A JOURNEY FROM EAST TO WEST: ALEXANDER SCHMEMANN’S CONTRIBUTION TO ORTHODOXY IN THE WEST

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The collapse of the organic Orthodox worlds in the East at the hands of the revolutionaries and the emergence of Orthodox diasporas in North America and in various parts of Western Europe could be considered as the most important event in the history of the Orthodox Churches of this century. It is remarkable to note their contributions in giving witness to Orthodoxy in the modern world. Their contributions are vital in the ecumenical world. It is no longer a diaspora but Orthodoxy of the West. The gradual spreading of Orthodoxy in the West is very different from that of its early spreading to the Slavic, or to other Eastern cultures. This cultural difference had its impact in the shaping of Orthodoxy in the West. Interpreting and shaping the fate of Orthodoxy to the West was not an easy task. Many Eastern theologians are to be credited for spreading Orthodoxy in the West. This article aims to single out one of its pioneers Alexander Schmemann and his contribution to the development of Orthodoxy in the West. In the first part of this article we shall focus on Schmemann’s theological horizons both his lived context in Paris and in America and the theological heritage that shaped him as a theologian. In the second part we shall focus on his contribution to Eastern theology in the West.

Précis of Schmemann’s Life

Schmemann was born in 1921 in Reval, Estonia, into a Russian emigrant family.¹ When he was seven, the family moved to Paris, where Schmemann received his schooling in the Russian schools. Having completed his


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high school studies he enrolled at St. Sergius Theological Seminary in 1940. He married Juliana Osorguine in 1943. Schmemann completed his degree in 1945, and in the same year he became an instructor of Church history in St. Sergius. Schmemann was ordained to the priesthood in 1946 and defended his doctoral dissertation in 1959 at St. Sergius, Paris. After immigrating to the United States in 1951, he joined the staff at St. Vladimir’s Theological Seminary in New York. Later, in 1962, he assumed the post of Dean of theology, which he held until his death. Schmemann was a member of the study and planning committee of the standing conference of the Orthodox Bishops in America (SCOBA), of the Metropolitan council of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) and the American Theological Society (ATS). During this period he broadcasted nearly 3000 talks to Soviet Russia over Radio Liberty. He died at the age of 62 from cancer on Dec. 13, 1983.

The Russian Diaspora

The first World War and the communist revolution brought tremendous changes to Orthodox Christianity in Russia at the beginning of this century. According to Schmemann the events which followed the fall of the Russian empire resulted in the emergence of a new socio-cultural context. With the revolution of 1917 began religious persecution and many people left Russia. This marked the beginning of the Russian Diaspora in Europe. In the beginning, the Russian émigrés “dreamt of a return home.” Gradually they realised their tragic fate to settle in the new world of immigration. The anguish and confusion of the people in Diaspora became the focus of theologising among the Russian Orthodox theologians in the third and the fourth decades of this century. The Diaspora experience of the Russians in Paris and elsewhere, as well as the uncertainty of the return to their homeland, forced them to develop a theology genuine to the emerging context. Schmemann was part of this diaspora culture and actively involved in the making of the fate of the diaspora community. The diaspora context in Paris has enabled him to

2 St. Sergius Theological Seminary was established in 1925 with a view to the theological formation of Russian Orthodox Church members in Diaspora.
4 Schmemann compares the situation of Orthodoxy at the end of First World War with the crisis that followed the collapse of Byzantium in 1453. Alexander Schmemann, “Trying the Spirits,” SVSQ, 1 (1957 Jan.) 3-4, 3.
contact many great theologians of the Russian Orthodox Church, Catholic theologians of the liturgical movement, and theologians of the WCC. Schmemann’s theological world view was shaped during his Paris years.6

Orthodox Mission in America

The second phase of Schmemann’s life was in America. The beginning of Orthodoxy in America goes back to the Alaskan mission of the Russian Orthodox Church.7 It comprised exclusively the native people. This Russian missionary endeavour among the natives of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands did not directly affect the growth and development of Orthodoxy in the United States. The second stage of Orthodoxy in America begins with the emigrations that began towards the close of nineteenth century. The real growth began with the mass return of the Uniates to Orthodoxy and the increase of Greek, Syrian, and Slavic immigration.8 The second phase of migration began with the Second World War. Nowadays the fortune seekers, the wars in the traditional Orthodox centres such as in the Middle East and in the Balkans and the mass mobilization following the Globalization trigger the emerging growth of the diaspora communities in the West.

Orthodoxy in America had to face a totally new situation which was alien to the Orthodox culture. In Grigorieff’s opinion the Orthodox Church was not ready to meet the challenges of the West, especially in the setting of the New World. He gives two reasons: first, the national character of the Church in Russia and its close connection with the state, which limited the Church’s interest almost entirely to Russians or residents of the Russian empire; second, the rigidly conservative makeup of the Russian clergy which made it difficult for them to integrate themselves into a foreign milieu.9 To this existing milieu came Schmemann. Here Schmemann, along with other theologians like Meyendorff, became instrumental in transmitting the Russian émigré heritage to new generations.

7 The Aleutian Island and Alaska were discovered by the captains of the Russian Imperial Navy, Behring and Chirkov, in 1741. A mission of eight monks, under the leadership of Archimandrite Joasaph Bolotov, reached Kodiak Island in Alaska on September 24, 1794. See Dimitry Grigorieff, “The Historical Background of Orthodoxy in America” SYSQ, 5:1-2 (1961) 3-54.
8 Though many Carpatho-Russians belong to the Catholic Church (Uniates) the Roman Catholic Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul, who had jurisdiction over Minneapolis didn’t grant permission to them and refused to recognise Father Toth as a valid priest on account of his marriage. Because of this refusal they joined the Eastern Orthodox Church. See Dimitry Grigorieff, “The Historical Background of Orthodoxy in America,” 9.
9 Dimitry Grigorieff, “The Historical Background of Orthodoxy in America,” 7.
Schmemann’s Theological Heritage

According to Schmemann, the fall of Byzantium marked the beginning of the degeneration of Orthodoxy in Russia. The absence of higher theological schools in this period forced Orthodox students to seek their theological training in the West. Theologians educated in Roman Catholic and Protestant universities, consciously or unconsciously adopted theological categories, terminology and forms of argument foreign to their own Church tradition.10 In Schmemann’s opinion, these western-trained theologians brought a radical change both in the ethos and theological tradition, later, theological schools appeared which were alien to the traditional forms of Orthodox piety and spirituality. He describes the entire history of modern Orthodox theology as a long attempt to overcome this “alienation,” to recover its independence from western patterns and to return to its own initial sources. Russian Orthodox theology started a process of renewal from the second half of the 19th century. Schmemann sees the root of the modern trends of Russian Orthodox theology in its effort to regain the real spirit of Orthodoxy.11

The intrusion of German materialist philosophy attracted many intellectuals and slowly it led to the separation of Orthodoxy from the life of the people. In reaction to this westernizing trend in Russia emerged ‘slavophilism’ which attempted a reconciliation between Hegelian Philosophy and Orthodox Christianity. Later a second trend evolved known as ‘sophiological school.’ With the Revolution (1917) many leading theologians of the pre-Revolutionary “renaissance” period went into exile. And they continued their revival mission in the Diaspora.12

The Russian Orthodox Church in Paris witnessed the migration of many of them. From different parts of Russia and Eastern Europe they sought asylum at St. Sergius in Paris. As Schmemann notes, “the centre of theological work shifted then from Russia to the Russian Diaspora. Some theologians of both traditions, the ‘academic’ and the ‘free’, were invited to teach at the Orthodox theological faculties of Belgrade, Sofia, Bucharest, and Warsaw. In 1925 a centre of higher theological learning was established in Paris, which became the ‘capital’ of the Russian

12 Paul Meyendorff notes, St. Sergius Theological Institute gathered some of the greatest Orthodox minds of the 20th century, including Sergius Bulgakov, Anton V. Kartashev, Vasilii V. Zekenovski, Cyprian Kern, Nicholas Afanassieff, and Georges Florovsky. See Paul Meyendorff, “The Liturgical Path of Orthodoxy in America,” 49.
During this period, theological works were made available in exile and a new generation of theologians was trained, capable of taking over the tradition of their teachers.

The theological arena of St. Sergius was very decisive in shaping Schmemann as an Orthodox theologian. At this point it is important to note that following the revivalist movement there were two theological schools prevalent among the Russian Orthodox theologians in St. Sergius. First, the 'Sophiological speculations' of Sergius Bulgakov and secondly, the 'historical theology' of Georges Florovsky. About this situation in St. Sergius, Schmemann wrote, that it was not a unified school of thought and, therefore, did not stand for a commonly accepted program: "schematically, we should distinguish two main streams or trends, two different types of theological approach."14

Though never attracted by the sophiological speculations of Bulgakov, he had great respect for him. Apart from Bulgakov and Florovsky other brilliant professors were Anton V. Kartashev, Cyprian Kern, and Nicholas Afanassieff. Each of these had great influence on him. Later, the ‘Eucharistic Ecclesiology’ of Afanassieff became the central guiding force of his speculative vision and pastoral activity. Later, along with Florovsky, Meyendorff and others, Schmemann continued this pursuit at St. Vladimir’s Seminary in America.

The Liturgical Movement

Schmemann’s theological genius is expressed mainly in the context of liturgical theology. The liturgical movement in the Catholic Church helped him in creating his liturgical theology. According to John Meyendorff,

although the influence of some of his teachers at St. Sergius was decisive, he always lived in a wider spiritual world. The forties and fifties were a period of extraordinary theological revival in French Roman Catholicism, the years of a return to the sources and a liturgical movement. It is from that existing milieu that Fr. Schmemann really learned 'liturgical theology', a 'philosophy of time' and true meaning of the 'Paschal mystery'.15

Schmemann acknowledges his deep indebtedness to the liturgical movement.16 He points out two merits of the liturgical movement. First, the

16 Alexander Schmemann, Sacraments and Orthodoxy, New York: Herder and Herder,
liturgical movement helped to break the division between the Eastern and Western Churches. Schmemann considers the liturgical movement as the pioneer even prior to the organised ecumenical movement which engaged in strengthening the relation between West and East. Secondly the liturgical movement helped to renew the ecclesial and theological understandings of both Churches. Schmemann acknowledges people like Odo Casel, Lambert Beauduin, J. A. Jungmann, Louis Bouyer, Romano Guardini and H. A. Reinhold who helped him not only to understand the liturgical and spiritual heritage of the West better, but also to understand better his own lex orandi. He even suggests that the liturgical movement developed in the West as an 'Orthodox trend in a non-Orthodox context'. He takes the view, that it is precisely this western interest in liturgical tradition, the efforts of western historians and theologians, that help the Orthodox to overcome the 'Western' defects and deviations of the Orthodox theology.

Ecumenical Movement

The numerous writings of Schmemann on ecumenism show his great interest and commitment to ecumenism. He observed certain confusion in the Orthodox Church regarding their attitude towards ecumenism. In his opinion, they were confused concerning the leadership within the Orthodox traditions and also related to the theological nature of their response. According to Schmemann, during the time of the development of Russian theology in the emigration, there were two different approaches to the very phenomenon of the Ecumenical Movement and to the nature of Orthodox participation in it. For some, the ecumenical movement is "an ontologically new phenomenon in Christian history requiring a deep rethinking and re-evaluation of Orthodox ecclesiology as shaped during the
'non-ecumenical' era. Sergius Bulgakov, Leo Zander, Nicholas Zernov, and Paul Evdokimov were the proponents of this group. The other group, “without denying the need for ecumenical dialogue and defending the necessity of Orthodox participation in the Ecumenical Movement, reject the very possibility of any ecclesiastical revision or adjustment and view the Ecumenical Movement mainly as a possibility for an Orthodox witness to the West.” Florovsky was the main proponent of this group, and Schmemann was a staunch supporter of Florovsky.

Schmemann’s involvement and contribution to the Pan-Orthodox Conferences (since 1961) and the establishment of the Federation of Orthodox Churches of America are expressions of his great concern for the unity of Orthodox traditions. Schmemann represented the Russian Orthodox Church at the Second Vatican Council as an observer. He worked as the vice chairman of WCC youth department and was a member of the Faith and Order Commission. The ecumenical context had opened a new horizon to him. His close association with the Catholic and the Protestant theologians and his contacts and leadership among the different Orthodox traditions widened his theological vision. The editorial in *Diakonia* to his memory underscores:

Schmemann was ... a devoted servant of the movement for Christian unity. As a young priest in Paris, he was already involved in theological discussions with Roman Catholics at a time when the ecumenical dialogue was not being encouraged very much in official church quarters. After coming to New York, he established contact with the fledgling Russian Centre of Fordham University which has now become ... John XXIII Ecumenical Centre. ... As a result of these pre-Vatican II efforts, the foundations were laid for a strong and effective Catholic-Orthodox dialogue which began officially in 1965.

In short, Schmemann’s academic career which was rooted in Paris and matured in America, helped him to develop a theology that befits the diaspora. His contacts with leaders of Russian religious renaissance, the liturgical movement and the ecumenical movement has contributed quite a lot in shaping his theology. The Russian revivalist generation and the leaders of the liturgical movement had greatly contributed to delineate the liturgical theology which gives content to his theological methodology. His intimate contacts with the ecumenical world refined his theological thinking.

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21 Ibid.
22 The Federation of Orthodox Churches in America was started in 1943. George Papaioannou, “Efforts toward Orthodox Unity in America: A Historical Appraisal,” 275-279.
The migration of Easterners to the American soil raised serious pastoral problems. It was even more complex with the presence of Alaskan missions and the multi-jurisdiction of the diaspora. Living in a world that is constantly changing, assimilation and integration of Orthodoxy to the contemporary needs of the world was one of the important concerns in the diaspora. Schmemann is one of the pioneers who alarmed the Orthodox believers about the tasks facing them in the changing context. Schmemann’s three consecutive articles on the problems of Orthodoxy in America are classical examples of his involvement in the pastoral situation of the Orthodox Church in America. Within the context of the cultural transition of Orthodoxy, he tried to keep the Orthodox principles intact and at the same time he interpreted it to the existential context.

The theological hermeneutics of Schmemann

The theological hermeneutics of Schmemann are delineated in his liturgical theology rooted in the formula: lex orandi est lex credendi. Using this hermeneutics Schmemann summed up his life and theology in one simple phrase: “two ‘nos’ one ‘yes’ and eschatology.” The two ‘nos’ are secularism and religion and the one ‘yes’ is the sacramental vision of the world redeemed and glorified by Christ, holding out for man already in this world an anticipation of the kingdom of God, to come at the end of time. Positively speaking, he committed himself for a sacramental vision of the world and negatively he engaged in a fight against secularisation of Christian life. The same could be said for Schmemann’s vision of Orthodoxy in the West. So in this part, we shall explicate Schmemann’s interpretation of Orthodoxy based on his view of the world and the Church and his fight against secularism.

The Orthodox World-View

One of the most important challenges faced by the Eastern theologians in the West lies in their different world-view which gives content to their Christian faith. From this point of view Schmemann said that the Western culture is alien to the Eastern culture. He further clarified that this alienation is “not because of her ‘orientalism’ or a difference in ethnical background, but, because of her fundamental theological and spiritual

presuppositions, of her whole world-view.” The eschatological dimension of Christian faith is the fundamental principle that shaped the worldview of early Christianity. The early Christian world-view is, in Schmemann’s words, “to be fully in the world, to be of any ‘use’ to it, to fulfill their historical, cosmic and any other ‘function’, the Church and the Christian must be at the same time totally not of this world.” But in the post-Constantine period, both the Eastern and the Western Church appropriated the ‘eschatological world-view’ of early Christianity from within their own socio-cultural and religious contexts. Hence, he underscored the changing world-views in the East and in the West, as the fundamental tasks to be addressed for the integration of Orthodoxy in the West.

According to Schmemann, the Christian East preserved the eschatological perspective of the early Church, making it the basis of its attitude towards the world. He even considers ‘eschatological continuity’ as the starting point and the ultimate term of reference to the entire ‘Eastern experience’. In the traditional Orthodox world, the Church had an ‘all-embracing world-view’ which Schmemann compares to the union of soul and body.

However, on the other hand, the Christian West replaced the eschatological perspective of the early Church in the post-Constantine period with a different ‘vision,’ and he terms its main ideological core and context ‘juridical.’ Moreover, he defines it from his Eastern standpoint as non-eschatological:

The medieval Christian synthesis in the Latin West was based indeed on a progressive elimination of the early Christian notion of the Kingdom of God, elimination, of course, not of the term itself but of its initial Christian

28 Schmemann deals very extensively with the ‘eschatological dimension of Christian faith’ in his discussion on the origin and development of the ordo. See Introduction to Liturgical Theology, 40-115.
30 Alexander Schmemann, “The “Orthodox World,” Past and Present,” 34-35. Schmemann holds the view that the definition of the Eastern ‘eschatological experience’ “must begin with the event which formed the spiritual and psychological foundation of Byzantine theocracy and of its continuation in other Orthodox lands, the spectacular conversion to Christianity of the Emperor Constantine.”
understanding, as the antinomical presence in “this world” of the “world to come” [...] The West rationalized the mysterion, i.e. deprived it precisely of its antinomical or eschatological character. It replaced the tension, essential in the early Church, between the “now” and the “to come,” between the “old” and the “new,” with an orderly, stable and essentially extra-temporal distinction between the “natural” and “supernatural,” between “nature” and “grace”; and then, in order to assure God’s total transcendence, it viewed grace itself not as God’s very presence but as a created “medium.” Eschatology thus became exclusively “futuristic,” the Kingdom of God a reality only “to come” but not to be experienced now as the new life in the Holy Spirit, as the real anticipation of the new creation. Within this new theological framework, “this world” ceased to be experienced as passage, as “end” to be transfigured into “beginning,” as the reality where the Kingdom of God is “at hand.” It acquired a stability, almost a self-sufficiency, a meaning of its own, guaranteed to be sure by God (causa prima, analogia entis), yet at the same time an autonomous object of knowledge and understanding. For all its “other-worldliness,” the Latin medieval synthesis was based in fact on the alienation of Christian thought from its eschatological source ... on its own “secularization.”

Schmemann even considers this as the basic principle behind all controversies between the East and the West. The ‘secularization’ that began with Renaissance took new forms in the modern era which he calls second secularization and he observes it as an inevitable result of the past.

It was a ‘secular’ world that the medieval Church dominated politically as well as intellectually. If politically she claimed a power superior to that of the state, and intellectually a source of knowledge superior to human reason, both claims were essentially ‘juridical’ i.e. extrinsic to the nature of that which they claimed to dominate. Secularization changed a relationship of ‘power’ not of ‘essence’. What the ‘world’ i.e. state, society, culture, etc., progressively rejected was an extrinsic submission to the authority of the Church, the Church’s ultimate ‘jurisdiction’ over them, but not an essentially ‘Christian’ idea of state, culture.

The true problem of Christian faith in the modern period lies not in ‘secularization as the world’s autonomy from the Church’s power’ or in ‘secularization as culture’s autonomy from religious values.’ Instead, it lies in the acceptance of the secular eschatology of the modern secular world by the Christian West, or at least by Western theology. Schmemann characterizes this change as a most tragic development in all Christian history. In his opinion, the Western Christians, Catholic as well as

33 Ibid., 59-60.
Protestant, seem to consider this 'secularised eschatology' as the criterion of Christian faith and action as the term of reference of all Christian renewal, as a valid framework and content of Christian eschatology.

Schmemann is critical of the modern trend in theology of emphasising some sort of eschatological faith. He also notes, that today the use of the term eschatology has become more of a fashion and, therefore, missing its real meaning. The interest in eschatology:

is based not on an interest in the early eschatology in which the transcendent Kingdom of God and not the world is the eschaton, but on the desire to find a common language with the secular world. Even where an attempt is made to preserve the transcendent Kingdom, it is preserved as a vague "horizon of hope" and not as the radical reality of all Christian experience. The obsession with "relevance" and "involvement," the incredible discovery of Christ's social and political "radicalism," the enthusiastic "rethinking" of Christianity within the categories of secular utopian ideologies - it all looks as if having at first "secularized" the world for the sake of a totally transcendent God, the Christian West is about to give up the "transcendent" as the very content of Christianity.36

To an even greater extent, he warns against the current discussions on the Church and its relationship to the world which is dominated with themes like religion and politics, justice, development.37 We missed the transcendent God in our quest for meaning and relevance. In our eagerness to "participate in the struggle of millions of people for greater social justice and for world development" we have lost the soteriological dimension and content of Christian faith.38

The transition of Orthodoxy from the East to the West needs to be addressed from this background: "the culture into which the Orthodox Church was 'exiled' ... were essentially shaped by secularism ... whose meaning can and must be found in itself, independently from any reference to the 'transcendent'."39 Schmemann admits a similar trend in the Russian Orthodox Church. He even considers the collapse of Russia as the result of the non-critical acceptance of 'Western idea':

The acceptance of the specifically Western eschatology without the "eschaton," of the Kingdom without the King, which reduced man to matter alone, society alone, history alone, which closed his spiritual and intellectual horizon

38 Alexander Schmemann, "Theology or Ideology?," 229.
with “this world” alone. This reduction of man, his progressive alienation from his divine and transcendent destiny began in the West at the time of the Renaissance, continued through the Enlightenment, and found its fulfilment in the “this worldly” enthusiastic utopianism of the nineteenth century.  

The success of the Western idea in Russia is due to many complex factors: “the initial acceptance by many Russians of the Revolution as fulfilling the ‘eschatological’ aspirations of the Russian people, the interpretation of the ‘Western’ idea in ‘Eastern’ terms.” At the same time, he observes the opposing views prevalent among the Russian writers towards this ‘Western idea’. In his opinion, throughout the entire nineteenth century the most creative and original Russian thinkers from Chaadaiev to Dostoievsky, engaged in criticizing the West. At the same time, the Westernized Russian intelligentsia endorsed it more enthusiastically.

As noted earlier, the religious revival in Russia started reforming the ‘Eastern experience’ that was obscured in the East by westernization. This search resulted in “a trend, a spiritual and intellectual perspective which permeates and unifies, inspite of all its internal diversity and even polarity, the Russian culture of the nineteenth century and which Berdiaev termed the Russian idea.” The general orientation of the ‘Russian idea’ “is towards a new synthesis between eschatology and history, towards a reintegration of “this world” - of action, creativity and culture - into the perspective of the Kingdom of God.” It is continued in the diaspora.

Schmemann even considers that the eschatological world-view and experience is the only answer to the world’s agonizing problems:

without the recovery of that experience no clear pattern of Christian thought and action can be detected. As long as the Church is imprisoned by the world and its ideologies, as long as she accepts and views all “problems” facing humanity in their secular and worldly formulations, we remain within a vicious circle without any hope of breaking through it. Before it can be put to any “use,” the notion of the Kingdom of God is to be purified of all “utilitarianism.”

42 Alexander Schmemann, “The Orthodox World, Past and Present,” 53. According to Schmemann, the ‘Eastern experience’ continued even after the collapse of the Byzantium in 1453, in countries like Bulgaria, Russia and Serbia. In the history of the post-Byzantine Orthodox world, the Turkish domination of the Southern Slavs served to confine the “Eastern experience” to Russia. This too, did not last long. The radical ‘westernization’ under Peter the Great which gradually took place in the Russian Church resulted in the loss of this ‘Eastern experience.’ This is the context that necessitated the religious revival in Russia.
Our discussions on development, tend to limit the goal of development to 'society' and forget the person in his unique and eternal hypostasis.\textsuperscript{45} At the same time, Schmemann detects an eschatological longing in the midst of the Christian search for justice:

While Christians, in their eagerness to be "relevant," shift the emphasis from the "transcendent" to the "immanent," one detects in the world a growing thirst for and hunger for that which can transcend, i.e. fill life with the ultimate meaning and content. Behind the sometimes cheap and romantically naive rebellion against "systems" and "establishment," behind the rhetoric of "revolution" and "liberation," there is a genuine longing not only for the Absolute but for communion with it, for its true possession. Behind the "juridical," it is for the "eschatological" that the modern man is longing, and this means for the Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{Church as a Worshipping Community}

The second major task for Orthodoxy in the West, lies in the ecclesial manifestation of their Eastern tradition. In contemporary theological discussions, the ecclesiology of Eastern Churches are generally termed as eucharistic ecclesiology.\textsuperscript{47} According to Schmemann, "the ecclesia exists in and through the leitourgia, and its whole life is a leitourgia."\textsuperscript{48} It means that the "experience of the Church is primarily the experience given and received in the Church's leitourgia - in her lex orandi."\textsuperscript{48} At the same time the liturgy has existence only in and through the Church. For Schmemann, worship is "the purpose of the Church."\textsuperscript{49} "The Church itself is a leitourgia, a ministry, a calling to act in this world after the fashion of Christ, to bear testimony to him and to his kingdom."\textsuperscript{50}

The ecclesial and eschatological dimensions of liturgy, inspired him to call it the 'sacrament of the Church' and the 'sacrament of the Kingdom.' He notes, "Kingdom, which for "this world" is yet to come and

\textsuperscript{45} Alexander Schmemann, "Theology or Ideology?" 234.
\textsuperscript{46} Alexander Schmemann, "The Orthodox World, Past and Present," 65.
\textsuperscript{49} Alexander Schmemann, Introduction to Liturgical Theology, 23.
\textsuperscript{50} Alexander Schmemann, Sacraments and Orthodoxy, 28.
forms the ultimate horizon of its history, is already present ... in the Church. And it is the liturgy which accomplishes this presence and parousia, and which in this sense ... is the sacrament of the Church and thus the sacrament of the kingdom. The ecclesial and eschatological dimensions of liturgy is characteristic to his Orthodox world-view:

[The Church is] a sacramental organism whose function and purpose is to reveal, manifest and communicate the Kingdom of God, to communicate it as Truth, Grace and Communion with God and thus to fulfil the Church as the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This means that it exists only in order to assure the Church's "passage" from "this world" into "the world to come," as the sign constantly to be fulfilled, as the "means" of the Church becoming all the time "that which she is." Essential as it is for the Church as sign and sacrament, the institution cannot be simply identified with the Church. As institution the Church is of "this world," as fulfilment she is of "the world to come." This does not mean any separation within the Church between "institution" and "fulfilment," for the whole purpose of the institution is precisely to make fulfilment possible, to reveal as present that which is "to come."

The life in the Church is understood as a life in Christ: "The Church is a divine institution, founded not by men, but by Christ, receiving her life from God and having one specific goal: to save people by introducing them into the life of grace, forgiveness, love and truth, by uniting them to the life of Christ Himself." He sees this understanding of the Church as life in Christ as being behind the absence of any formal definition of Church in Fathers, liturgy and in the councils. For them the Church is not an "essence" or "being" distinct, as such, from God, man, and the world, but is the very reality of Christ in us and us in Christ, a new mode of God's presence and action in His creation, of creation's life in God:

Orthodox ecclesiology rather than precise definitions or forms, conditions and modalities, is an attempt to present an icon of the Church as life in Christ - an icon which to be adequate and true must draw on all aspects and not only on the institutional ones of the Church. For the Church is an institution, but

52 Alexander Schmemann, "The Orthodox World, Past and Present," 38.
she is also a mystery, and it is mystery that gives meaning and life to institution and is, therefore, the object of ecclesiology.54

The original meaning of leitourgia is "an action by which a group of people become something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals - a whole greater than the sum of its parts. It meant also a function or 'ministry' of a man or of a group on behalf of and in the interest of the whole community."55 In this view, all liturgies emphasize an "indispensable correlationship between the Liturgy and an assembly, between the Eucharist as the actualization of the Church, as ecclesia, as a gathering."56 In this sense Schmemann calls the Eucharist the 'sacrament of the assembly.'57

The "ordo is entirely ... constructed on the principle of correlation, the mutual dependence of the celebrant of the service and the people. One may even more precisely define this bond as a co-serving or concelebration."58

These Eastern understandings of the Church have been under attack in the Western context: "worship has ceased to be understood as a function of the Church. On the contrary, the Church herself has become to be understood as a function of worship".59 Schmemann calls the former leitourgia and the latter cult. It "means more precisely that the theological mind as well as piety ceased to see in it, to experience it, as the very epiphany of the cosmic and eschatological "content" of the Church's faith and thus of the Church herself."60 The reduction of liturgy into cultic categories weakened its ecclesial vision: "worship has ceased to be the self-expression of the Church."61

The experience of worship has long ago ceased to be that of a corporate liturgical act. It is an aggregation of individuals coming to Church, attending worship in order to satisfy individually their individual religious needs, not in order to constitute and to fulfil the Church.52

55 Alexander Schmemann, Sacraments and Orthodoxy, 28.
56 Alexander Schmemann, Introduction to Liturgical Theology, 99.
57 Schmemann acknowledges the origin of this expression 'sacrament of the assembly' in the fifth century author of the Areopagitica. Alexander Schmemann, The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom, 12.
58 Alexander Schmemann, The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom, 14. He acknowledges Nicholas Afanassiev for the expression co-serving or concelebration.
59 Alexander Schmemann, Introduction to Liturgical Theology, 23.
60 Alexander Schmemann, "Liturgy and Theology," 58.
The Church is understood from the secular perspective as a society or an organization. He criticises the trend of reducing ecclesial categories into secular categories. It does not mean that he is not concerned about the organizational Church. He was always in the forefront to assert the institutional nature of the Church. Of course the motivation is rather different. In the context of Diaspora, Schmemann argued for the local Orthodox Church avoiding any ethnic barriers. According to Meyendorff, “together with most representatives of the “younger” generation of Orthodox theologians, Fr. Schmemann saw no other answer and no other meaning for the existence of the “Diaspora” than the establishment of the territorial, eventually French-speaking local Church in France.” He further adds, “if there was any commitment which was constant in his life, already in France, it was the hope that the uncanonical overlapping of “jurisdictions,” which was the single most obvious obstacle to Orthodox witness in the west, would be replaced by local Church unity in conformity not only with canons, but with the most essential requirements of Orthodox ecclesiology.”

According to Slesinski, ““Pragmatic” America also was attuned to accept his ecclesiological message: For Orthodoxy to survive in the West it must cease considering itself to be “in diaspora,” and become truly indigenous to the West, its new home. That would also mean the elimination of the rival, interlocking ethnic jurisdictions, still characteristic of American Orthodoxy.” Along with Georges Florovsky, John Meyendorff and other theologians, Schmemann worked towards the establishment of the autocephalous Orthodox Church eliminating national barriers in America. Their efforts succeeded with the establishment of the autocephalous Orthodox Church in America in 1970.

**Fight against Secularism**

Schmemann underscores secularism as one of the most dangerous tragedies for Orthodoxy in the West. He has observed America, as being both deeply religious and deeply secularist. The dichotomy of culture and religion in the secular nature of contemporary America was the focus of attention for him. According to him, “America is a culture, i.e., a complex of habits, customs, thought forms, etc., many of which are either new or alien to Orthodoxy, to its history and tradition and it is impossible simply to “transpose” Orthodoxy into the American cultural categor-

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The religious neutrality that belongs to the American culture prevents religion from a total "integration" in culture. Schmemann considered this dichotomy as one of the greatest dangers of Orthodoxy in America.

Schmemann defined secularism as a negation of worship and "as the autonomy of the secular, i.e., worldly life of man and society from religion and its scale of values, a radical distinction between the religious and the secular "sectors" of life." Though Schmemann defines secularism as a negation of worship, he distinguishes it with atheism: "A modern secularist quite often accepts the idea of God. What, however, he emphatically negates is precisely the sacramentality of man and world. A secularist views the world as containing within itself its meaning and the principles of knowledge and action."

Schmemann sees secularism as a great heresy of our time. He differentiates it from other great heresies of the patristic age that "the latter were provoked by the encounter of Christianity with Hellenism, whereas the former is the result of a "breakdown" within Christianity itself, of its own deep metamorphosis." In his opinion, "the Orthodox "world-view" excludes secularism, for it is indeed the central and all-embracing idea and inspiration of Orthodoxy that the whole life not only belongs to God, but is to be made God-like and God-centred, transformed into communion with God, and therefore - no "sector" of human activity or creativity, be it the most "secular" or "profane" can be neutral, not capable of being sanctified, i.e., transformed into communion with God." From this perspective, he always argued against the adaptation of Orthodoxy, according to the secularist and nominalistic needs of American society.

Schmemann's Legacy

There are various things for which we are indebted to Schmemann. Two things are very important in this regard: the liturgical renewal and his contribution to the ecumenism especially in the American context. Litugi-

72 Alexander Schmemann, "Worship In A Secular Age," 11.
cal renewal was one of the key points that was discussed at large in the diaspora. As the champion of liturgical theology Schmemann always showed great interest in the liturgical life of the Church. Many people have acknowledged his contribution in the liturgical life of the American Orthodoxy. Metropolitan Philip observes: “Fr. Schmemann was a pioneer in the field of Liturgical Theology, and I would dare say he is the father of Liturgical Theology in the Orthodox Church. His relentless emphasis on the eucharistic experience as a journey to the kingdom, created a spiritual renaissance in thousands of parishes throughout the Orthodox world.” Likewise, Paul Meyendorff observes that, “it is Schmemann who is credited, or blamed, for many of the liturgical changes that we in America have experienced in recent decades.” He was always engaged in the true liturgical renewal, for “the eradication of all liturgical and spiritual lethargy in the Church and the supplanting it with a sense of purpose and verve, marked by a real concern for the mission of the Church in the world.” According to Peter Galadza, Schmemann’s ‘dialogue’ with Dom Bernard Botte and Jardine Grisbrooke marked the “most seminal and significant exchange of a virtual flood of articles and proposals” regarding the Eastern Christian Liturgical reform.

Schmemann makes a distinction between the kind of liturgical renewal in the West and in the East. According to him, the liturgical revival in the West was first of all a return to the corporate idea of worship. But from the Orthodox point of view, there are also other dimensions of the liturgy that must be rediscovered, or brought back into our corporate experience of worship. For Schmemann, the fundamental crisis in the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church, lies in the alienation of the lex orandi from the lex credendi. According to him, professional theologians constitute a kind of Lumpenproletariat. Theology ceased to be the conscience and the consciousness of the church. Schmemann also characterizes Orthodox theology by two words: confusion and awakening. By confusion, he means lack of unity among Orthodox theologians: unity of theological language, unity of method, consensus as to the nature of questions and the mode of their solution. Orthodox theology develops in a plurality of theological

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75 Paul Meyendorff, “The Liturgical Path of Orthodoxy in America,” 49.
77 Peter Galadza, “Restoring the Icon: Reflections on the Reform of Byzantine Worship,” Worship, 65:3 (1991) 238-255, 238. In this article Peter Galadza has given an extensive bibliography of the literature concerning liturgical renewal in the Byzantine Churches that followed the ‘dialogue.’
78 Alexander Schmemann, “The Liturgical Revival and the Orthodox Church,” 102.
“keys” and within several mutually exclusive intellectual frameworks. In his opinion, this confusion is a sign of awakening, of a new search for a genuinely Orthodox theological perspective.80

The alienation of the lex orandi from the lex credendi results in nominalism and minimalism in the liturgical life and practice. According to him, there is a growing discrepancy between the demands of tradition on the one hand, and the nominalism and minimalism of the liturgical piety and practice on the other hand.81 On the one hand, he notes the nominalistic tendency of some. He defines nominalism as the “peculiar divorce of forms of the Church’s life from their content, from that reality whose presence, power and meaning they are meant to express and, as a consequence, the transformation of those forms into an end in itself so that the very task of the Church is seen as the preservation of the ‘ancient,’ ‘venerable’ and ‘beautiful’ forms, regardless of the ‘reality’ to which they refer.”82 On the other hand, he sees minimalistic tendencies. Because of this minimalistic tendency, the liturgical traditions which are preserved in books are disappearing from practice. The selection of certain elements and rejection of other elements are based not on the principle of the lex orandi, but on other considerations which are totally alien to it.83 He criticises the attitude that reduces the question of liturgical renewal to translation of liturgical texts and the restoration of ‘rubrical purity’.84 He always stood against this nominalistic and minimalistic attitudes. He also criticises the ‘liturgical formalism.’ In his opinion, liturgical formalism “reduces the whole study of the history of worship to the analysis of liturgical texts, to the classification of ‘various liturgical families’ and their subdivisions, to a study of their influence on one another and so on.”85

Schmemann was very critical of the secularising trend in the liturgical life of the Church. In his opinion, it alienates liturgy from the life of the faithful. According to him, the liturgy was connected with all aspects of the Church’s life; to inform, shape and guide the ecclesiastical consciousness, as well as the “world view” of the Christian community. Liturgy ceased having this influence on the faithful. Instead, the influence of

85 Alexander Schmemann, Introduction to Liturgical Theology, 76.
secularism brought a dichotomy between the sacred and the profane. In Schmemann’s opinion, “the liturgical pietism fed by sentimental and pseudo-symbolical explanations of liturgical rites results, in fact, in a growing and all-pervading secularism. Having become in the mind of the faithful something “sacred” per se, liturgy makes even more “profane” the real life which begins beyond the sacred doors of the temple.” Schmemann was always engaged in a fight against the nominalistic and secularist tendencies which endangered the life of Orthodoxy in the Western context.

Unity of Churches

Schmemann understood the multi-jurisdiction of various orthodox Churches as a serious problem to the Orthodox witness to the West. The massive migration of Orthodox faithful from different countries to the West caused the formation of different national Churches in one place. According to Schmemann the migrants brought their religion as a continuation of their national existence. He characterises American Orthodoxy as multinational in origin. This resulted in ecclesial and jurisdictional crises within the Orthodox Church as a whole. The presence of different national Churches in America caused the problem of multi-jurisdiction as early in 1900. Schmemann was worried about the ethnic attitudes of some Orthodox people such as Russian and Greek: “At present almost all organised efforts of the Church are split between the attempt to keep the “American Orthodox” as Russian or as Greek as possible and the attempt to make the “Russian” or “Greek Orthodox” as American as possible.”

Ecclesiastically the diaspora has resulted in the coexistence on the same territories, within the same cities, of a dozen of ‘national’ or ‘ethnic’ jurisdictions. This is considered by an overwhelming majority of the Orthodox people as something perfectly normal, as expressive of the very essence of that diaspora whose main vocation, as everyone knows and proudly proclaims, is the preservation of the various ‘cultural heritages’ proper to each ‘Orthodox world’.

According to Meyendorff, Schmemann “lacked the necessary patience for remaining concentrated on the Church’s past: the existential today was that which really mattered. And today, the Orthodox Church could not be

alive either as a defence of the State, or cultural appendix of “Russian-ism”: it was alive in and through the Liturgy.”

This existing situation has compelled Schmemann to think of the unity of Orthodox Churches and he was very much concerned about their unity. He realised the need for an “intra-Orthodox ecumenical movement.” According to him, the empirical Orthodox Church is divided in view of St. Ignatius of Antioch’s definition of the Church as “unity of faith and love.” In Schmemann’s opinion, unity is not the absence of divisions, disagreements and schisms, but it is the presence of unity which, from the first beginnings of Christianity, has been considered as the very essence of the Church.

There were many efforts to bring different churches into one fold. According to Schmemann, the first expression of the union of the Orthodox Church of different jurisdictions is seen with the formulation of the standing conference of Orthodox Bishops in America which started in 1960. About this conference Schmemann wrote, “for the first time in America, a constructive step was made towards a real and permanent cooperation of Orthodox Churches in areas, which obviously call for common planning, united efforts and exchange of experience. But even more important than the practical aspect is the spiritual and ecclesiological value of this achievement.”

His ecumenical concerns had gone always beyond the boundaries of Orthodox Churches. Schmemann was aware of the differences of opinion regarding the Orthodox Church’s relation to the Catholic Church. In his opinion, two attitudes prevalent among the Orthodox are: anti-Catholics rejecting all that is Roman and those who think that the only difference between Catholics and Orthodoxy, is on the question of papacy. Differing from both, he points out that “what we need today is an extensive, sober and consistent evaluation of Roman Catholicism taken as a whole, a study of its spiritual and theological ethos.” Leaving the polemical attitude of the past, Schmemann has come to a dialogical attitude which is characteristic of modern ecumenism. He strongly advocates, “from the emotional, historical, cultural and all the other roots of our “anti-Romanism” we must go back to the only real, the only valid one: the doctrinal... Unity,

reunion, conversion - for the Orthodox all these terms can mean but one thing - agreement in faith, unity in dogma.”

There is for Schmemann a possibility for new dialogue. In his opinion, the great movement of “re-sourcement,” of a return to the real sources: the Bible, the Fathers, the Liturgy which has deeply marked the theological life of both Orthodox Church and the Roman West has engendered a new spirit of dialogue. This conviction is seen throughout his life. Schmemann is one of the first Orthodox theologians who responded to the announcement of the Second Vatican Council. Even before knowing the details he wrote in the editorial of St. Vladimir’s theological Quarterly: “a reaction of Orthodox theology, even at this early stage, is not only possible but positively necessary. Whether an invitation or an offer is to come from or not, whether its general tenure is acceptable or not, a clarification of our own position regarding Roman Catholicism is overdue.”

Schmemann, an Orthodox theologian in the context of liturgical, patristic and ecumenical movements of the Catholic and Protestant churches, became a theologian with a harmonious blend of both the East and the West. This combination helped him in his theological synthesis. He contributed a great deal to Christian thought in this century. In particular, his contribution to the theological rediscovery of liturgy is incalculable. He has contributed generously for a theological revival of the liturgical life of the Churches. Regarding the liturgical awakening of the Orthodox Churches in America, Thomas Hopko has observed:

The people went to Church with devotion and piety. They were moved by the beauty of the services. But the significance and power of these services as revelations of the Kingdom of God, in spirit and in truth, were hardly understood and experienced. Today this is no longer the case. In more and more places, for more and more people, through educational enlightenment and pastoral guidance, the liturgy of the Church has come alive as the source of divine wisdom and power which it is.

Schmemann has given a great contribution to this achievement of Orthodoxy in America. But along with W. Jardine Grisbrooke and Peter

96 Alexander Schmemann, “Rome, the Ecumenical Council and the Orthodox Church (I) Possibilities and Impossibilities,” 2.
we have to acknowledge that Schmemann did not go enough
towards achieving a genuine liturgical reform. He was more concerned
about the theological content of the liturgy. It goes well in the mystical
tradition of Orthodoxy, but seems far from reality. Perhaps this is an area
where the liturgical theologians of various Orthodox traditions need to
work further.

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of Alexander Schmemann,” 148. Grisbrooke criticises Schmemann for his “attitude to
practical liturgical reform.” He states that Schmemann’s reform “was governed not
by his theological and liturgical principles, but by fear ... of chaos as it has produced
in so many churches of the Roman rite.” He dealt in detail regarding “the influence
on Schmemann of the consequences of liturgical reform in the West.” 146-148. Peter
Galadza agrees with Grisbrooke and notes that, his “interest in liturgical reform was
very much conditioned by the post-Vatican II changes in the Roman Rite. A “trend
factor” stimulated the discussion.” Peter Galadza, “Restoring the Icon: Reflections on
the Reform of Byzantine Worship,” 239.

It is becoming vital in ecumenical circles. For example take the case of Harare
Conference of the WCC where the Orthodox delegates took opposing stands towards
the common liturgy. See Peter Bouteneff, “Notes and Comments: The Orthodox at
the Harare Assembly,” SVTQ, 43 (1999) 79-84.