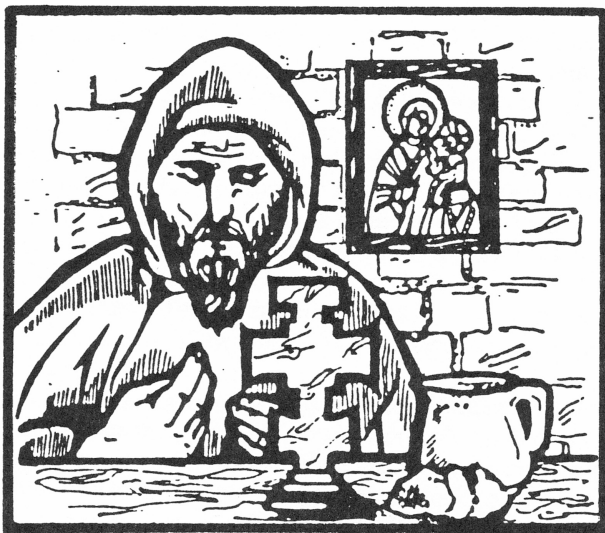


5. BASILIANS.



Originally published in *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, Joseph L. Wieczynski, ed., Gulf Breeze, Florida: Academic International Press, Inc., 1988, Vol. 47, pp. 60-65.

BASILIAN. The *Ordo Sancti Basilii Magni*. A monastic cenobitic movement initiated by St. Basil the Great (who died in 379) and influenced by his 55 “Longer rules” and 313 “Shorter rules”, which were composed about 362 A.D.. These rules of communal monastic life were written in opposition to unorganized anachoretic and solitary monastic life (hermits or “desert Fathers”). Basilian rules became the foundation of an organized Eastern monasticism and influenced the rules of John Cassian and St. Benedict and through them Western monastic movement.

The early Basilian monastic spirituality was characterized by the spiritual optimism of the Eastern Fathers of the Church. It stressed the life of the Holy Spirit and the exchange of His gifts (or charisms) and fruits among the members of the monastic community. Further, it taught an intense life in the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, including frequent reception of the Divine Mysteries (Sacraments) and an intense liturgical life. This includes the celebration of Mattins, Divine Liturgy, the Little Hours, Vespers, Great or Small Compline, etc. The spirituality of St. Basil the Great is based on the mystical reality of transfiguration, divinization, fulfillment and glorification of the whole Christian person in body and soul, also of the whole of created reality.

The first monks on the territory of contemporary Ukraine who were influenced by a Basilian spirit were the so-called “gothic monks.” They educated indigenous “Scythian monks,” among whom were John Cassian, the founder of the first cenobitic monasteries in Western Europe (late fourth century), also Dionysius Exiguus (Denis the Little), the first famous reformer of the Roman calendar and author of the first systematic canonical collection, called “Dionysiana.”

The growth of monastic tradition in the Byzantine Church was influenced by the ascetical and mystical writing of St. Basil the Great and the typicon of St. Theodore Studite (759-826). The introduction of Christianity into Kievan Rus as the state religion under Vladimir the Great occurred in 988; and thereafter there was a monastic flourishing, according to the Studite rule. There were no monastic “orders,” for monasteries were independent of each other, under the local bishops—or, as an exception, under the direct jurisdiction of the Patriarch in Constantinople (Stau-ropegeion monasteries).

In 1596 the Ukrainian Church entered into union with Rome. In 1617 the Metropolitan of Kiev, Joseph V. Rutskyi, with the assistance of Archbishop Josaphat Kuntsevych, organized the monasteries in the Ukrainian and Belorussian Eparchies into one Congregation of the Holy Trinity and prescribed a rule based on that of St. Basil the Great. The resultant Basilian monasteries were exempt from the jurisdiction of the local bishops and were subject to a protoarchimandrite, who was the head of the whole congregation.

