross) and 'The Cross' (from the Feast of the Cross until the Feast of the Nativity). (Drower, 1956:144-146) In the Ethiopian Rite, the Seal is relatively simple, consisting of a series of small crosses in the form of a larger cross. During the Fraction, the Priest removes the various small crosses by lifting them out the undercrust of the Body (which remains whole throughout), and changing their positions in the Body. (Drower, 1956:191-194) The Protestants, in revising or constructing liturgies, tended to eliminate what they saw as unnecessary ritual or superstitious practices, and the Fraction in their texts tended to be entirely utilitarian, although in some cases an imitative Fraction was included. Anglican liturgies prior to the Prayerbook of 1662 contained no direction that the bread be broken during the Words of Institution (Ball 1912:360), although the First Prayerbook of Edward VI (1549) prescribed that every wafer, prior to Communion, "shall be divided in two pieces at least, or more, at the discretion of the minister, and so distributed", although no more specific rubric or accompanying prayer was provided. (cf Cuming 1969:82). Some texts, however, prescribe an imitative Fraction: the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 (text in Wigan 1964:35) and the Scottish Communion Office of 1764 (text in Grisbrooke 1958:343), for example, directs that, when the celebrant says the words 'He brake it' he is 'here to break the Bread', but there are no rubrics to indicate how the bread is to be broken. However, some Protestant Liturgies which have obviously been influenced by Orthodox traditions, do include a ceremonial Fraction. For example, the Bombay Liturgy (first published in 1920), and authorized for use in the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Bombay, includes a specific prayer and rubrics for the Fraction (which is combined with the Commixture). (Wigan 1964:107) Protestant traditions have divided between those which use a single loaf (which is usually broken only for the purpose of distribution), those which use bread which has been broken into fragments prior to the liturgy, and those which use communion wafers (that is, multiple unleavened 'breads') which do not require breaking for distribution.

### **The Fraction in the Coptic Tradition**

The Coptic Orthodox Church today uses what some scholars have called the 'Coptic Common Order' (Jasper and Cuming, 1990:67), with a choice of three anaphoras: St Cyril, St Gregory and St Basil, which is the most commonly used. The Liturgy of St Basil is used throughout the year, except on the Feasts of the Nativity, Epiphany, Resurrection and Pentecost, when the Liturgy of St Gregory is celebrated. For a contemporary text of St Gregory, see Coptic Theological College (Sydney) 1994, and *The Service of the Deacon and Hymns*, 1993. The Liturgy of St Mark, a Greek liturgy anciently used at Alexandria, is known essentially by fragments of its anaphora; a recension of the anaphora is now known in the Coptic Rite as the Liturgy of St. Cyril. (cf Cody 1991:1539-1540) The Liturgy of St Cyril can no longer be celebrated in its entirety, the melodies of the Liturgy having been lost. For a contemporary text of St Cyril, see Coptic Theological College (Sydney) 1994, and *The Service of the Deacon and Hymns*, 1993. The Coptic anaphora of St Basil was originally written in Greek, but this differs from the Coptic text in only a few phrases; it is usually dated to the late third century. There is also a Byzantine version of St Basil (which is almost twice as long as the original), and this was the principal liturgy of Constantinople until supplanted by the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom. St Basil is used in the Eastern Orthodox Church on the first five Sundays of Lent, Maundy Thursday, the eves of Pascha, the Nativity and Epiphany, and at the Feast of St Basil (For the text, see Haggood 1975:67-126 and Vapouris 1988). It does not contain anything like the Coptic Fraction, and follows the Byzantine practice in essentially dividing the bread at the Rite of Prothesis. The Fraction (literally understood) in the Coptic Orthodox rite occurs in several stages: during the Words of Institution, during the Fraction proper, before the Signing of the Body with the Blood and immediately before (or during) the Communion. However, the term 'Fraction' is more specifically (and correctly) understood to refer to the ceremonial division of the Body during the Fraction proper. The ritual of the Fraction is essentially the same in each of the three Eucharistic Liturgies in use in the Coptic Church: St Basil, St Gregory and St Cyril, though the use of the latter two liturgies (as distinct from the importation of sections of both into the Liturgy of St Basil) is extremely rare. Few Priests are trained in any rite other than that of St. Basil.

### **The Eucharistic Bread**

The Eucharistic Loaf (Arabic: Qurbanah, Coptic: Hamal) in the Coptic Orthodox tradition is a round, leavened loaf, varying in size depending upon the

presumed number of communicants, but usually about five to eight inches in diameter and about an inch or two in thickness. In the centre of the loaf is impressed, before baking, a Seal which bears the words 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty' in Greek letters around the circumference. Within the circle is a cross usually made up of twelve small squares, each of which is marked with a small cross placed diagonally. However, in ancient practice (and still in more traditional Coptic churches), the crosses are upright, and not diagonal, requiring a much greater sophistication of craftsmanship in the carving of the bread seal. The four middle squares, which make up what might be described as a small cross in a square, is known as the Despotikon ('bread of the Lord')(Greek), Asbadikon (Coptic), Isbadiquin (Arabic) or (most commonly) the Spadikon in English. Within the seal, five holes are pierced before baking: one at each of the four corners of the central square, and one in the middle of the right hand side of the square. These five piercings represent the 'five wounds' which Coptic tradition identifies as having been inflicted on the Lord at the Crucifixion. (Basilios 1991(a):1062): the three wounds of the nails in the hands and feet, and the Crown of Thorns and the Scourging. During the Liturgy, the bread is placed on the paten (Coptic: diskos Arabic: siniyah), with a circular Veil (Coptic: mappa Arabic: lifafah) underneath it. The paten stands in front of the Ark (Coptic: thiokeli Arabic: tabut, kursi I-kas) in which stands the chalice (Coptic: aphot Arabic: kas), with a small veil covering to top of the Ark. From almost the beginning of the liturgy until immediately prior to the Words of Institution, the bread is covered by the Star (or Asterisk)(Coptic: kubbah Arabic: qubbah), over which are placed two Veils (or Mats)(Coptic: shento Arabic: lififah). Each veil is folded in half in the form of a triangle; one veil, folded with the upper (usually embroidered or decorated) surface inside, lays across the rear of the Star, with the point towards the east. The second veil, folded with the upper (usually embroidered or decorated) surface outwards, lays across the front of the Star, with the point towards the west. From the conclusion of the Prayer of Oblation ("Master, Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Sharer...") and the Absolution of the Son ("O Master, Lord Jesus Christ the Only-begotten Son..."), the Paten and Chalice (in the Ark) are covered by the Prosperine (the Great Veil)(Coptic: prosfarin Arabic: ibrusfarin). At the conclusion of the Prayer of Reconciliation ("O God, great and eternal, Who created man...."), the Priest, assisted by other clergy, removes the Prosperine. He removes the Veils from the Star, and covers each hand with one veil, keeping them covered throughout the Anaphora until immediately before the beginning of the Words of Institution ("He instituted this great mystery....."). Immediately before the words: "He took bread....", the Priest removes the Star from covering the Bread, folds and places against the right side of the Ark. The Priest lifts the Bread with his left hand, takes up the Veil underneath it with his right hand and thoroughly wipes the paten with that Veil (to remove any moisture which may have been caused by condensation from the warm Bread), and, kissing the Veil, places it also on the right side of the Ark.

### **Fraction during the Words of Institution**

During the Words of Institution (also known as The Prayer of the Crossing of the Gifts), the priest takes the Oblation and slightly divides it into one-third and two thirds sections, without actually separating them. Using his thumbs, and taking care not to touch the Spadikon (the central part), he holds the one-third section in his right hand, and the two thirds section in his left hand, saying: "He broke it; He gave it to His own saintly disciples and pure Apostles saying: 'Take, eat ye all of it, for this is my Body.'" At this point the celebrant slightly breaks the top part of the Oblation with the tips of his fingers, and places it on the paten, carefully removing any loose particles off his fingers on the paten, and continues quoting Christ's words, 'Which shall be broken for you and for many, and be given for the remission of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.' [Basilios 1991:1121] The ritual is as follows:

1. During the first part of the Words of Institution ("He took bread upon His pure, spotless, undefiled and blessed life-giving hands..."), the Priest holds the bread in his left hand, and with the thumb of his right hand, indents the bread along a line from the hole at the top right corner of the Spadikon to the top of the Oblation, and then from the top right corner of the Spadikon (beneath the hole) to the bottom of the Oblation, along a line to the immediate right of the Spadikon, and taking care not to break the loaf. It must be noted that wherever reference is made to the indenting of the Bread, this refers to indenting by pressing with the side of the thumb or forefinger, and never to cutting with the nail of the thumb or finger.
2. The Priest, with the thumb of his right hand, then indents the bread around the square immediately above the Spadikon, taking care not to actually break it.
3. The Priest, with the thumb of his right hand, then indents the bread around the square immediately below the Spadikon, taking care not to actually break it.
4. During the words, "He broke it....", the Priest, holding the left (larger) side of the Oblation in his left hand, and the right (smaller) side of the Oblation in his right hand, opens (or bends back slightly) the Oblation along the indented line from the top to the bottom to the right of the Spadikon, taking care not to break it.
5. Immediately after the words "...broke it...", the Priest, still holding the two sides of the Bread bent slightly back and open, breathes lightly into the opening within the bread; he then 'closes' the Bread.
6. At the words "...gave it to His holy disciples...", the Priest uses the thumb and forefinger of his right hand to break out the surface (that is, beneath the surface crust but not through to the lower crust) of the indented square immediately above the Spadikon, taking care not to break it from the loaf.
7. At the words "...Take, eat of it....", the Priest uses the thumb and forefinger of his right hand to break out the surface (that is, beneath the surface crust but not through to the lower crust) of the indented square immediately below the Spadikon, taking care not to actually break it from the loaf.
8. The Priest replaces the bread on the paten, and wipes his hands together carefully over the paten to remove any particles of the bread that might be on them.

### **The Introduction to the Fraction**

The second stage of the Fraction - what is known properly and liturgically as the Fraction - occurs after Litanies and Commemorations which follow the Prayer of the Epiklesis (Invocation of the Holy Spirit). At the conclusion of the Epiklesis ("And we ask you, O Lord our God...."), the Priest takes up the veils which previously covered his hands and had been placed upon the altar, and again covers each hand with a veil during the Litanies and Commemorations ("Make us all worthy, O our Master..."). The Introduction to the Fraction begins with the prayer, "Also let us give thanks to the Almighty...". At the conclusion of this prayer, the Priest kisses the Altar and places the veils with which his hands have been covered on the altar, and does not veil his hands again.

### **The First Consignation**

1. The Priest places the Body on the palm of his left hand, and wipes it gently all over with his right hand to remove any loose Particles.
2. The Priest raises the Body to the level of the chalice with his left hand, holding the Body in front of and slightly to the left of the Chalice.
3. The Priest places the forefinger of his right hand on the Body on the right side of the Spadikon where the Body was broken and says: "The Holy Body".
4. The Priest raises his right hand slightly above the chalice, and immerses the tip of the forefinger of his right hand into the Blood, making the sign of the cross in the Blood, and saying: "The honoured (or precious) Blood."
5. The Priest removes his finger from the chalice, ensuring that any drops of Blood return first to the Chalice, and places his finger on the Spadikon.
6. The Priest lowers the Body and both hands to immediately above the paten, and, while saying the words, "Those belonging to His Christ, the Almighty, our God", moves his right forefinger upwards on the surface of the Body, from the Spadikon in a straight line, over the top and down the reverse, then under the bottom and up to the Spadikon in a single movement, thereby completing a circuit of the Bread.
7. The Priest, without removing his finger from the Body, then moves his right forefinger sideways on the surface of the Body from the Spadikon to the left, around the back of the Body and then across from the right side to the Spadikon, thereby completing a circuit of the Bread. The Priest has thus formed the Sign of the Cross by encircling the Body twice.
8. The Priest then places the Body onto the paten, and dries his finger inside the broken part of the Body beside the Spadikon, and again wipes his hands together to remove any Particles of the Body.

Thereafter the Priest, without turning or making the Sign of the Cross, says to the people: "Peace be with you all." It should be noted that after the Epiklesis, the Priest may not make the Sign of the Cross over the people, nor look towards the West (that is, may not turn his back on the Body and Blood). Nor may he make the Sign of the Cross in blessing on the Body or the Blood. For this reason, during the words of the Epiklesis, the three Signs of the Cross made on the Body and the Blood must be made before the words "...His Holy Body" (in the case of the Body) or "...His Honoured Blood of the New Testament" in the case of the Blood. After the people reply to the "Peace", the Priest begins the Fraction Prayer.

## The Fraction

The liturgical Fraction, a minor part of most Western liturgies, possesses great symbolical significance in most of the Oriental liturgies. Lady Drower (1956), for example, describes the complex rituals of the Fraction in the Syrian (pp. 139-147), the Ethiopian (pp. 192-4) and the Coptic (pp. 181-183) traditions, including diagrams and photographs to illustrate the division of the Body. In the Eastern (or Byzantine) Orthodox Churches, it might be said that the symbolic fraction occurs at the beginning of the Liturgy, in the Rite of the Prothesis, rather than after the Consecration. Although there is clearly a Rite of Prothesis in the Coptic Liturgy, it does not involve any division or fraction of the Bread. Indeed, since the Bread must be as free from blemish or fault as possible, a loaf which was cut or broken in any way would not be acceptable.

In the Eastern Orthodox Liturgy, the bread (the *prospophora*) is cut, using a ceremonial knife (the lance or spear), and various portions of the bread are placed on the paten in a symbolic arrangement. For a description of the division of the bread during the Prothesis of the Byzantine Rite, see Haggood, 1975:71-74. In the Oriental Orthodox traditions (with the exception of the Armenian Church), the bread, which has become the Body, is divided after the Epiklesis, and arranged symbolically on the paten. In the Coptic tradition, the Priest, after beginning the Fraction Prayer (either the Prayer of the feast day or the Prayer which he has chosen), divides the Oblation according to the following directions:

1. Holding the Body in his left hand, the Priest separates the right (that is, smaller or third) segment from the left (that is, larger or two-thirds) by folding the two segments apart, and gently separating them.
2. The Priest places the smaller segment on top of the larger so that the two segments form a cross, holding the smaller segment between the forefinger and thumb of his left hand (that is, so that it is not resting directly on the larger segment); the straight edge of this segment is horizontal and in the east.
3. The Priest removes, with his right hand, the small portion at the top of the larger segment, and places this in the centre of the top of the paten; this portion is known as the 'Head'.
4. The Priest removes, with his right hand, the small portion at the bottom of the larger segment, and places this in the centre of the bottom of the paten; this is known as the 'Limbs'.
5. The Priest removes, with his right hand, the quarter portion of the smaller segment which is to his right as he looks upon the Body, and places this places it on the paten to the right.
6. The Priest places the remainder of the smaller segment on the paten to the left. There are thus four portions of the Body on the paten in the form of a cross.
7. The Priest, holding the larger segment vertically (and with the straight edge to his right) in his left hand, takes the central section (which contains the *Spadikon*) with his right hand and separates it from the rest by folding it downwards and gently separating it, and places it perpendicularly in the centre of the paten.
8. The Priest, holding the remainder of the larger segment in his left hand, indents it into four segments, each containing a Cross, taking care not to separate any of the segments.
9. The Priest, holding the now indented segment in his left hand, takes up the smaller segment on the left of the paten with his right hand, and replaces it with the indented segment.
10. Taking the smaller segment in his left hand, the Priest indents it into three segments, each containing a Cross, taking care not to separate any of the segments.
11. The Priest then places the indented smaller segment on the right side of the paten immediately below the segment that was separated earlier in the fraction, and moving both segments so that they now appear as they were before the division. Thus the portion at the right side of the paten is now divided into four segments like the portion on the left side.
12. The Priest takes the central portion (containing the *Spadikon*) and holds it in his left hand, with his thumb and forefinger above the portion (above and below the *Spadikon*), and the other fingers below it, supporting it.
13. The Priest uses the thumb and forefinger of his right hand to detach the *Spadikon* as completely as possible, but without breaking the central portion; thus, the *Spadikon* is separated from below the crust of the bread on top, but not completely through to the crust on the bottom so that the central segment remains entire.
14. The Priest raises the *Spadikon* to his lips, and lightly kisses it.
15. The Priest replaces the separated *Spadikon* within the central portion, and replaces the portion into the centre of the paten, and carefully wipes his hands together to ensure that no fragments of the Body adhere to them.
16. The Priest then gently moves all the separated portions of the Body together so that the Body appears intact, as if the Fraction had never occurred. As one source of the traditional rubrics declare: 'And if the priest be skilful and well taught after the elders, he shall break the Eucharistic loaf (*qurbanah*) regularly until it be broken yet remain whole, and he shall raise it with his hands broken yet whole, and this is also good.' [quoted in Burmeister, January-March, 1949: 25]
17. Taking the reconstructed Body with both hands, holding the forefinger and thumb of the left hand around the left half of the circumference of the Body and those of his right hand around the right half, the Priest lifts up the Body slightly from the paten twice (or, in some practice, three times), lowering it, but not replacing it on the paten completely or removing his hands from it.
18. The Priest then replaces the Body on the paten, and wipes his hands together to ensure that even the tiniest Particle does not remain on them.

At the conclusion of the Fraction (and of the Fraction Prayer), the Priest leads the people into the Lord's Prayer.

There is an alternate version of this rather complex fraction ritual, which Bishop Mettaous (1997:149) describes as 'The Direct and Brief Fraction' (as contrasted with what he describes as 'The Comprehensive Fraction'), and which he notes "is not commonly used." It involves virtually the same procedure as previous described, but without the actual separation of the portions of the Body. Essentially, it is done by indented the Body with the thumb of the right hand so that all the divisions are marked out, but not removed from the whole. The exception is the *Spadikon*, which is removed as previously described, and then replaced in the centre of the Body. This 'Direct and Brief Fraction' is neither a traditional nor a widely accepted practice, but is known to be used on occasion for expediency, or because of a lack of knowledge of the traditional, but more complex, Fraction. The Body is thus broken into thirteen parts, referring to the Lord and His twelve disciples. (Malaty, 1992:47)

## The Fraction Prayers

A number of ancient Liturgies contain Fraction Chants, as, for example, the Ambrosian Rite with the Fraction antiphon called the *Confractorium* (that is, the chant at the Fraction), previously mentioned. The Mozarabic Liturgy also included a variety of antiphons for the Fraction. (Sheerin 1986:379) In the Roman Liturgy, probably from the time of the Syrian Pope Sergius I (687-701), the *Agnus Dei* ("Lamb of God...") gradually became the universal chant during the Fraction; this has parallels with the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, in some versions of which the Priest recites "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world..." at the Commixture. (ibid) The Coptic Liturgies include a number of Fraction Prayers: Abdel-Massih, for example,

includes ten (1982:199-223). The Three Anaphora by 'Abd al-Masih Mikhayll and Ghabryal 'Abd al-Masih, published in Cairo in 1932, contains eighteen. While some Fraction Prayers are specific to, and must be used upon, major festivals, others are chosen at the discretion of the Priest, and each of the three liturgies in regular use in the Coptic Church has its own Fraction Prayer.

The Fraction Prayers vary in length and in theme. Obviously, those prescribed for specific feasts refer to those events. One Fraction Prayer, appropriately called 'The Short Fraction', is very brief; another, 'A Fraction for the Feasts of Our Lord' is lengthy. Most English texts of the Coptic Liturgy include the following Fraction Prayers: The Short Fraction, A Fraction for the Nativity Fast and Feast, A Fraction for the Theophany, A Fraction for the Feasts of St John the Baptist, A Fraction for the Holy Great Fast (Lent), A Fraction for Palm Sunday, A Fraction for Covenant Thursday, A Fraction for Joyous Saturday, A Fraction for The Resurrection (with an addition for the period from the Ascension to Pentecost), A Fraction for the Apostle's Fast, A Fraction for Feasts of the Virgin and the Angels, A Fraction for Feasts of Our Lord, A Fraction for The Son at any time (found in several versions), A Fraction for the Father (found in several versions), The Syrian Fraction, and A Fraction by St Cyril.

## The Second Consignation

The Consignation (Coptic: rasam) is the signing of the Body with the Blood; it is found as part of the Eucharistic rite in the Coptic, Ethiopian and Syrian Churches. In the Ethiopian rite, the Consignation (ataba) the Priest also takes the Spadikon (asbaikon) and, having intincted it in the Blood, signs the sides of the Body. In the Syrian rite, the Consignation (rushmo), each portion of the Body is partially intincted into the Blood, and then each part of the Body is anointed with the other. In the Liturgy of St Basil, following the Lord's Prayer, the Priest recites (usually 'secretly' - that is, inaudibly) several prayers, including the Prayer of Submission unto the Father (which begins: "The graces of the generosity of your Only-begotten Son..."), St Basil's Prayer of Absolution to the Father (which begins: "O Master, Lord God Almighty, Healer of our souls, bodies and spirits...."), and a prayer for his own forgiveness (which begins "Remember, O Lord, my weakness and forgive me my many sins...."). He then says: "Remember, O Lord, to bless our gatherings." Thereafter, following the response of the Deacon and the congregation, the Priest consigns the Body (in effect, for a second time) with the Blood, following these directions:

1. The Priest takes the Spadikon from the Body with his right thumb and forefinger, holding the palm of his left hand upwards underneath the Spadikon, and raises the Spadikon above the chalice, making the Sign of the Cross over, but slightly inside, the chalice with the Spadikon; the Spadikon is never inverted until the Commixture.
2. The Priest then slightly intincts the Spadikon with the Blood, and may press the Spadikon very slightly against the inside of the Chalice to ensure that Blood does not fall from the Spadikon when it is removed from the chalice.
3. Holding his left palm open under the Spadikon, the Priest carries the intincted Spadikon down to the Body, and holds it on the south east top corner of the Body.
4. The Priest chants: "The Holies are for the holy. Blessed be the Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Amen."
5. During these words, the Priest signs the Body with the Blood by making the Sign of the Cross over the Body: (i) he touches the intincted Spadikon at the top and then the bottom, and then the left and then the right of the outer edge of the Body; (ii) he touches the intincted Spadikon at the centre of the top and then the centre of the bottom of the outer edge of the seal, and then the centre of the left and then the centre of the right of the outer edge of the seal; (iii) he touches the intincted Spadikon to the top right corner of the seal, then to the bottom right corner, then the bottom left corner, and then the top left corner of the seal; and (iv) he signs the Body with the Blood by touching the intincted Spadikon to the Body on the divisions (called the 'Wounds') around the circumference, moving from the edge of the Body above the top right corner of the seal, clockwise around the Body, then returning the Spadikon to the edge of the Body above the top right corner of the seal.
6. The Priest chants: "Holy Body and True Honoured Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of our God. Amen."
7. During these words, the Priest signs the Body with the Blood (for a second time) by making the Sign of the Cross over the Body: (i) he touches the intincted Spadikon at the top and then the bottom, and then the left and then the right of the outer edge of the Body; (ii) he touches the intincted Spadikon at the centre of the top and then the centre of the bottom of the outer edge of the seal, and then the centre of the left and then the centre of the right of the outer edge of the seal; (iii) he touches the intincted Spadikon to the top right corner of the seal, then to the bottom right corner, then the bottom left corner, and then the top left corner of the seal; and (iv) he signs the Body with the Blood by touching the intincted Spadikon to the Body on the divisions (called the 'Wounds') around the circumference, moving from the edge of the Body above the top right corner of the seal, clockwise around the Body, then returning the Spadikon to the edge of the Body above the top right corner of the seal.
8. The Priest chants: "Holy and honoured are the True Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of our God. Amen."
9. During these words, the Priest signs the Body with the Blood (for the third time) by making the Sign of the Cross over the Body: (i) he touches the intincted Spadikon at the top and then the bottom, and then the left and then the right of the outer edge of the Body; (ii) he touches the intincted Spadikon at the centre of the top and then the centre of the bottom of the outer edge of the seal, and then the centre of the left and then the centre of the right of the outer edge of the seal; (iii) he touches the intincted Spadikon to the top right corner of the seal, then to the bottom right corner, then the bottom left corner, and then the top left corner of the seal; and (iv) he signs the Body with the Blood by touching the intincted Spadikon to the Body on the divisions (called the 'Wounds') around the circumference, moving from the edge of the Body above the top right corner of the seal, clockwise around the Body, then returning the Spadikon to the edge of the Body above the top right corner of the seal.

## The Commixture

The Commixture is the placing of a particle of the Body into the Blood. The origins of the tradition appear complex and far from clear. Some scholars (for example, Davies 1986:181) suggest it is derived from the fermentum, a fragment of the Body consecrated at an episcopal celebration and taken to another church to be added to the chalice after the fraction as a symbol of unity. This practice was known in the East until around the fourth century, and continued in Rome until around the ninth. A custom also existed whereby extra chalices were believed to be consecrated simply by the addition of a fragment of already consecrated Body. The tradition developed further with the symbolic interpretation of the commixture in the Syrian tradition, wherein the words of consecration were taken to represent the death of the Lord (and hence, symbolically, the separation of His Body and Blood), and the reunion of these in the Commixture symbolizes the Resurrection. Thus, in the Liturgy of St James, the Commixture is called henosis: that is, 'union'. In the Coptic Liturgy, after the three signings of the Body with the Blood, the Priest places a fragment of the Body into the Chalice, following these directions:

1. The Priest, holding the Spadikon (which he has previously used to sign the Body with the Blood) in the forefinger and thumb of his right hand, turns it upside down (that is, so the crust bearing the Cross is on the bottom), and raises it slightly above the chalice.
2. The Priest makes the Sign of the Cross with the Spadikon horizontally over the chalice, and then lowers the Spadikon into the chalice, placing it gently into the Blood, with the crosses on the Spadikon downwards.
3. As he does this, the Priest says: "Truly this is the Body and Blood of Emmanuel our God. This is true indeed. Amen."
4. The Priest then wipes his hands together over the paten to ensure that no fragment of the Body remains on them.
5. The Priest takes the veil which previously covered the Chalice, and covers it again.
6. The Priest takes the Star from beside the Ark, opens it and places it over the Body; he then takes the veil from the right side of the Ark and covers the Star with the veil.
7. The Priest raises the covered Paten with both hands and, holding it above his head but over the Altar, and bowing, says the profession: "Amen. Amen. Amen. I believe, I believe, I believe....."
8. At the conclusion of the profession, the Priest places the covered paten on the Altar, in front of the Ark.

## The Communion

Following the declaration of faith ("Amen. Amen. Amen. I believe, I believe, I believe...."), and several inaudible prayers, the Priest receives Holy Communion, and distributes Holy Communion to any other clergy, and then to the people. The rubrics are as follows:

1. The Priest removes the veil covering the Paten, and places it to the right of the Ark.
2. The Priest removes the Star, and wipes the base of each of the four 'arms' with his right fingers over the Paten to remove any Fragments of the Body; he folds the Star and places it so that it leans against the front of the Ark.
3. The Priest (or if it has been a concelebration, the Principal Celebrant) takes the central top portion (the 'Head') with his right hand and places it directly into his mouth.
4. If there are other Priests present, the Principal Celebrant takes the central lower portion (the 'Limbs')(or, if there is more than one other Priest, a part of that portion), and places it onto the spoon (which has been on the top of the Ark on the right of the chalice), which is then placed so that the part containing the Communion lies in the centre of the Body upon the paten (that is, in the space from which the Spadikon was removed) and the handle of the spoon lies horizontally to the left. The other Priest (or Priests), with hands veiled, take the spoon and receive Communion from it.
5. However, if the Celebrant is a Bishop, he distributes Communion to any Priests present in the normal way: that is, by placing a fragment of the Body directly into the mouth of each Priest.
6. When all Priests have received Communion, the Celebrant takes the top section of the right third of the Body, and divided this again to give Communion to the clergy. If this is insufficient for the number of the clergy, the Priest takes the remainder of the right third of the Body, and separates it into its three remaining segments, and then (depending upon the number of other clergy present), divides these segments into smaller portions for the communion of the clergy. Holy Communion is given to the Deacons and lesser clergy in order of their ranks in the clergy and then by seniority within each rank.
7. Although it is common practice for Priests to complete the division of the Body into small pieces for the Communion of the laity at this point, it is symbolically incorrect to do so. It is more appropriate for the Priest, in giving Holy Communion, to take the already divided segments of the Body and to separate a small portion from each immediately prior to giving Communion to each individual communicant.

The rites of the Church are neither merely expedient means to accomplish an end, nor are they randomly defined procedures, but contain complex and intricate symbolism which expresses in outward and visible form an inward and spiritual meaning. Thus, the ceremonial division of the Body of the Lord in the Divine Liturgy is profound in its symbolic meaning. However, to attempt to outline that symbolism within the Coptic Orthodox rite would extend this article beyond reasonable limits, and such an exploration must await consideration in a subsequent paper.

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Prayers before the Fraction Prayer of the Fraction The Lord's Prayer Inaudible Prayers. 7. The Confession: Prayers before Confession The Prayer of Confession.Â As the Bible is the greatest source of Christian teaching, the Coptic Orthodox Church reads many chapters from it in each Devin liturgy: The Pauline Epistle ( quoted from the Epistles of St. Paul), The Catholic Epistle (quoted from St. Peter, St. James, St. John or St. Jude epistles), The Praxis (quoted from the Book of Act), The Psalm (quoted from the book of. The main liturgy used by the Coptic Churches is known as Liturgy of Saint Basil.[8] The term Liturgies of Saint Basil in a Coptic context means not only the sole anaphora with or without the relater prayers, but also the general order of the Divine Liturgy in the Alexandrine Rite.[9].Â ^ "The Fraction in The Coptic Orthodox Liturgy". britishorthodox.org. Retrieved 9 June 2012. [permanent dead link].

The Coptic Liturgy has the following main sections, which are also characteristics of almost every Liturgy all over the Christian world: a. Prayer of Thanksgiving b. Prayer of Consecration c. Prayer of Fraction d. Prayer of Communion. The Liturgy of St. Basil the great, bishop of Caesarea - . As we mentioned before, the Liturgy of St. Basil is the one most commonly used in the Coptic Orthodox Church. It is also widely used in the other Orthodox Churches around the world. The Basilian Liturgy was established at the end of the 4th century, and drew heavily on the Liturgy of St. Mark the Evangelist