

## THE ORIENTAL CHURCH SERVICE.

The divine service of the Orthodox Oriental Church, usually called the Greek Church, has but twice been celebrated in public on this continent, unless in the sparsely settled Russian territory, at the extreme northwestern and nearly uninhabitable end of it. The first service was on March 2, in Trinity Chapel, New York, and the second was yesterday in St. Paul's Church, New Orleans.

The reason for the selection of these cities for these services is, that in them are found in theory quite a number of the disciples of that faith, either Greeks or Russians, who have been deprived for very many years of the rites to which their faith and national ties give them a preference.

We attended, by invitation, the service performed yesterday in St. Paul's Church, where we found assembled a goodly congregation, including fifty or sixty persons belonging to the Oriental Church. These latter had seats near the chancel, except such as were within it, assisting in the services.

At the appointed hour for beginning the services, the Rev. Father Agapius entered the church, robed in a white vestment much like the surplice of the Episcopal clergy, but having a small gilt cross on the back and a gilt border round the vestment. He was accompanied by the Rev. Dr. Vallas and Rev. Messrs. Guion and Hopkins, of the Episcopal Church, the first and last in surplices and the second in the black gown used by Episcopal clergymen, also by several members of the Greek Communion in plain clothes.

The attendants were ranged on each side of the church, and facing thus the altar or communion table, which was covered with a white cloth, and had upon it six lighted tapers and a small painting of two figures which we were not able to distinguish, so as to say whom they represented.

At the commencement of the service, the worshipers, including the whole congregation, all rose to their feet, and remained standing until the close. Father Agapius, for the most part, faced the altar while performing the service; but occasionally turned to the people to give them his blessing.

The service was intoned or chanted. The officiating priest has a very musical voice, and the service, so far as his performance was concerned, fell pleasantly upon the ear. Had those who responded been trained singers, no doubt the whole would have been equally interesting.

At the proper place the Nicene creed was pronounced by the worshipers, in their own language, and was then repeated in English, making but one deviation from it as printed in the prayer books of the Episcopal Church. This consists in leaving out after the words respecting the Holy Ghost, "who proceedeth from the Father," those words, "and the Son." The latter are said to have been added at a later period by the Latin Church, and the Greek Church does not admit that the Holy Ghost proceeds from "the Son."

The service included the consecration of the elements of bread and wine, which was performed with very simple but impressive ceremonial. When this was done the Father turned to the congregation, and one by one the communicants of his faith came up and received from him out of a ladle or spoon the consecrated wine, which he took from the vase which he held in his hand. In the meantime, an assistant placed on a small table standing some distance from the officiating priest, the consecrated bread, of which the communicants partook, as is usually done, but without having it delivered to them by any one. There was also a pitcher on the table, but what it contained we did not learn.

After this the scene ended with a benediction, and the congregation were dismissed.

The service of the Greek Church is much more simple and unaffected than we had supposed. It was unintelligible to us, because in a tongue unknown to us; but it was in the vernacular of the worshiper for whose benefit it was held.