

# The Liturgical Path of Orthodoxy in America

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## Introduction

Visitors from abroad are often surprised when they attend liturgical services at Orthodox parishes in America. They are struck by the interior appearance of our churches, by the presence of pews, of stained-glass windows, by iconostases which vary in style from massive Russian baroque to low, almost symbolic, barriers which conceal nothing. They do not believe their ears when, in parishes of some jurisdictions, they hear organ music. Often to their surprise, they hear the Eucharistic prayer recited aloud by the priest, and they see entire congregations receiving communion every week. They are taken aback by the relative brevity of the divine liturgy on Sunday, which is usually considerably shorter than the 2-3 hours they are accustomed to at home. They wonder why some litanies are omitted or abbreviated. They ask where the children are and are told that they are all attending Sunday school next door at the hall.

To some extent, the differences can be explained for cultural reasons. The Orthodox liturgy has always acclimated itself to local conditions, to various historical circumstances. A Russian or a Ukrainian attending a service in a Greek or Arabic community might well wonder if he shared the same faith. Yet this is precisely the genius of our liturgical tradition, in which the experience and expression of the faith is so thoroughly assimilated, so fully incarnate, in various cultures. Each of these cultures has its own history, its own experiences; yet they all share the same faith and, despite external appearances, also the same liturgy.

But all these differences cannot be explained only in terms of culture. What the foreign visitor observes in our American parishes is not simply an "Americanized" liturgy, though it is usually celebrated in American English in a church building whose pews are taken (sometimes literally) from Protestant churches. In fact many of the adaptations in our liturgical life have their roots abroad; these changes are thus an expression of the links and the continuity which exist between Orthodox communities in America and their "mother churches," and not a break with their past or a capitulation to "foreign," i.e., American Protestant, influences.

In the first part of this paper, I propose to examine one such historical link, that with the Church of Russia. As we commemorate in 1994 the bicentennial of the Russian Orthodox mission in North America, this is certainly an appropriate topic for our reflection. And we at St.

Vladimir's Seminary stand, in a way, as the heirs of this tradition which, I am convinced, has something to say to all the Orthodox in America, as well as to the broader society. I am, of course, fully aware that such an approach cannot do full justice to all the various Orthodox traditions which have been transplanted to America during the course of these two centuries, and which have all left their marks here.

## **Liturgical Study and Reform in Russia in the late 19th-early 20th Centuries**

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It is to the Russia of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that we must look to find the roots of many of the developments in American Orthodox liturgical practice. The 19th century saw the emergence of historical study in Russia. This period marked the rediscovery of the patristic roots of the Orthodox faith. By making available to the academic and ecclesial publics the texts of the Greek fathers, by studying the history of the eastern church, scholars paved the way for the liberation of the Russian Orthodox Church from its centuries' long "Western captivity," in the words of Fr Georges Florovsky [1].

In the area of liturgical history, this era produced a remarkable body of work. No scholar in the field is unaware of the labors of such men as A. Dmitrievskii, M. Skaballanovich, I. Mansvetov, I.A. Karabinov, N. Krasnoseltsev, A. Petrovskii, M.-I. Orlov, among many others. These historians were instrumental in uncovering the rich and complex development of Christian worship. As in the West, which also saw the development of historical liturgical scholarship at this time, these historians laid the groundwork for the subsequent flowering of liturgical theology, and helped to guide the path of liturgical reform in the 20th century.

In 19th century Russia, the field of liturgical study was almost exclusively historical and limited to academic circles. There were few efforts at liturgical reform, with a few notable exceptions, such as the innovations of the recently canonized John of Kronstadt, as well as the work of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow in producing a Russian translation of the Bible. Both of these endeavors engendered strongly negative reactions at the time (much as they did in later years in Greece when the New Testament was translated into modern Greek). Russian liturgical practice had remained essentially frozen since the 17th century. Following Nikon's reform and the resulting Old-Believer schism, few Russians were bold enough to suggest further reforms. The Moscow Council of 1667, completing its deliberations on the *Sluzhebnik* (priest's Service Book), declared: "Let them print it thus in the future, and let no one dare add, remove, or change anything from now on. And even if an angel should say anything different, do not believe him." [2]

Before the mid-17th century, however, there had been several major liturgical reforms in Russia, both far more extensive than Nikon's. The first of these, under Metropolitan Cyprian of Kiev in the late 14th-early 15th centuries, saw the gradual adoption throughout Russia of the "Sabaite" *Typikon*, a monastic rule which had reached its final form on Mt Athos in the 14th century. In cathedrals and parish churches, this marked the end of the so-called "cathedral rite," which had been imported from Constantinople in the 10-11th centuries. In monasteries, this "*Typikon* of St Sabas" replaced the earlier "*Studite Typikon*," an urban monastic *ordo* also of Constantinopolitan origin [3]. The second reform took place in the first half of the 17th century in the Kievan Metropolitanate under Peter Moghila [4]. This reform, like Nikon's in Moscow a few years later, aligned Russian practice with contemporary Greek practice, but with significant Latin influences, many of which found their way into Muscovite practice through the 1672 Moscow *Trebnik* (*Euchologion*) [5]. Significantly, neither Cyprian's nor Peter Moghila's reforms aroused much opposition.

Not until the tumultuous first decade of the 20th century did the topic of liturgical reform again arise. And the call for reform came from a totally unexpected source. In 1905, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church sent a questionnaire to all the bishops seeking their opinion about the reorganization and revival of the church. K.P. Pobedonostsev, the lay Ober-Prokurator of the Holy Synod, clearly expected that the bishops, most of whom he had himself selected precisely for their conservative views, would support his reactionary position against the liberal reformers. The results surprised him. The bishops' responses, subsequently published in three volumes [6], proved to be a clarion call for large-scale church reform, affecting virtually every aspect of ecclesial life [7].

It is outside the scope of this paper to describe these responses in detail. But one area of concern, certainly not the most prominent or well-known, is liturgical practice. The answers provided by the hierarchs certainly contradict the commonly-held view that the Russian Church and its leadership were at this time blindly conservative, opposed to any change or adaptation. Thirty-two of the sixty-four bishops who provided responses address liturgical issues, and what they say reveals a remarkable openness to, indeed a cry for, liturgical renewal. [8]

The bishops were almost uniformly negative in their evaluation of the current state of liturgical life. Recognizing the centrality of worship for Christian life, they lamented over the prevailing situation. The comments of Bishop Nazarii of Nizhnii-Novgorod express a common

theme: "The Orthodox faith is acquired, strengthened, and maintained chiefly by means of liturgical worship. Liturgical worship is properly considered to be the best school for teaching faith and morals, for it acts abundantly and in a saving way on all the powers and capacities of the soul. But if worship is to accomplish all this, then all the faithful must participate in it directly, consciously, and actively ... Most unfortunately, this cannot be said of the liturgical worship of the Russian Orthodox Church." [9]

One of the most significant areas of concern was the issue of liturgical language. Comments on this question ranged from the moderate views of Archbishop Tikhon, then of North America, who called for a new, updated Slavonic translation of liturgical texts, with a view to eventually adopting Russian [10], to the more radical opinion of Bishop Arsenii of Pskov, who wrote that "liturgical worship should be celebrated in the commonly-understood Russian language" [11]. Bishop Ioannikii of Arkhangel complains that, while translations of the liturgical books exist in languages such as Latvian and Mordovian, services cannot be celebrated in Russian! [12] Of the twenty-eight bishops who addressed the question of liturgical language, eight called for the use of Russian, eighteen for a major correction and revision of the Slavonic text to make it more understandable, and two recommended a thorough examination of the whole question.

A second issue addressed by many of the bishops is the problem of the *Typikon*. This book, which regulates the liturgical life of the church, is chiefly of monastic origin. Services are extremely long and, to the lay person, monotonous. Only in a small minority of monasteries has it ever been strictly followed. In parish and cathedral use, services have always been abbreviated-and here is where the difficulty arises. In the absence of clear guidelines, clergy abbreviate services in an arbitrary and haphazard manner. There is a lack of uniformity, and, more significantly, violence is often done to the very structure and content of the liturgy. Twenty of the responding bishops appeal for the development of a parish *Typikon*, which would regulate and codify parish usage and eliminate abuses.

The bishops expressed considerable concern for the manner in which services were performed. In particular, they called for greater participation on the part of the laity. Eleven bishops called for the introduction of congregational singing. There was strong concern that the hymns and the readings were, because of their mode of performance, incomprehensible to the people. Five bishops, including Archbishop Tikhon of North America [13], recommended the recitation of the so-called "secret prayers" aloud. Many bishops called for the elimination of repetitious litanies on the one hand, and the

expansion of scriptural readings and the restoration of preaching on the other. Archbishop Tikhon raised the question of the "new" calendar, particularly in the context of the American diocese, where the entire society followed the Gregorian, not the Julian, calendar.

This brief summary only points to the tremendous openness toward liturgical reform and renewal which existed within the Russian Church on the eve of the revolution. The tragic events which followed derailed any possibility of bringing these changes into reality. The projected council was not called, and the Council of 1917-18 was only able to reestablish the patriarchate and elect Tikhon of North America to the position. The Communist oppression began immediately and precluded much further discussion about the internal life of the Church, particularly on liturgical matters.

The subsequent adoption of many of the above reforms by the Renovatianist Church after 1922 only made things more difficult. On the one hand, as the Church of Russia battled for survival under the oppressive yoke of a militantly atheistic regime, it was in no position to face the issue of liturgical reform. And even today, seventy years later, any suggestion concerning liturgical change usually leads to accusations of "Renovationism." But the issues raised by the Russian bishops in 1905 must be resolved, and the church, now freed from communism is now beginning, very slowly, to address them.

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**The Tradition  
Continues Abroad:  
Fr Alexander  
Schmemmann**

In the tumultuous years following the 1917 revolution, Paris became the center of gravity of Russian intellectual and religious thought. Here, particularly at the St Sergius Theological Institute, were gathered some of the greatest Orthodox minds of the 20th century, including Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, Anton V. Kartashev, Vasili V. Zenkovskii, Fr. Cyprian Kern, Fr. Nicholas Afanassieff, and Fr. Georges Florovskii, among others. These were the people who were to educate a later generation of scholars, including Frs. Alexander Schmemmann and John Meyendorff, with whom the name of this institution is so inextricably linked. And it is Schmemmann who is credited, or blamed, for many of the liturgical changes that we in America have experienced in recent decades.

Schmemmann completed his studies at St Sergius in the area of church history, studying under Kartashev, and writing a candidate's thesis on the subject of Byzantine theocracy. He then began to teach church history at the Institute, first as a layman, then as an ordained priest. Under the influence of Fr. Cyprian Kern, his spiritual father and professor of patristics, Schmemmann's interest turned to liturgy. Even more significant, however, was the influence on the young

Schmemmann of Fr. Nicholas Afanassieff, professor of canon law, whose chief area of interest was ecclesiology. Afanassieff is best known for his emphasis on Eucharistic ecclesiology, an understanding of the Church which stresses the importance of liturgy, of the Eucharist in particular. According to this vision, which is based on some of the earliest patristic writings, including those of Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons, the Church is fully realized, is incarnate as the Body of Christ, precisely when she gathers around the altar to celebrate the Eucharist. The Eucharist, therefore, is both locus and source of the Church's life. This was the vision that Schmemmann was to champion for the rest of his life, striving constantly to translate this principle from theory into practice [14].

Fr Alexander Schmemmann's contacts, however, were hardly limited to his teachers and colleagues at St Sergius. Paris in the 1940's and 1950's was also a center of Roman Catholic revival, a trend which included both a "return to the sources" (primarily the writings of the Greek fathers) and a "liturgical movement" (which drew much of its inspiration from the study of eastern liturgy). It is by his personal contacts with and reading of the works of western scholars such as Jean Danielou and Louis Bouyer that Schmemmann worked out his "liturgical theology" and "philosophy of time." The writings of these scholars held a prominent place in his library, alongside the works of 19th and early-20th century Russian liturgical historians and those of his mentors at St Sergius.

It was here in America, however, that Fr Alexander was to leave his greatest mark. He came to St Vladimir's Seminary in 1951 and assumed the position of dean in 1962, serving in that capacity until his death in 1983. A man of vision and action, Schmemmann was never entirely comfortable in purely academic and intellectual circles. Through his many writings, through his frequent speaking engagements, through his sermons, and particularly through his teaching of several generations of priests, he constantly strove to translate into reality his vision of the Church primarily as Eucharistic assembly. It would be no exaggeration to say that he was the driving force behind a renewal of Eucharistic and liturgical life which continues in America and abroad to this day.

When Fr Schmemmann arrived on the American scene in the early 1950's, the situation was not bright. The Russian revolution had caused chaos in the life of the church not only in Russia, but in America as well. A church that had once been united under a Russian archbishop was now fragmented, along both political and ethnic lines, into numerous competing groups. Among the jurisdictions of Slavic origin, the language of the liturgy was Slavonic, even though most of

the faithful, in America for several generations already, no longer spoke their ancestral Russian, Ukrainian, Carpatho-Russian, Galician, etc.-much less understood Slavonic. Many formerly Uniate parishes followed certain Latin traditions, such as refusing communion to small children or celebrating memorial stipend liturgies on Lenten weekdays. A majority of the clergy had little theological education, though this was beginning to change, and they were ill-equipped to represent Orthodoxy in a pluralistic society. Many parishes functioned chiefly as ethnic clubs, and their organization was essentially congregational, with the priest relegated to the altar for the performance of the cult. Parishioners were obliged by parish statute to receive the sacraments - confession and communion - once a year.

The three decades that Fr Schmemmann labored on American soil witnessed a remarkable transformation in American church life, particularly in its *liturgical* life. English became the language of worship in most parishes. At first, the English texts used were the very same translations from the Slavonic commissioned by Archbishop Tikhon at the turn of the century [15]. But in the 1960's and 1970's, new English translations began to appear, at least some of them with a more scholarly foundation, in more contemporary English, and based on the original Greek. This work continues to the present day, not without some degree of controversy.

Schmemmann, in particular, was instrumental in bringing about a Eucharistic revival. Where once-a-year communion was once the norm, a significant proportion of the laity now receive the sacrament weekly. General confession is used in many parishes as a supplement to individual confession, and the former requirement (in Slavic churches) that confession precede each communion no longer applies to those who receive regularly and frequently. Once silent prayers, the Eucharistic anaphora in particular, are now read aloud in an increasing number of churches. In order to make clear the ecclesial dimension of baptism, many baptisms are now performed in conjunction with the Eucharist, typically on Sunday morning, with the entire parish in attendance. In order to accommodate working families, weekday festal liturgies are often held in the evening in conjunction with the festal vigil [16].

Several years ago, the Liturgical Commission of the Orthodox Church in America conducted a survey among the clergy. The purpose of the survey was twofold: 1) to determine what was actually being done in the parishes; and 2) to learn what the clergy would like to see done in the area of liturgy. The results are striking, particularly when compared to the general situation a decade earlier.

- 80% of priests read all or part of the anaphora aloud
- 95% of priests encourage frequent communion
- 52% offer general confession, typically monthly
- 39% celebrate baptism together with the eucharistic liturgy (and 69% would do so if their bishops allowed this practice and provided appropriate guidelines)
- 21% celebrate evening eucharistic liturgies on the eves of certain feasts (and 55% would do so with appropriate authorization from their bishops)

As for the clergy's hope for the future, there were numerous appeals for greater uniformity and clear guidelines. "Every priest is his own *Typikon*" is an oft-repeated complaint, just as it was among the Russian bishops in 1905. And just as in 1905, many of the clergy called for the development of a parish *Typikon* to replace the monastic *Typikon* of St Sabas, which cannot possibly be fulfilled in a parish setting.

Many of the changes in American liturgical practice are attributable directly to the work of Fr Alexander Schmemmann. Many of the priests now serving in America have studied under him, and it would be difficult to find a priest who has not at least read his works. Through both the spoken and written word, Schmemmann always stressed the ecclesial dimension of worship. The liturgy, he insisted, must be an action of the entire church, clergy and laity together. Even more than that, the liturgy, and the Eucharist in particular, is the most perfect expression, the realization of the Church. As such, the liturgy cannot be divorced from theology, because it is itself the most perfect act of theology, of knowing and experiencing God-and thus liturgy is itself a primary source of theology. This was Schmemmann's greatest insight, and it influenced not only the Orthodox, but also many outside the Church. Schmemmann's books are widely used in American universities and seminaries. Is it an accident that, for many years already, close to 50% of our seminary students are adult converts to Orthodoxy? Often, it is precisely their exposure to Orthodox worship, as well as to such seminal works as Schmemmann's *For the Life of the World* [17], that draws people to the Orthodox Church.

## **The Challenge Ahead**

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But all is not well on Orthodoxy's western front. While the Eucharistic liturgy has undergone significant change, most of the other services have remained untouched-not only because they have been little-changed, but in the sense that they have virtually disappeared from the experience of the faithful. Many parishes still have Saturday evening vespers, but this service is attended by few parishioners. Sunday matins has, in most cases, simply ceased to exist in parishes of Slavic



background; in communities following Greek/Antiochian practice, this service is much abbreviated and reduced to a little-comprehensible dialogue between priest and cantor, performed in an empty church. Thus the rich Orthodox liturgical tradition has, *de facto*, been reduced to the Sunday morning Eucharistic liturgy, and this is undoubtedly the most significant liturgical "reform" to have occurred in the modern period.

We have become a "Sunday church," peopled by "Sunday Christians." The Eucharist has lost its connection to the Orthodox liturgical corpus, of which it is supposed to be the climax-something akin to reducing a fifteen-course banquet to dessert alone. And, all too often, our people reduce Christianity only to attending Sunday liturgy, making little connection between this liturgical assembly and their daily life. This is precisely the triumph of that "secularism," about which Fr. Schmemmann warned us some thirty years ago [18].

The reduction of liturgical life to Sunday morning liturgy is a tragedy in another sense as well. For example, the faithful who attend liturgy every Sunday never hear the resurrection gospel proclaimed, save once a year on *Pascha* - yet it is appointed to be read every Sunday at matins! The rich tradition of Orthodox hymnography, that great synthesis of theology, spirituality, and poetry-which served as the school for teaching the faith to countless generations of Christians-has been virtually abandoned. The discipline of prayer, both liturgical and private, has disintegrated.

This is a void that no church school, no Christian education curriculum, can fill. In the past, it was the liturgical life which taught the faithful how to live, which transformed them into citizens of the Kingdom, which shaped their lives. Our present system of Christian education, aimed almost exclusively at children, often conducted during the Sunday liturgy, oriented toward transmission of data rather than toward Christian formation, misses the mark almost entirely. It accomplishes little more than give us a false sense of security, that somehow, by sending our children to Sunday school for an hour a week, we are fulfilling our responsibilities as Christian parents. Our recent demographics indicate that this approach has not been particularly successful.

What is needed, and again Schmemmann pointed this out long ago, is a spiritual renewal in all aspects of church life, including church organization, education, and liturgical life. All must go together, and this renewal must include an internal transformation within the heart of each Christian. It is not enough simply to make changes in the liturgy, for then the significant developments in Eucharistic practice in

recent decades should have produced far better results. Indeed, some have compared tinkering with the liturgy to rearranging the deck furniture on the Titanic! Nevertheless, few today would dispute the need for frequent communion, the obvious value of celebrating the liturgy in the vernacular, or the theological rationale for reading aloud the so-called "secret prayers," the anaphora in particular. But it is clear that such reforms are not sufficient in themselves. They must be realized within the context of an evangelical and spiritual revival within the Church.

So where do we go from here? Given our present situation, three areas of concern come to mind, areas to which we Orthodox have paid little attention in the modern era, but about which, I believe, we shall hear more in the years to come.

### ***1. Lay Participation: The Priesthood of the Laity***

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Liturgy is the work of the entire people of God (the *laos tou theou*), and not, as was the case in both pagan and Jewish antiquity, the task of a clerical caste. In the New Testament, the concept of "priesthood" is applied in two ways. First, Christ is presented as the only high priest; this is the main theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Christ is the one who intercedes for us before the throne of the Father, who offers up a sacrifice once for all. By this act, the Old Testament priesthood is finished, or rather, it is perfectly fulfilled in the person of Christ, who remains our high priest for all eternity. Second, the New Testament extends the concept of priesthood to all Christians: "You are a chosen race, a *royal priesthood*, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Peter 2:9). This is an extension of Christ's own priesthood, for the Church is nothing less than the Body of Christ, charged with carrying out Christ's own priestly ministry in the world. When a person is baptized, he or she "puts on Christ" (Gal 3:27), becomes a member of the Body of Christ, and therefore a sharer in Christ's priesthood. It is significant that the term "priest" (*hiereus*) is never used in the New Testament for either bishop (*episkopos*=overseer) or presbyter (*presbyteros*=elder).

In the liturgy, therefore, the priestly function is exercised by the *entire community*, by virtue of their baptism. The function of the ordained clergy is to *preside* over the priestly community, to unite *their* priestly prayer. This is why liturgical prayers always use the first person plural. Nowhere is this more clear than at the very center of the anaphora of St John Chrysostom:

***Priest:*** Remembering, therefore, this saving commandment, and all that came to pass for our sake—the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right

hand, the second and glorious coming,

Offering to you these gifts from your own gifts, at all times, and in all places,

**People:** We praise you, we bless you, we give thanks to you, and we pray to you, O Lord our God.

This is all one sentence, and the only active verbs are those which express the action of the gathered assembly and are sung by them: *We praise, we bless, we give thanks, we pray*. This is a sacrificial prayer, and we are here performing our sacrifice of praise. Yet in pagan and Jewish practice, only the priest offers sacrifice: here it is clearly the whole assembly, the priestly people, which does this.

Yet the way in which we celebrate the liturgy often obscures this fact and very few of our laity are even aware that the anaphora is their prayer. For many centuries already the laity could not even hear the words of the Eucharistic prayer, which was recited silently by the priest, who stood behind the closed doors of the sanctuary. And, in recent centuries, even their responses have been taken away from them by choirs, who often stand not with the congregation, but at some distance away, in a choir loft. The laity thus becomes an audience watching a performance by the clergy and the choir. And how often we say that it is the bishop/priest who celebrates the liturgy: do we realize what we are really saying? The adoption of pews by the Orthodox in America makes our churches resemble theaters and further enhances the feeling among the laity that they are a passive audience attending a show. The notion of liturgy as a spectator sport is further encouraged by the symbolic interpretations of the liturgy which abound, stressing that the liturgy is a pictorial demonstration of the life of Christ. Schmemmann railed against this type of symbolism, but it remains common in popular literature on the Eucharist down to our own day. All these developments serve to minimize the laity's role in the liturgy, except as passive spectators. And, because the laity is not engaged in the liturgy, the liturgy has little transformational effect on their lives.

What is needed first, therefore, is a concerted effort to restore their proper role to the laity. Some steps have already been taken, at least in some communities. Frequent communion is more common, the recitation aloud of the Eucharistic prayer is gradually gaining acceptance. But much remains to be done.

There needs to be a broad discussion among our hierarchs, clergy, and laity about their respective roles in the liturgy and in the life of the

church. The clericalism which abounds needs to be overcome. Liturgy is always a conciliar act: no priest can celebrate the liturgy alone; he must always preside over a community, which must itself respond and give its assent. And the prayers recited by the priest are not his own, but those of the entire assembly. Ways need to be found to involve the laity more directly in the liturgy: why, for example, is it necessary for a choir to sing "Amen," or "Lord, have mercy"? Could not at least some parts of the service be sung congregationally? Antiphonal psalmody, with the people singing refrains, could also easily be restored without altering the structure of our services. Knowledge of liturgical history is particularly helpful in this regard, since it allows us to see how liturgically impoverished we have become, but also offers various models we might find useful in our present situation.

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## 2. *Daily Prayer*

*"Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"* (1 *Thessalonians* 5:16-18).

Christianity developed out of a Jewish tradition that knew the discipline of daily prayer. The pious Jew, and Jesus can certainly be counted among them, prayed at least two or three times a day. The *Didache*, the earliest "church order," dating to *ca.* 125, instructs Christians to recite the Lord's Prayer thrice daily. By the end of the 2nd century, the times of prayer are generally fixed, typically at morning, noon, evening, and midnight. At first performed privately in the home by each Christian, after the 4th century daily prayer moved into the public arena with the development of the cathedral and monastic offices. Throughout the centuries, the Church has maintained this practice of daily prayer in many different ways, adapting the office to the exigencies of each age [21]. Clearly, being Christian did not begin and end with attending the Eucharistic liturgy on Sunday morning.

Perhaps the chief casualty in the process of transplanting Orthodoxy onto the American continent is the tradition of daily prayer. Not only the daily office, but even Saturday evening vespers and Sunday morning matins [22], are on the verge of extinction. One can list endless reasons for this development: increased secularization; the fact that people do not live close to their parish church; the absence of monasticism, which always maintained the ideal of constant prayer; imitation of western Protestant patterns of worship; competition from television and other forms of entertainment. ... Whatever the causes, the results are indeed worrisome. Not only are we abandoning a discipline of prayer which has always been central to Christian life, but we are losing the rich body of hymnography which has educated

and formed countless generations of Christians.

Clearly, Orthodoxy cannot survive as a Sunday-only church. We must recover the practice of daily prayer, both private and liturgical. Being a member of the Church implies that we have a living, ongoing relationship with God and with the members of Christ's Body, the Church. This is not a relationship that we can simply turn on and off, once a week.

The Church today stands at a crossroads, much as it did during the apostolic age, or in the age of Constantine. In those days, the Church responded to challenges from within and without with creative solutions. Nowhere is this more evident than in the liturgical realm. The early Church developed several liturgical traditions, drawing freely and creatively on both Jewish and pagan sources. We can see this clearly in the development of the practice of daily prayer. During the fourth century, in response to radically different conditions and greatly expanded possibilities, the Church developed both a popular "cathedral" rite for urban cathedrals and parishes and a more sober "monastic" rite for monasteries. In subsequent centuries, these traditions underwent any number of radical reforms, each time in response to new conditions. Our present practice of daily prayer, vespers and matins, derives essentially from 14th century Mt Athos, a monastic tradition which eventually supplanted the "cathedral rite." But this monastic practice, we can safely say, no longer fits the needs of our time, as our empty churches on Saturday evening so clearly indicate. This tradition developed in a rural, agrarian society; yet we live in an urban (or suburban), industrial society. We live far from church. We, at least the fortunate ones among us, live in nuclear families, and few of our neighbors share our faith. All these factors conspire to make it impossible for us simply to carry out the tradition of daily prayer that we have inherited.

Should we not at least begin discussing how we might go about restoring this very essential aspect of Christian life? How are we to recover our traditional practice of regular, frequent prayer, both in common and in the privacy of our homes? How are we to rediscover our rich hymnographic heritage, which we have virtually abandoned? The tradition of the church provides us with numerous examples: there is much variety in the times of prayer, in the types of celebration, both private and communal. Drawing on this rich heritage, we need to develop resources that might be used by individuals, by families, by small groups, as well as by our parishes [23]. But what is needed first of all is a conversion ourselves and of our people, a realization that Christianity is a way of life, not simply the fulfilling of a "Sunday

obligation."

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### 3. *The Lectionary*

The reading of Scripture and the sermon have always formed an integral part of Christian worship, just as they were in the synagogue. In fact, the New Testament itself developed in the context of the liturgical community. It was in the liturgical assembly that Scripture was proclaimed, transmitted, and interpreted, as we can already see from the mid-2nd-century description by Justin Martyr: "On the day named after the sun, all who live in city or countryside assemble. The memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read for as long as time allows. When the lector has finished, the president addresses us and exhorts us to imitate the splendid things we have heard. Then we all stand and pray." [24]

It is hardly accidental that the vast majority of early patristic writings consist precisely of commentaries on Scripture, of sermons delivered within a liturgical gathering.

Subsequently, many of these commentaries were tapped by generations of hymnographers in Syria, Palestine, and Constantinople. Elaborate hymns such as the kontakia of St. Romanos the Melodist, or the canons of St. John of Damascus or St. Andrew of Crete breathe Scripture through every pore. Prayers, too, are replete with biblical language and imagery: in the anaphora of St Basil, for example, the introductory section, up to the *Sanctus*, contains no fewer than forty-four biblical citations! In this way, the reading of Scripture, the sermon, the chanting of hymns, and the Church's prayer all worked together to provide the faithful with a sound scriptural formation, always within an ecclesial context. Thus, while private reading of the Bible is always desirable and appropriate, it can never replace this ecclesial, liturgical context.

In contemporary Orthodoxy, it would be fair to say, scriptural literacy has all but disappeared. Our only exposure to Scripture is through the brief selections from the epistles and the gospels read on Sunday, and through the sermon (assuming that the homily has any connection to the readings, which is not always the case). The vast corpus of hymnography has, *de facto*, become inaccessible, largely because the Sunday Eucharist, the only service the vast majority ever attend, contains almost no variable hymns. But even when the faithful do attend vespers or matins, the hymnography is often performed in a language or musical style which renders it virtually incomprehensible. As for the prayers, particularly the anaphora, these are still read silently in the majority of Orthodox parishes.

What we are largely left with, then, is the reading of the epistle and the gospel on Sunday morning. These two brief selections now must bear virtually the entire weight of transmitting our scriptural heritage. The Old Testament reading, once an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word, has long since disappeared [25]. And the selections from the New Testament, the epistles and the gospels, are necessarily limited in scope. The gospel readings typically focus on the signs of the Kingdom, often healings or other miracles, which are certainly appropriate for Sunday, the "eighth day," itself the foretaste of the Kingdom. But key texts, such as the Sermon on the Mount, or St Paul's eloquent chapter on love (1 Corinthians 13), are never read on any Sunday, while some passages, such as the account of the healing of the Gerasene demoniac, are repeated several times! The picture of Christ which emerges from our Sunday lectionary is that of a miracle worker, a magician, more than that of a teacher. And pastors eventually run out of ideas in preaching about the pigs' jumping into the sea.

The faithful must be provided with access to Scripture. The Bible must be read in church, and it must be preached about. It is not enough simply to hand out copies to all parishioners and tell them to go read it at home. Nor are Bible studies adequate. To understand the Scriptures, one must have the "mind of the Church," and this can only be accomplished within an ecclesial, liturgical context. Private interpretation is, for the Orthodox, never sufficient.

In order to make the Bible live again within our liturgy, therefore, we must begin by broadening our Sunday lectionary, at least for the period between Pentecost and the beginning of the pre-Lenten cycle. The present Byzantine lectionary spreads the readings throughout the week, with the result that the selections appointed for Monday through Saturday are never heard; the Eucharist is celebrated daily only in monasteries. What is needed, therefore, is some provision for sequential reading on Sundays alone, which would probably result in the creation of a two- or three-year lectionary. This would allow for entire books to be read in order and enable preachers to treat books in their entirety, much as we find in the commentaries of John Chrysostom and other great preachers. The faithful would then have the opportunity to hear far more of the Scriptures, and pastors would have a much richer lode of material to draw upon.

Second, we should at least consider restoring the Old Testament reading to the liturgy. At present, only a few selected psalm verses are ever used in the Eucharist. The few readings that remain are restricted to the vespers of important feasts and saints' commemorations. Over the course of some 1500 years, the Church has gradually limited the

liturgical use of the Old Testament, with the exception of the Psalter. While it never went along with the blanket rejection of the Old Testament by the Gnostics, the Church was never entirely comfortable with it. As a result, scriptural passages were at first supplemented, and later simply replaced, by hymnographic material - as happened, for example, with the canon at matins [26]. This new hymnography was based, sometimes rather loosely, on the scriptural material, but interpreted it in a Christian sense by means of allegory and typology. Old Testament readings were dropped from the Eucharistic liturgy around the 7th century [27]. As a consequence of these developments, the Old Testament hardly counts as Scripture in the minds of most faithful, except in some very abstract way. Could not at least selected passages from the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Wisdom literature be included in the liturgy, just before the *prokeimenon*?

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## Conclusion

The crisis about which Fr. Schmemmann wrote some thirty years ago has only deepened. The canonical problem has not been resolved. The spiritual problem is as acute as ever. The liturgical problem certainly remains, despite the many developments in recent decades. Yet the challenge facing the Church today is no different than it was 2000 years ago in Palestine, or 200 years ago in Alaska: the Church's primary task, as always, is to bring humanity face to face with Christ himself, to restore the communion between God and man. Everything that the Church does, all its structures, all its programs and activities, are not ends in themselves, but must be directed towards this goal, and judged according to their effectiveness in bringing it about. This applies particularly to the Church's liturgy, because the liturgy, the eucharist in particular, is the privileged locus of the divine-human encounter -- for most people, the Sunday liturgy is their only encounter with the Church. And it implies constant reevaluation, as well as sensitivity to the society in which the Church is called to exercise its ministry. It implies as well an openness to change-and in this regard the Byzantine liturgy has undergone more changes, has been more adaptable, than any other liturgical tradition.

We can simply do nothing and complain that we are losing our "traditions." Or, at the dawn of the 21st century, as we ponder our 200-year history on this continent, we can put on the "mind of the fathers" and respond, faithfully and creatively, to the challenges of a new age.

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## NOTES:

1. See his "Western Influences in Russian Theology," in *Aspects of Church History (The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, vol. IV)* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1975), pp. 157-182.
2. N.I. Subbotin, ed., *Deianiia moskovskago sobora 1666-1667 gg.* (Moscow, 1893), pt. 2, ff. 15v-16. On Nikon's reforms, see my *Russia, Ritual, and Reform: The Liturgical Reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991).
3. See M. Arranz, "Les grandes etapes de la liturgie byzantine: Palestine--Byzance--Russie," in *Liturgie de l'eglise particuliere et liturgie de l'eglise universelle* (Conferences Saint-Serge, 1975 = *Bibliotheca "Ephemerides Liturgicae," Subsidia, 7*) (Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1976), pp. 43-72; and I.D. Mansvetov, *Mitropolit Kiprian v ego liturgicheskoi deiatel'nosti* (Moscow, 1882).
4. See my article, "The Liturgical Reforms of Peter Moghila: A New Look," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 29(1985)101-114.
5. See N.D. Uspenskii, "Kollizia dvukh bogoslovii v ispravlenii russkikh bogoslužhebnykh knig v XVII veke," *Bogoslovskie Trudy* 13(1975)148-171; English trans. in N. Uspensky, *Evening Worship in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), pp. 191-240.
6. *Otzyvy eparkhial'nykh arkhiereev po voprosam o tserkovnoi reforme* (St Petersburg, 1906). Cited hereafter as *Otzyvy*.
7. See especially James W. Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope: The Movement for Church Renewal in Russia, 1905-1906* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981).
8. A complete analysis of these responses appears in an unpublished M.Div. thesis at St Vladimir's Seminary by John Shimchick, "The Responses of the Russian Episcopate Concerning Worship -- 1905, and the Liturgical Situation in America" (1980).
9. *Otzyvy* II, 454.
10. *Otzyvy* I, 537.
11. *Otzyvy* IV, 6.
12. *Otzyvy* I, 335-6.
13. *Otzyvy* I, 537.
14. For a concise biography of Fr. Schmemmann, see John Meyendorff, "A Life Worth Living," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 28(1984)3-10.
15. Who has not been exposed to the Service Book compiled and translated by Isabel Florence Hapgood, commissioned by Archbishop Tikhon and first published in 1905, revised in 1922, and still kept in print by the Antiochian Archdiocese?
16. Evening liturgies were first introduced in this country in the Antiochian Archdiocese, but they are now increasingly common in other jurisdictions as well.
17. 2nd edition (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973).
18. See his "Problems of Orthodoxy in America, I: The Canonical Problem," *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 8 (1964) 67-85; "Problems of Orthodoxy in America, II: The Liturgical Problem," *ibid.* 8 (1964) 164-185; and "Problems of Orthodoxy in America, III: The Spiritual Problem," *ibid.* 9 (1965) 171-193. An even more cogent articulation of this issue appeared in Schmemmann's 1971 address to the 8th General Assembly of Synodos, held at Brookline, MA, and subsequently published as "Worship in a Secular

Age," appendix 1 of his *For the Life of the World*, 2nd edition (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), pp. 117-134.

19. I am not aware of the origin of this frequently-repeated aphorism, and I would be grateful to any reader who could locate its source.
20. Not until the fourth century is the term applied to the ordained clergy. The best discussion on the subject is to be found in Raymond E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970).
21. On the early Christian period, see Paul F. Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer in the Early Church* (New York: Oxford, 1982). On the development of the office, see Robert F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1986).
22. In Slavic and Athonite practice, according to the "Typikon of St Sabas," Sunday matins is celebrated not on Sunday morning, but on Saturday evening, immediately following vespers.
23. Some such materials have already appeared; cf. Constance J. Tarasar, *The Season of Christmas* (Syosset, NY: Orthodox Church in America, Department of Religious Education, 1980).
24. *Apology* 1, 67.
25. This probably happened as early as the 7th century, though this reading did survive on certain feast days, such as the eves of Christmas, Epiphany, and Pascha. Cf. Juan Mateos, *La celebration de la parole dans la liturgie byzantine* (= *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 191) (Rome: *Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium*, 1971), pp. 130-133.
26. On the canon, as well as on Byzantine hymnography, see the now dated, but still useful, study by Egon Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949).
27. See note 25 above.