

## The Liturgical Theology of Father Alexander Schmemmann

### "RENOVATED ORTHODOXY"

by protopresbyter Michaël Pomazansky

BEFORE US is a work of Archpriest (now Protopresbyter) Alexander Schmemmann, Introduction to Liturgical Theology (Paris, YMCA Press, 1961; English translation: The Faith Press, London, 1966).

The book is presented as an "introduction" to a special course in liturgical theology projected by the author.

In it are indicated the foundations of a proposed new system of theology, and then there is given an historical outline of the development of the Rule or Typicon of Divine services.

The basic part of the Introduction to Liturgical Theology — the history of the Typicon — is based primarily on Western scientific investigations in French, English, and German, and partially on Russian sources.

The author is convinced that he has succeeded, as he expresses it, in "escaping the Western captivity" while using non-Orthodox sources.

He writes: "*We categorically reject the understanding of the Peace of Constantine (i.e., the era of Constantine the Great) as a 'pseudo-victory' of Christianity - victory bought at the price of compromise*" [p. 86].

But such affirmations are not enough in themselves, and we consider it our obligation to focus attention on the book's contents in one respect: has the author indeed escaped the Western captivity?

As many facts testify, he has in fact not escaped it.

### THE ORTHODOX LITURGICAL ORDER: THE PRODUCT OF HISTORICAL CAUSE AND EFFECT, OR DIVINE INSPIRATION AND GUIDANCE?



IN INVESTIGATING the chief stages of development of the Rule of Divine services, or Typicon, the author looks upon them as upon an ordinary historical manifestation, formed as a result of the influence of changing historical circumstances. He writes: "*Orthodox writers are usually inclined to 'absolutize' the history of worship, to consider the whole of it as divinely established and Providential*" (p. 72).

The author rejects such a view.

He does not see "*the validity of principles*" in the definitive formulation of the Rule; in any case he acknowledges them as dubious.

He rejects or even censures a "*blind absolutization of the Typicon*" while in practice this

is joined, in his observation, to a factual violation of it at every step. He acknowledges that "*the restoration of the Rule is hopeless*"; *the theological idea of the daily cycle of services he finds "obscured and eclipsed by secondary strata in the Ordo"* which have lain upon the Divine services since the 4th century (pp. 161-2). The ecclesiological key to the understanding of the Rule, according to the author, has been lost, and it remains by the historical path to seek and find the key to liturgical theology.

Such a view of the Rule is new to us.

The Typicon, in the form which it has taken down to our time in its two basic versions, is the realized idea of Christian worship; the worship of the first century was a kernel which has grown into maturity in its present state, when it has taken its finished form.

We have in mind, of course, not the content of the services, not the hymns and prayers themselves, which often bear the stamp of the literary style of an era and are replaced on by another, but the very system of Divine services, their order, concord, harmony, consistency of principles and fullness of God's Glory and communion with the Heavenly Church on the one hand, and on the other the fullness of their expression of the human soul - from the Paschal hymns to the Great Lenten lamentation over moral falls.

The present Rule of Divine services was already contained in the idea of the Divine services of the first Christians in the same way that in the seed of a plant are already contained the forms of the plant's future growth up to the moment when it begins to bear mature fruits, or in the way that in the embryonic organism of a living creature its future form is already concealed.

To the foreign eye, to the non-Orthodox West, the fact that our Rule has taken a static form is present as a petrification, a fossilization; but for us this represents the finality of growth, the attainment of the possible fullness and finality; and such finality of the form of development we observe also in Eastern Church iconography, in church architecture, in the interior appearance of the best churches, in the traditional melodies of church singing:

further attempts at development in these spheres so often lead to "decadence", leading not up but down.

One can make only one conclusion: we are nearer to the end of history than to the beginning...

And of course, as in other spheres of the Church's history, in this one also we should see a destiny established by God, a providentialness, and not a single logic of causes and effects.

The author of this book approaches the history of the Typicon from another point of view; we shall call it the pragmatic point of view.

In his exposition the basic apostolic, early Christian liturgical order has been overlaid by a series of strata which lie one upon the other and partially supplant each other.

These strata are: "mysteriological" worship, which arose not without the indirect influence of the pagan mysteries in the 4th century; then the liturgical order of desert monasticism; and finally the final working over which was given by monasticism that had entered the world.

The scientific schema of the author is thus: the "thesis" of an extreme involvement of Christianity and its worship in the world of the Constantinian Era evoked the "antithesis" of monastic repulsion from the new form of "liturgical piety," and this process concludes with the "synthesis" of the Byzantine period.

Alone and without argumentation stands this phrase as a description of the stormy Constantinian Era: "*But everything has its germ in the preceding epoch*" (p. 73).

The author even pays tribute to the method that reigns completely in contemporary science: leaving aside the idea of an overshadowing by Divine Grace, the concept of the sanctity of those who established the liturgical order, he limits himself to a naked chain of causes and effects.

Thus does positivism intrude nowadays into Christian science, into the sphere of the Church's history in all its branches.

But if the positivist method is acknowledged as a scientific working principle in science, in the natural sciences, one can by no means apply it to living religion, nor to every sphere of the life of Christianity and the Church, insofar as we remain believers.

And when the author in one place notes concerning this era:

*"The Church experienced her new freedom as a providential act destined to bring to Christ people then dwelling in the darkness and shadow of death"* (p. 87),

one wishes to ask: And why does the author himself not express his solidarity with the Church in acknowledging this providentialness?

## THE CONSTANTINIAN ERA



WE ALL KNOW what an immense change in the position of the Church occurred with Constantine the Great's proclamation of freedom for the Church at the beginning of the 4th century.

This outward act was reflected also in every way in the inward life of the Church.

Was there here a break in the inner structure of the Church's life, or was there a development?

We know that to this question the self-awareness of the Orthodox Church replies in one way,

and Protestantism in another.

A chief part of Father A. Schmemmann's book is given over to the elucidation of this question.

The era of Constantine the Great and afterwards is characterized by the author as the era of a profound *"reformation of liturgical piety"*.

Thus the author sees in the Church of this era not new forms of the expression of piety, flowing from the breadth and liberty of the Christian spirit in accord with the words of the Apostle: *"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"*

- but rather a reformation of the interpretation of worship and a deviation from the early Christian liturgical spirit and forms:

a point of view long ago inspired by

the prejudices of the Lutheran Reformation.

A propos of this, it is difficult to reconcile oneself also to the term *"liturgical piety"*.

In the ordinary usage of words, piety is Christian faith, hope and love, independently of the forms of their expression. Such an understanding is instilled in us by the sacred Scriptures, which distinguish only authentic piety [*"piety is profitable unto all things"* - 1Tim. 4: 8] from false or empty piety [James 1: 26, 2Tim.3: 5].

Piety is expressed in prayer, in Divine services, and the forms of its expression vary depending on circumstances: whether in church, at home, in prison, or in the catacombs.

But we Orthodox scarcely need a special term like *"liturgical piety"* or *"church piety"*, as if one were pious in a different manner in church than at home, and

as if there existed two kinds of religiousness:

*"religiousness of faith"* and *"religiousness of cult"*.

Both the language of the Holy Fathers and the language of theology have always done without such a concept.

And therefore it is a new conception, foreign to us,

of a special liturgical piety that the author instills when he writes:

*"It is in the profound reformation of liturgical piety and not in new forms of cult, however striking these may seem to be at first glance, that we must see the basic change brought about in the Church's liturgical life by the Peace of Constantine"* (p. 78).

And in another place: *"The center of attention is shifted from the living Church to the church building itself, which was until then a simple place of assembly... Now the temple becomes a sanctuary, a place for the habitation and residence of the sacred... This is the beginning of church piety"* (p. 80), a *"mysteriological piety"*.

In his usage of such terms one senses in the author something more than the replacement of one terminology by another more contemporary one; one sense something foreign to Orthodox consciousness.

This fundamental point is decisively reflected in the book in the views on the sacraments, the hierarchy, and the veneration of saints, which we shall now examine.

## **THE SACRAMENTS AND THE SANCTIFYING ELEMENT IN SACRED RITES**

THE AUTHOR adheres to the concept that the idea of *"sanctification"*, of *"sacraments"*, and in general of the sanctifying power of sacred rites was foreign to the ancient Church and arose only in the era after Constantine.

Although the author denies a direct borrowing of the idea of "*mysteries-sacraments*" from the pagan Mysteries, he nonetheless recognizes the "*mysteriality-sacralization*" in worship as a new element of "*stratification*" in this era.

"*The very word 'sacrament'*", he writes, citing the Jesuit scholar (now Cardinal) J. Danielou, did not originally have the meaning in Christianity that was subsequently given it, a mysteriological meaning;

in the New Testament Scriptures it is used only in the singular and with the general significance of the economy of our salvation: the word "sacrament" [mysterion] in Paul and in early Christianity signified always the whole work of Christ, the whole of salvation; thus, in the author's opinion, the application of this word even to separate aspects of the work of Christ belongs to the following era.

In vain, however, does the author cite a Western scholar concerning the word "sacrament", if in Saint Paul we may read the precise words:

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries [sacraments] of God" [1Cor.4: 1].

The Apostles were stewards of the sacraments, and this apostolic stewardship was expressed concretely in the service of the Divine stewardship:

**a.]** in invocatory sermons,

**b.]** in joining to the Church through Baptism,

**c.]** in bringing down the Holy Spirit through laying on of hands,

**d.]** in strengthening the union of the faithful with Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist,

**e.]** in their further deepening in the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, concerning which the same Apostle says: "*Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom*" [1Cor.2: 6-7].

Thus the activity of the Apostles was full of sacramental [mysterion] elements.

Basing himself on the ready conclusions of Western researches in his judgments on the ancient Church, the author pays no attention to the direct evidence of the apostolic writings, even though they have the primary significance as memorials of the life of the early Christian Church.

The New Testament Scriptures speak directly of "*sanctification*", sanctification by the word of God and prayer.

"*Nothing is to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayers*" [1Tim.4: 4-5].

And it is said of Baptism:

"*Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified*" [1Cor.6: 11].

The very expression cup of blessing [1Cor. 10: 16] is testimony of Sanctification through blessing.

The apostolic laying on of hands cannot be understood otherwise than as a Sanctification.

A special place in the book is occupied by a commentary on the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The author maintains the idea that in the early Church the Eucharist had a totally different meaning from the one it subsequently received.

The Eucharist, he believes, was an expression of the ecclesiological union in assembly of the faithful, the joyful banquet of the Lord, and its whole meaning was directed to the future, to eschatology, and therefore it presented itself as a "*worship outside of time*", not bound to history or remembrances, as eschatological worship, by which it was sharply distinct from the simple forms of worship, which are called in the book the "*worship of time*".

In the 4th century, however, we are told, there occurred a severe reformation of the original character of the Eucharist.

It was given an "*individual-sanctifying*" understanding, which was the result of two stratifications:

at first the mysteriological, and then the monastic-ascetic.

Notwithstanding the assertions of this historico-liturgical school, the individual-sanctifying significance of the sacrament of the Eucharist, i.e., the significance not only of a union of believers among themselves, but before anything else the union of each believer with Christ through partaking of His Body and Blood, is fully and definitely expressed by the Apostle in the tenth and eleventh chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians:

*"Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.*

*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body.*

*For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many die"* [1Cor.11: 27).

These teachings of the Apostle are concerned with individual reception of the Holy Mysteries and with individual responsibility.

And if unworthy reception of them is judged, it is clear that, according to the Apostle, a worthy reception of them causes an individual sanctification.

It is absolutely clear that the Apostle understands the Eucharist as a sacrament:

*"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?"* [1Cor.10: 16].

How can one say that the idea of "*sacrament*" was not in the Church in apostolic times?

Maintaining the idea of the total "*extra-temporality*" of the Eucharist in the early Church, Father Alexander Schmemmann considers as a violation of tradition the uniting to it of historical remembrances of the Gospel.

He writes:

*"In the early Eucharist there was no idea of a ritual symbolization of the life of Christ and His Sacrifice.*

*This is a theme which will appear later... under the influence of one theology and as the point of departure for another.*

*The remembrance of Christ which He instituted ("This do in remembrance of Me") is the affirmation of His 'Parousia,' of His presence; it is the actualization of His Kingdom...*

*One may say without exaggeration that the early Church consciously and openly set herself in opposition to mysteriological piety and the cults of the mysteries" (pp. 85-6).*

Despite all the categoricalness of the author's commentary on the words: "This do in remembrance of Me", it contradicts the indications of the New Testament Scriptures.

The Apostle says outright: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" [1Cor.11: 26].

That is, until the very Second Coming of the Lord the Eucharist will be joined to the remembrance of Christ's death on the Cross.

And how could the Apostles and Christians of the ancient Church pass by the thought, while celebrating the Eucharist, of the sufferings of Christ, if the Saviour in establishing it, at the Last Supper, Himself spoke of the sufferings of His Body, of the shedding of His Blood ["which is broken for you, which is shed for you and for many"], and in Gethsemene prayed of the cup: "Let this cup pass from Me"?

How could they not preface the joyful thought of the Resurrection and Glory of the Lord with the thought of His Cross and death?

Both Christ and the Apostles call upon us never to forget the Cross.

## THE HIERARCHY AND THE SACRAMENT OF PRIESTHOOD



THE AUTHOR adheres to the idea that only in the post-Constantinian era did there occur a division into clergy and simple believers, which did not exist in the early Church and occurred as the result of a "breakthrough of mysteriological conceptions". The very idea of the "assembly of the Church", he says was reformed:

*"In the Byzantine era the emphasis is gradually transferred...*

*to the clergy as celebrants of the mystery" (p. 99).*

*"The early Church lived with the consciousness of herself as the people of God, a royal priesthood, with the idea of election, but she did not apply the principle of consecration either to entry into the Church or much less to ordination to the various hierarchical orders" [p. 100].*

From the 4th century on, he continues, there can be traced the "idea of Sanctification", i.e., consecration to the hierarchical ranks.

Now the baptized, the "consecrated", turn out to be not yet consecrated for the mysteries; "the true mystery of consecration became now not Baptism, but the sacrament of ordination". "The cult was removed from the unconsecrated not only 'psychologically', but also in its external organization. The altar or sanctuary became its place, and access to the sanctuary

*was closed to the uninitiated*" [p. 101];

the division was increased by the gradual raising of the iconostasis.

*"The mystery presupposes theurgii, consecrated celebrants; the sacralization of the clergy led in its turn to the 'secularization' of the laity".*

There fell aside "the understanding of all Christians as a 'royal priesthood'", expressed in the symbol of royal anointing, after which there is no "step by step elevation through the degrees of a sacred mystery" (p. 100).

The author quotes Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, who warned against revealing the holy mysteries "to profane impurity", and likewise similar warning of Saints Cyril of Jerusalem and Basil the Great.

In the description cited here of the Constantian era and thereafter, the Protestant treatment is evident:

the golden age of Christian freedom and the age of the great hierarchs,

the age of the flowering of Christian literature,

appears from the negative side of a supposed intrusion into the Church of pagan elements, rather than from the positive.

But at any time in the Church have simple believers actually received the condemnatory appellation of "profane"?

From the Catechetical Lectures of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem it is absolutely clear that he warns against communicating the mysteries of faith to pagans.

And Saint Basil the Great writes of the same thing:

*"What would be the propriety of writing to proclaim the teaching concerning that which the un-baptized are not permitted even to view?"* [On the Holy Spirit, ch. 27].

Do we really have to quote the numerous testimonies in the words of the Lord Himself and in the writings of the Apostles concerning the division into pastors and "flock",

the warning to pastors of their duty, their responsibility,

their obligation to give an accounting for the souls entrusted to them,

the strict admonitions of the Angels to the Churches which are engraved in the Apocalypse?

Do not the Acts of the Apostles and the pastoral Epistles of the Apostle Paul speak of a special consecration "through laying on of hands" into the hierarchal degrees?

The author of this book acknowledges that a closed altar separated the clergy from the faithful.

But he gives an incorrect conception of the altar.

One should know that the altar and its altar-table in the Orthodox Church serve only for the offering of the Bloodless Sacrifice at the Liturgy.

The remaining Divine services, according to the idea of the Typicon, are celebrated in the middle part of the church.

An indication of this is the pontifical service.

Even while celebrating the Liturgy the bishop enters the altar only at the "Little Entrance" in order to listen to the Gospel and

celebrate the sacrament of the Eucharist;

all remaining Divine services the bishop celebrates in the middle of the church.

The litanies are intoned by the deacon at all services,

including the Liturgy, outside the altar; and the Typicon directs priest who celebrate Vespers and Matins without a deacon to intone the litanies before the Royal Doors. All services of the Book of Needs (Trebnik) and all sacraments of the Church, except for the Eucharist and Ordination, are celebrated outside the altar. Only to augment the solemnity of the services at feast day Vespers and Matins is it accepted to open the doors of the altar for a short time, and that only for the exit of the celebrants at solemn moments to go to the middle of the church.

During daily and lenten services the altar, one may say, is excluded from the sphere of the faithful's attention; and if the celebrant goes off into the altar even then, this is rather in order not to attract needless attention to himself, and not at all to emphasize his hierarchical prestige.

One must consider an evident exaggeration the idea of the appearance from the 4th century of a new "*church*" piety. Christians who had been raised from the first days of the Church on images not only of the New Testament but also of the Old Testament, especially the Psalter, could not have been totally deprived of a feeling of special reverence for the places of worship [the House of the Lord]. They had the example of the Lord Himself, Who called the Temple of Jerusalem "*the House of My Father*"; they had the instruction of the Apostle: "If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy" [1Cor.3: 17], and although here in the Apostle the idea of temple is transferred to the soul of an, this does not destroy the acknowledgment by the Apostle of the sanctity of the material temple.

## THE INVOCATION AND GLORIFICATION OF SAINTS



SPEAKING OF the invocation and glorification of saints in the form in which it was defined in the 4th to 5th centuries, Father A. Schmemmann underlines the excessiveness of this Glorification in the present structure of our Divine services, and he sees in this an indication of the "*eclipse of catholic ecclesiological consciousness*" in the Church (p. 166).

But is not the trouble rather that he does not enter into the catholic fullness of the Orthodox view of the Church?

What is it in the Divine services - something significant, visible to everyone - that distinguishes the Orthodox Church from all other confessions of the Christian faith?

It is communion with the Heavenly Church.

In this is our pre-eminence, our primogeniture, our Glory.

The constant remembrance of the Heavenly Church is our guiding star in difficult circumstances;

we are strengthened by the awareness that we are surrounded by choirs of invisible comforters, co-sufferers, defenders, guiders, examples of sanctity, from whose nearness we ourselves may receive a fragrance.

How fully and how constantly we are reminded of this Communion of the Heavenly with the earthly by the content of our whole worship - precisely that material in place of which Father A. Schmemmann intends to build his system of "*liturgical theology*"!

How fully did Saint John of Kronstadt live by this sense of nearness to us of the Saints of Heaven!

Is this awareness of the unity of the Heavenly and the earthly justified by the Revelation of the New Testament?

It is completely justified. Its firm general foundation is found in the words of the Saviour: "***God is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for in Him all are living***" [Luc.20: 38].

We are commanded by the Apostles to remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their lives [Hebr.13: 7).

Protestantism is completely without an answer before the teaching of the Apostle in Hebrews 12:22-23, where it is said that Christians have entered into close Communion with the Lord Jesus Christ and with the Heavenly Church of Angels and Righteous Men Who have attained perfection in Christ.

And which for us is more necessary and important:

to strive for ecumenical communion and union with those who think differently and who remain in their different opinion, or

to preserve catholic communion of spirit with those teachers of faith, lamps of faith, who by their life and by their death showed faithfulness to Christ and His Church and entered into yet fuller union with Her Head?

Let us hear how this side of the Church's life is accepted by Father A. Schmemmann.

He affirms that there occurred an abrupt change in the Constantian era in that there appeared a new stratum to worship in the form of

*"the extraordinary and rapid growth of the veneration of Saints"* (p. 141).

As the final result of this, with us *"the monthly Menaion dominates in worship... The attention of liturgical historians has been for some time directed at this literal inundation of worship by the monthly calendar of saints' days"* (p. 141).

Concerning this supposed "*inundation*" of worship we shall note the following.

The execution of the daily Vespers and Matins requires no less than three hours, while a simple service to a Saint takes up some four pages in the Menaion, occupying only a small

part of the service.

In the remaining services of the Daily Cycle [the Hours, Compline, Nocturn] the remembrance of the saints is limited to a kontakion, sometimes a troparion also, or it does not appear at all; and it occupies a small place in the services of Great Lent. If the day of worship is lengthened by a festive service to a Saint, precisely thereby it acquires that "*major tone*", for the diminishing of which the author reproaches the contemporary Typicon.

Let us continue the description given in the book of the Glorification of Saints.

The author writes: "*In the broadest terms this change may be defined as follows. The 'emphasis' in the cult of saints shifted from the sacramentally eschatological to the sanctifying and intercessory meaning of veneration. The remains of the saint, and later even articles belonging to him or having once touched his body, came to be regarded as sacred objects having the effect of communicating their power to those who touched them... The early Church treated the relics of martyrs with great honor—'But there is no indication,' writes Father Delahaye, 'that any special power was ascribed to relics in this era, or that any special, supernatural result would be obtained by touching them. Toward the end of the fourth century, however, there is ample evidence to show that in the eyes of believers some special power flowed from the relics themselves'.*

*This new faith helps to explain such facts of the new era as the invention of relics, their division into pieces, and their movement or translation, as well as the whole development of the veneration of 'secondary holy objects' -objects which have touched relics and become in turn themselves sources of sanctifying Power".*

Let us note: under the pen of an Orthodox writer this description shows a particular primitivization and irreverence.

"*At the same time*", the author continues,

*"the intercessory character of the cult of saints was also developing.*

*Again, this was rooted in the tradition of the early Church, in which prayers addressed to deceased members of the Church were very widespread, as evidenced by the inscriptions in the catacombs.*

*But between this early practice and that which developed gradually from the 4th century on there is an essential difference.*

*Originally the invocation of the departed was rooted in the faith in the 'communion of Saints' - prayers were addressed to any departed person and not especially to Martyrs . . .*

*But a very substantial change took place when this invocation of the departed was narrowed down and began to be addressed only to a particular category of the departed".*

Thus it turns out, according to the author, that if we appeal with the words '*pray for us*' to the departed members of the Church without reference to whether they were devout in their faith and life or were Christians only in name, then this fully corresponds to the spirit of the Church; but

if we appeal to those who by their whole ascetic life or Martyr's death testified to their faith, then this is already a lowering of the spirit of the Church!

*"From the 4th century onward", continues the excerpt from the book, "there appeared in the Church first an everyday and practical, but later a theoretical and theological concept of the saints as special intercessors before God, as intermediaries between men and God".*

This is a completely Protestant approach, unexpected from an Orthodox theologian. It is sufficient to read in the Apostle Paul how he asks those to whom he writes to be intercessors for him and intermediaries before God so that he might be restored to them from imprisonment and might visit them; in the Apostle James [5: 16]: *"The prayer of a righteous man availeth much"*; in the Book of Job [42: 8]: *"My servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept"*.

The author continues: *"The original Christocentric significance of the veneration of saints was altered in this intercessory concept. In the early tradition the Martyr or Saint was first and foremost a witness to the new life and therefore an image of Christ."*

The reading of the Acts of the Martyrs in the early Church had as its purpose *"to show the presence and action of Christ in the martyr, i.e., the presence in him of the 'new life.'*

*It was not meant to glorify the saint himself...*

*But in the new intercessory view of the Saint the center of gravity shifted.*

*The Saint is now an intercessor and a helper...*

*The honoring of Saints fell into the category of a Feast Day", with the purpose of "the communication to the faithful of the sacred Power of a particular Saint, His special Grace...*

*The Saint is present and as it were manifest in his relics or icon, and the meaning of his holy day lies in acquiring sanctification by means of praising him or coming into contact with him, which is, as we know, the main element in mysteriological piety".*

Likewise unfavorable is the literary appraisal by the author of the liturgical material referring to the veneration of Saints.

We read: *"We know also how important in the development of Christian hagiography was the form of the panegyric...*

*It was precisely this conventional, rhetorical form of solemn praise which almost wholly determined the liturgical texts dealing with the veneration of Saints.*

*One cannot fail to be struck by the rhetorical elements in our Menaion, and especially the 'impersonality' of the countless prayers to and readings about the Saints.*

*Indeed this impersonality is retained even when the Saint's life is well known and a wealth of material could be offered as an inspired 'instruction' [especially for children].*

*While the lives of the Saints are designed mainly to strike the reader's imagination with miracles, horrors, etc.,*

*the liturgical material consists almost exclusively of praises and petitions". (pp. 143-146).*

We presume that there is no need to sort out in detail this whole long series of assertions made by the author, who so often exaggerates the forms of our veneration of Saints. We are amazed that an Orthodox author takes his stand in the line of un-Orthodox reviewers of Orthodox piety who are incapable of entering into a psychology foreign to them. We shall make only a few short remarks.

The honoring of Saints is included in the category of feasts because in them Christ is Glorified, concerning which it is constantly and clearly stated in the hymns and other appeals to them; for in the saints is fulfilled the Apostle's testament: "*That Christ may dwell in you*" [Eph.3: 17].

We touch the Icon of a Saint or His Relics guided not by the calculation of receiving a Sanctification from them, or some kind of Power, a special Grace, but by the natural desire of expressing in act our Veneration and Love for the Saint.

Besides, we receive the fragrance of sanctity, the fullness of Grace, in various forms. Everything material that reminds us of the sacred sphere, everything that diverts our consciousness, even if only for a moment, from the vanity of the world and directs it to the thought of the destination of our soul and acts beneficially on it, on our moral state - whether it be an icon, antidoron, sanctified water, a particle of relics, a part of a vestment that belonged to a saint, a blessing with the sign of the cross - all this is sacred for us because, as we see in practice, it is capable of making reverent and awakening the soul. And for such a relationship to tangible objects we have a direct justification in Holy Scripture: in the accounts of the woman with a flow of blood who touched the garment of the Saviour, of the healing action of pieces of the garment of the Apostle Paul and even of the shadow of the Apostle Peter [Lucas 8: 40-48, Acts 5: 14-15, 19: 11-12].

The reason for the seemingly stereotyped character of church hymns, in particular hymns to Saints, are to be found not in the intellectual poverty nor the spiritual primitiveness of the hymn-writers.

We see that in all spheres of the Church's work there reigns a canon, a model: whether in sacred melodies, in the construction of hymns, or in iconography.

Characteristic of hymns is a typification corresponding to the particular rank of Saints to which the Saint belongs: hierarchs, monk-saints, etc.

But at the same time there is always the element of individualization, so that one cannot speak of the impersonality of the images of Saints. Evidently the Church has sufficient psychological motives for such a representation.

As for the petitions to Saints, they have almost exclusively as object their prayers for our Salvation.

Is this reprehensible?

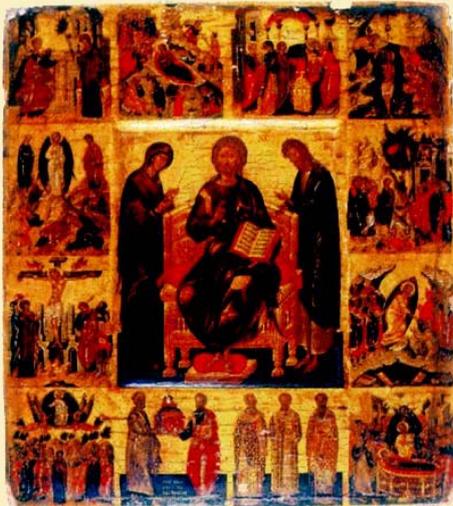
Is there here a lowering of church spirit?

Thus did the Apostle Paul pray for his spiritual children:

**"I pray to God that ye do no evil; and for this also we pray, even for your perfection"** [1Cor. 13: 7].

If in prayers, especially in molebens, we pray for protection from general disasters and for general needs, this is only natural; but these molebens do not even enter into the framework of the Typicon.

## CHURCH FEASTS



WE SHALL CONCLUDE our review with a question of secondary importance, namely, concerning Church feasts as they are presented in the book..

The author agrees with a Western liturgical historian that for ancient Christians there was no distinction between Church feasts and ordinary days, and he says in the words of this historian [J. Danielou, S.J.]:

*"Baptism introduced each person into the only Feast - the eternal Passover, the Eighth Day. There were no holidays - since everything had in fact become a holy day"* (p. 133).

But with the beginning of the mysteriological era this sense was lost.

Feast days were multiplied, and together with them ordinary days were also multiplied [So asserts the author; but in reality it is precisely according to the Typicon that there are no "ordinary days", since every day there is prescribed the whole cycle of church services].

According to Father A. Schmemmann, the bond with the liturgical self-awareness of the early Church was lost, and the element of chance was introduced in the uniting of feasts among themselves and the "Christian year".

The author gives examples: *"The dating of the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord on August 6th has no explanation other than that this was the date of consecration of three churches on Mount Tabor"* (p. 136),

whereas in antiquity, according to the author's assertion, this commemoration was bound up with Pascha, which is indicated also by the words of the kontakion:

***"that when they should see Thee crucified..."***

The dates of the feasts of the Mother of God, in the words of the author, are accidental.

*"The Feast of the Dormition on August 15th, originates in the consecration of a church to the Mother of God located between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and the dates of September 8 (The Nativity of the Mother of God) and November 21 (Her Entrance into the Temple) have a similar origin.*

*Outside the Mariological cycle there appeared, for similar reasons, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross [connected with the consecration of the Holy Sepulchre], and the Feast of the Beheading of John the Baptist on August 29th [the consecration of the Church of St. John the Baptist in Samaria at Sebaste]"* (p. 137).

In these references of the author, a characteristic sign is his trust of Western conclusions in the face of, as we believe, the simple conclusion from the order of the church-worship year.

The Byzantine church year begins on September 1st.

The first feast in the year corresponds to the beginning of New Testament history:

the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God;

the last great feast of the church year is in its last month:

the Dormition of the Mother of God.

This is sequential and logical.

The Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord occurs at the beginning of August doubtless because the cycle of Gospel readings at about this time approaches the account of the Evangelist Matthew of the Lord's Transfiguration, and the commemoration of this significant Gospel event is apportioned to a special feast.

As for the words of the kontakion of the Transfiguration: "*From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go into Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day*"

[Matth.16: 21, 17: 9, 22].

Therefore the Church, in accordance with the Gospel, six days before the Transfiguration begins the singing of the katavasia "*Moses, inscribing the Cross*" [it may be that the bringing out of the Cross on August 1st is bound up with this], and

just forty days after the Feast of the Transfiguration is celebrated

the commemoration of the Lord's suffering on the Cross and death on the day of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross.

And the designation of the time of this feast is also scarcely accidental:

this time corresponds, like the time of the Feast of the Transfiguration, to

the approach of the Gospel reading at the Liturgy of the Lord's suffering on the Cross and death.

Here is one of the examples that indicated that the structure of Divine services in the Typicon is distinguished by proper sequence, harmony, and a sound basis.

If it be represented that in the church calendar a strict sequentialness of the Gospel events is not observed, this is because the Gospel remembrances take in many years and in the calendar they are arranged as it were in the form of a spiral embracing several years:

it contains a series of nine-month periods

[from the conception to the nativity of St. John the Baptist, the Mother of God, the Saviour],

two 40-day periods of the Gospel, etc.

In the concluding part of his book the author, not in entire agreement with what he has said up to that point, is ready to come closer, it would seem, to the historical Orthodox point of view; but just here he makes such reservations that they virtually conceal the basic position.

He says:

*"The Byzantine synthesis must be accepted as the elaboration and revelation of the Church's original 'rule of prayer', no matter how well developed in it are the elements which are alien (?) to this lex orandi and which have obscured it.*

*Thus in spite of the strong influence of the mysteriological psychology on the one hand and the ascetical-individualistic psychology on the other - an influence that affected above all the reformation of liturgical piety, the Ordo [Rule] as such has remained organically connected with the 'worship of time' which, as we have tried to show, contained the original organizing principle.*

*This worship of time, we repeat, was obscured and eclipsed by 'secondary' layers in the Ordo, but it remained always the foundation of its inner logic and the principle of its inner unity" (p. 162).*

Such is the author's resume.

It remains for one to be satisfied with little.

It was too much to expect that our Rule has preserved even the very principle of Christian worship!

## CONCLUSION

WE HAVE CONSIDERED in so much detail the book of Father A. Schmemmann because in the future there will be given the Orthodox reader, based on the views presented in this book, a liturgical dogmatics.

But if the foundations are so dubious, can we be convinced that the building erected on them will be sound?

We do not at all negate the Western historico-liturgical and theological science and its objective values.

We cannot entirely manage without it. We acknowledge its merits.

But we cannot blindly trust the conclusions of Western historians of the Church.

If we speak of worship as members of the Orthodox Church, there should be present to us that principle in the understanding of the history of our worship and its present status by which the Church Herself lives.

The principle diverges fundamentally from Western Protestant attitudes.

If we have not understood this principle, our efforts should be directed to finding it, discovering it, understanding it.



The logic of history tells us that in public life departures from a straight path occur as the consequence of changes in principles and ideas.

And if we maintain the Orthodox Symbol of Faith, if we confess that we stand on the right dogmatic path, we should not doubt that both the direction of church life and

the structure of worship which was erected on the foundation of our Orthodox confession of faith, are faultless and true.

We cannot acknowledge that our "*liturgical piety*", after a series of reformations,

has gone far, far away from the spirit of Apostolic times.

If we see a decline of piety, a failure to understand the

Divine services, the reason for this lies outside the Church:  
it is in the decline of faith in the masses, in the decline of morality,  
in the loss of church consciousness.

But where church consciousness and piety are preserved,  
there is no reformation in the understanding of Christianity.

We accept the Gospel and Apostolic Scriptures not  
in a refraction through some kind of special prism, but  
in their immediate, straightforward sense.

And we are convinced that our public prayer is made on  
the very same dogmatic and psychological foundations on  
which it was made in Apostolic and ancient Christian times,  
notwithstanding the difference in forms of worship.

But is Father Alexander Schmemmann prepared to acknowledge that  
the character of his piety is different from the character of the piety of the ancient Church?

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