

FRATE SOLE FOUNDATION

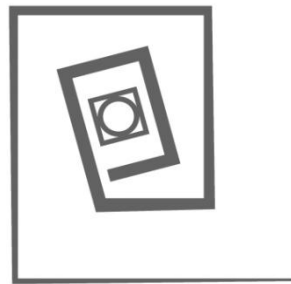
Participation to the  
EUROPEAN PRIZE FOR SACRED ARCHITECTURE

Project Title

# New Orthodox Christian Temple

Architect

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## Introduction

The project presented here, as participation in the FRATE SOLE FOUNDATION - EUROPEAN PRIZE FOR SACRED ARCHITECTURE, is my proposition for a new Temple, intertwined with the Orthodox Christian doctrine. This project has been developed under the supervision of my teachers: Tasis Papaioannou and Andreas Kourkoulas, in the frame of my Diploma Thesis which was presented at the National Technical University of Athens on the 10th of April in 2014. The aiming of this Diploma Thesis is to explore the issue: "What the Orthodox Christian Temple is, what it expresses and how it should be designed"

## Abstract

The **Church**, according to the Orthodox Christian vision, is the "Body of Christ" (A Corinthians 12), the union and unity of believers, through the Holy Spirit, in the godlike humanity of Christ. According to St. John Chrysostom, Church and Christ is an unbroken and non-confusable unity since "one kind was made of God and humans" (Patrologia Graeca 52, 789).

Considering the temple definition through the Holy Bible, we learn that the **Temple** is the house of God (Matthew 21:12,13), the holy place where the people gather as "churchgoers" (Romans 12:4,5) to meet mainly with the head of the Church, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23), through their participation in the Holy Communion prepared by ordained priests (A Corinthians 4:1).

Out of these two definitions comes the need and importance of establishing the temple as a sacred building. As such, the temple should

both express the relationship between man and God and also support functionally the aggregation of the believers and the celebration of the Sacrament.

Christianity, for the first three centuries AD, developed under mainly pagan environment and was often persecuted. The Christian cult buildings are few and difficult to certify. Shortly afterwards, by the decree of Milan in 313 AD, the emergence of the Eastern Roman Empire (best known as the Byzantine Empire) is linked to the new religion, and Christianity becomes the state religion. So far, the early Christian and medieval architecture was mainly trying to openly express the meanings of the new religion: no longer the classical beauty, but the "high and transcendent". All stages of the Byzantine temple evolution, from the royal and the circumcenter temples to the domed ones, pinpoint the concepts of the Orthodox Church and form a continuous effort to spatially and symbolically apply them, employing building techniques as wise as possible for the materials available at the time.

At this very point, we should make a crucial observation: On the one hand, the perfection with which the architecture of the Byzantine – mainly domed- temple manages to convey orthodox meaning. On the other hand, the duration of the Byzantine empire has instilled in our consciousness the notion that the Orthodox temple is identified as the Byzantine temple, while the latter is rather just an inspired realization of the concept of the former. This identification, despite its sincerity, eventually led to a kind of morbid inactivity or halt of creative pursuit: The byzantine concept of the

Orthodox temple has indeed come to a great climax, but is that maybe engaging our thinking in easily accepting that this road is the only one?

In any case, the Orthodox Christian temple is the sacred building that contributes to the revelation, understanding and love of the concepts and meanings of the Orthodox Christian faith and thus is formed as their consistent and expressive spatial application, taking also into account the ritual needs and movements. In order to detect these meanings we delved deeply into some great examples of the Orthodox Church architecture. The **values and meanings** detected through this analysis were always inherent in the Orthodox Christian church, even if not always legible. The same meanings must certainly be expressed in a modern temple since the religious sentiment remains unchanged. However, the way of their spatial expression, which may be different, must result from the deep understanding of meanings and not necessarily by repeating forms of the past. The obsessive, or even well-meaning, attachment to **forms** of the past is, in my humble opinion, a shallow expression of respect for what the "tradition" really means.

Undoubtedly this course is at stake and constitutes the difficult task to design a modern temple, as was the argument on the beginning of the chapter.

Therefore, we based the design of this temple, on three axes: the preservation of the basic concepts that emerged from the study of our temple paradigms, the fulfillment of use and operation needs and the utilization of the potential of construction techniques and instruments of modern times.

Specifically, in the temple we can discern all the established areas and the same structure encountered in all Orthodox churches. The floor plan was organized so that it can serve all the needs and movements of all rituals. What has clearly changed is the way of expression of the structure and the way of static resolution. The reinforced concrete, that expresses stability and eternity, also supporting the ceilings without the need for traditional columns and arches. The light now comes plentifully only from the top of the dome and the sanctuary, creating a variety of central overexposed zones and peripheral underexposed ones. The "blind" sides receive all loads while they also symbolically cut the horizontal worldly sightings.