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Disertační práce

**Alexander Schmemmann's Ecclesiology:  
Witnessing the Crisis within the  
Orthodox Church**

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## Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto disertační práci s názvem ***Alexander Schmemmann's Ecclesiology Witnessing the Crisis Within the Orthodox Church*** napsal samostatně a výhradně s použitím uvedených pramenů.

Souhlasím s tím, aby práce byla zveřejněna pro účely výzkumu a soukromého studia.

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### **Anotace**

Dizertační práce Christiana Panaitescu zkoumá ekleziologii Alexandra Schmemmanna v souvislosti s krizí uvnitř pravoslavné církve. Sleduje zásadní změny, kterým musela Schmemmannova generace pravoslavných teologů v emigraci čelit: bolševická revoluce v Rusku a její důsledky, situace cizinců žijících v odlišné kultuře, posun k situaci, kdy církev nemá pevné místo ve společnosti ani není zakořeněná v každodenním životě lidí, a konečně hledání teologických základů liturgické a duchovní zkušenosti, kterou tito teologové považovali za formativní. Práce ukazuje krizi jako proces mající své teologické, kulturní, sociální a politické kořeny a důsledky. Panaitescu následuje způsob, jakým tuto krizi vnímal a zpracovával Alexander Schmemmann ve své teologii, jmenovitě ve své liturgické a sakramentální teologii. Vzhledem k tomu, že krize v pravoslavné církvi byla mnohvrstevným jevem, dizertační práce si všímá jejích různých dimenzí prostřednictvím sledování vývoje ruské emigrantské teologie, která se vyrovnávala s faktem, že byla doposavad pod vlivem západní novoscholastiky, dále s nesouladem mezi liturgickým životem pravoslavné církve a její teologií a nakonec s problematikou vztahu pravoslavné církve a světa. Dizertace identifikuje pozitivní stránky Schmemmannova chápání zásady *lex orandi est lex credendi* a potenciál světa stát se místem prostředkujícím Boží přítomnost. Dizertace se kriticky staví k Schmemmannovým nejasným argumentům týkajícím se hranic pravoslavného svědectví ve světě a odkazů k slavení eucharistie jako nejlepšímu řešení této mnohvrstevné a složité krize. Na druhou stranu oceňuje Schmemmannovu ekleziologii jako užitečný příspěvek k vnímání krizových změn v pravoslavné církvi a k nalezení správného vztahu ke kořenům a poslání pravoslaví vzhledem k ostatním křesťanským teologiím a k liturgickým zkušenostem.

### **Klíčová slova**

Schmemmann, ekleziologie, liturgická teologie, sakramentální teologie, krize, *lex orandi est lex credendi*.

## Summary

The thesis of Cristian Panaitescu analyses Alexander Schmemmann's ecclesiology in relation to the crisis within the Orthodox Church. It follows the decisive turning points Schmemmann's generation of Orthodox Theologians living in emigration had to face: The Bolshevik revolution in Russia and its consequences; being strangers in different cultures; moving to the situation where Church no longer had a firm place in society and embedded structures of life; seeking for theological foundations that would be corresponding to the liturgical and spiritual experience the Orthodox theologians found formative. Thus it shows the crisis as a process with theological, cultural, social and political reasons and implications. Panaitescu follows how Alexander Schmemmann witnessed this crisis and dealt with it in his theology, namely within his liturgical and sacramental theology. Given that the crisis within the Orthodox Church has been a multi-layered reality, the thesis refers its various dimensions as it follows the evolution of Russian émigré theology as it has dealt with being previously dominated by Western neo-scholasticism the disruption between the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church and Orthodox theology, and eventually regarding the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the world. The dissertation identifies the positive aspects of Schmemmann's understanding of the rule *lex orandi est lex credendi* and of the potentiality of the world becoming a mediating place for God's presence. The thesis criticizes Schmemmann's less than clear arguments concerning the restrictive boundaries of the Orthodox witness in the world and the adequacy of the Eucharist being the ultimate solution for the multi-layered and complicated crisis. On the positive side, Schmemmann's ecclesiology is appreciated as a useful contribution to seeing the turning points of the Orthodox Church as new possibilities of finding a right relationship to its roots and its mission, and a right relationship with other Christian theologies and liturgical experiences.

## Keywords

Schmemmann, ecclesiology, liturgical theology, sacramental theology, crisis, *lex orandi est lex credendi*.

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## Introduction

This study is an attempt to explore Alexander Schmemmann's (1921-1983) consideration and criticisms of the crisis within the Orthodox Church as it was mediated and witnessed by his ecclesiology. Two factors particularly inspired me to take up this project. The original inspiration goes back to the period when I studied in Paris, at St Serge Theological Institute where I wrote my dissertation for a master's degree on Schmemmann's pastoral theology. During that period I noted not only the importance of the questions raised by Schmemmann regarding the crisis within the Orthodox Church, but I had also some personal experience with a more actual manifestation of that crisis. Several teachers from France, the United States of America and the Czech Republic helped me providentially to cope with my own experience, which was not always smooth, and to understand the necessity of dealing openly with the existence of such a state in the Orthodox Church to which I belong.

The second reason for engaging with Schmemmann's ecclesiology was another experience I underwent, this time in the Czech Republic during a period of ten years when I was a member of a monastic community in South Moravia and afterwards a parish priest in Central Moravia. Once again the crisis within the Orthodox Church met my missionary and ecumenical enthusiasm and hit me dramatically but not tragically. During this struggle I found the possibility of expressing my concern regarding this predicament at the Protestant Theological Faculty in Prague, under the guidance of Professor Ivana Noble, and I took that God-given chance.

A few words need to be said about the scope of this study entitled *Alexander Schmemmann's Ecclesiology Witnessing of the Crisis Within the Orthodox Church*. The title itself shows the limits and scope of this reading. It is a study built on analysing Schmemmann's life context, his theology and his activity within the Russian Orthodox Church under the Constantinople

Patriarchate. Orthodox churches in the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw several major changes, which have shaped the contemporary image of the Orthodox presence in the world. One of these issues was the crisis that began to trouble Orthodox emigrants in Western Europe and Northern America. Alexander Schmemmann will constitute through his life, theology and belonging to the Church the vantage point of my dissertation thesis that engages the crisis within the Orthodox Church.

Speaking of this crisis within the Orthodox Church as lived, reflected and analysed by Schmemmann means articulating the process that took place in his life and that was expressed in his theology. This process implies several levels: at an existential level it is about giving away old certainties and accepting new challenges; at an ecclesial level it is about allowing new structures to overcome juridical splits in the diaspora and enabling Orthodoxy to take roots on West social, cultural and political grounds; at a religious level it is about theology nourished by the specific Orthodox heritage and theology becoming the source of the new mission needed in contemporary secularised society.

How did Schmemmann come to speak and write about the crisis within the Orthodox Church? What exactly made him determined to adopt an uncompromising attitude over the jurisdictional problems of the Orthodox émigrés in France and the United States of America, who found their theological refuge in the nationalistic melting pot? What solution did Schmemmann offer to the critical discrepancy between theology and liturgy that settled in the Orthodox academic circles of his time? How did he react to the call of his contemporary world to rely on the Church? What did he as a Christian propose to the growing process of secularization of the society of his time? It is with questions such as these that my thesis will deal, leading the reader through Schmemmann's life, through the influences he received from his



teachers to the final shape of his theology concerning the Church, the world and the way humankind is called to celebrate God's revealing presence in that world.

Examining his theology will provide me with the necessary material for engaging more theologically with his understanding of that crisis. It will complement studying his own life and engagement with the Church. These two parts, one biographical, the other theological, will partly overlap. Each one will involve the other and they will critically develop each other. Their inner dialogue out of which we can understand Schmemmann's deep commitment to serving the Orthodox Church as well as his criticism of the crisis within the Orthodox Church continued to inspire me throughout the writing of the thesis.

It has to be said right at the beginning that Schmemmann was not alone in his approach to that crisis. Hence I decided to compare him with other theologians who influenced him and with institutions or movements to which he belonged and which marked his theology. I have done this in order to make a contextual study of his ecclesiology and the relevance that this issue could have on our thought today.

The purpose of this study is to uncover a theological view on a subject that has its overriding significance in our time. Such an attempt is fruitful not only as a means of rapprochement in an ecumenical context, but also as an encouragement to the elaboration of a stable and well-adjusted ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church.

There is also another motivation to this study that is linked both to my belonging to the Orthodox Church as a monk and priest living in a predominantly non-Orthodox ecclesiastical context, and also to my commitment to the ecumenical movement. The Church I belong to has to overcome several challenges and difficulties in its quest for a right Christian identity. As I write these lines, in Bucharest, the Orthodox faithful have gone

out on the streets to protest against, among other things, the hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church which stands accused of corruption and opulence. A quest for correct understanding of the relationship between the Church and the world is still important. The social, cultural, political and religious relevance of the Church, as Schmemmann proposes in his theology and in his *Journals*, I believe can definitely help Orthodox people to cope with the difficulties of their belonging to the Church and dwelling in the world.

For the past eleven years I have taken part regularly in ecumenical encounters, being also a member of an organising committee for ecumenical meetings of monks, nuns and religious consecrated persons. I am deeply aware of the duty to engage such encounters and the imperative of such meetings. Here again, a correct understanding of the importance of being different yet one in Christ, together with Christ in the Holy Spirit can provide a milieu for dialogue and rapprochement, for communion and spiritual sharing.

Now let me say a couple of words on the structure of this thesis and its method. It is a systematic study in three levels. In my study I use a comparison with a contextual connotation rather than a face-to-face approach. On the first level, the assessment regards Schmemmann's life context, his growth as a church member, the Russian émigrés in France and the United States of America. Schmemmann is viewed in relation to several personalities, institutions and movements that shaped his life and theology in a rather general manner. Then I move towards another dimension, the one shaped by three theologians, Afanasiev, Kern and Florovsky, who influenced him decisively in his theological evolution. Finally, the study turns to his own theology, mainly his ecclesiology, liturgical theology and in particular his view of the relationship between dogma and practical worship. Here I explore too the tensions of the relationship between the Church and the world. Throughout the text I refer to

the views of theologians interlinked with commentaries and critics in order to keep the argument coherent and full.

As for the sources of research, I have depended mainly on Schmemmann's writings and on the writings of those three theologians, Afanasiev, Kern and Florovsky who most significantly influenced Schmemmann. I have nevertheless selected those books and articles that dealt directly with the theme of my dissertation. Secondly, I refer to a great number of doctoral dissertations, articles and books dealing with Schmemmann's ecclesiology or other minor subjects. The detailed information is in the footnotes to the relevant passages.

The method of my thesis can be characterised as a biographical-theological comparative study. In line with the method, I have divided my thesis into four chapters. In the first chapter I will look at Schmemmann's life, at the process he underwent to become a husband, priest and theologian, at the different milieus in which he lived, the movements to which he belonged, the personalities he encountered, the situations he passed through. The crossroads of his life will be explored in order to uncover the old backgrounds that formed his life, the deep-rooted theological foundations he inherited, the longstanding cultural, social, political and religious frameworks that shaped his spiritual attitude and Church stance. But this analysis is intended to disclose also the gradual changes in his convictions, the new perspective he would finally follow in order to express his theological thought, and his commitment as a Christian. Both philosophical and theological streams formed the water basins and the waves Schmemmann navigated during the course of his life, whether those waters were deep and quiet, or fast and tumultuous. I will be particularly interested in following where they met other torrents and how the different wavelets interacted.

Right at the beginning I will look at the general features of the Russian émigrés in France, especially in Paris, where Alexander's parents moved when their twin sons, Andrei and Alexander were small. The aim of this inquiry will be to expose the way of life chosen by the people who left their motherland Russia because of the Bolshevik Revolution to gain some freedom in Western Europe.

I shall continue with the French period of his life focusing on his studies and on the process of accomplishing his dream to work in and serve the Church. I shall go further on to analysing his move to America, his work in St Vladimir's Seminary, his commitment to the Orthodox Church in America, and finally look at the end of his life.

A number of questions will be asked in this chapter in order to relate the crisis within the Orthodox Church with his life experience: How did he grasp and communicate his personal experience? How did he receive the experience of the Church and of the others? What was important for him: the experience *per se* or the transmission of the experience? How did his personal experience build his communal vision of the Church? What role did experience play in his understanding of the community of the Church? Answers to these questions will provide a bridge to the following chapters.

His life-experience will be traced through people he met and who witnessed concerning him or were witnessed about by him, institutions where he studied and worked, the social and cultural life he shared, movements and tendencies to which he belonged. He was an emigrant and travelled a lot, often he changed his settlement and was himself changed by this dynamic. He belonged to a mutable society and to a Church community in formation. He walked through already opened theological ways and doors and he had the opportunity to open others. He inherited already opened theological visions and he had the chance to unseal others. How the course of his life managed to keep

continuity with Church and society or to break with them, to vivify ecclesial tradition or to fold it will be analysed in this chapter.

With the second chapter I will move on towards more concrete examinations of three theologians and priests who influenced Schmemmann decisively: Nicolas Afanasiev, Cyprian Kern and Georges Florovsky. In order to understand the way they marked his theology I will examine their theological thought, especially ecclesiology, liturgics, pastoral theology and patristics. But before entering their theology I will present the Russian milieu of Paris where all of them moved to from Russia *via* other countries and where they taught at St Sergius Institute having Schmemmann as a pupil. This presentation will not be a recounting of the analysis I did in the first chapter where I introduced Schmemmann's life context, but rather another view on similar cultural, political, jurisdictional and religious points that were important for Russian émigrés a generation earlier than Schmemmann's. The ultimate purpose of this chapter will be to trace the formation of their consciousness regarding that crisis and the theological expression of these three theologians all of whom acknowledged the crisis within the Orthodox Church.

The first part of the chapter will look at Afanasiev's Eucharistic theology. I will consider the role played by the idea of the local liturgical community and how he compared two types of ecclesiology: universal/judicial versus local/eucharistic. In the second part I will investigate Kern's pastoral concern in relation to the Orthodox Church. I will look for the reason that pushed him to draw categorical conclusions regarding the behaviour of priests and I will examine the environment that shaped these conclusions. When it comes to Florovsky I will focus on his way of understanding Orthodox theology historically. His engagement in the ecumenical movement will guide me to sum up my inquiry. The main characteristic of his theology i.e. his patristic theology will be under the lens of my argument. Interpreting his call

for a neo-patristic synthesis and his criticism towards the sophiological and philosophical melange within Orthodox theology will constitute a part of this inquiry.

The third chapter will take us to the first insight of Schmemmann's ecclesiology. I will begin with an examination of his liturgical experience and how he put it in the light of ecclesiological interpretation. Who the subject is of that experience and what is experienced in and through worship will be the questions guiding us all along the first part of this chapter. Then I will move on with insights concerning the liturgical structure of the Orthodox ordo, that is the way of celebrating the liturgy according to Eastern tradition. I will look not only at the role and importance of time within this liturgical framework, but also at the manner in which the faithful relate to liturgical celebration, which is piety.

In order to understand Schmemmann's view it will be necessary to examine his appropriation of the ancient rule of *lex orandi est lex credendi*. I shall look for the elements that he used for explaining this rule within the Orthodox liturgical tradition. Also I will search out the back-and-forth impact that this rule had on Schmemmann's liturgical theology. Moving on towards finding who the subject is of this liturgical piety will bring me to analyse the communal character of the liturgical assembly. I will examine is the link between the historical Church and the liturgical community and how liturgical piety evolved. From this point I will consider the monastic weight on worship. Keeping in mind the historical evolution of liturgical piety will help me to discover how Schmemmann related the crisis within the Orthodox Church with that piety.

With the fourth chapter, the perspective will change, as I will look at how Schmemmann turned to the world and how he tried to adapt his theology to more practical necessities. The main purpose of this section will be to find out

who the members are of the dialogue between Church – world. Schmemmann's liturgical apprehension of the world will guide us to uncover the tension between the eucharistic assembly and the world where the faithful return after celebration. The first step will be to understand Schmemmann's awareness of the direction the world took away from God and how this direction impacts the Church. Also of great importance will be to demand the reason why he looks at the world for finding the cause of the crisis within the Orthodox Church and then, the meaning of the solution proposed by the liturgical community. I will engage the issue of secularism as Schmemmann puts it. Then I will examine the way he sees the world as God's creation and environment for how humans relate to divinity. I will see how Schmemmann uses the metaphor of "eating and drinking" the world and how he moves from the general perception of the world as nourishment to Christ's Body and Blood fulfilling the ontological human necessity of eating and drinking.

The next steps will be to focus on Christ's paradoxical presence in the world and in the Church. This presence shows us why Schmemmann decided to pay much attention to the liturgical experience of the Church in order to understand the tension between world and Church. From Christ's person Schmemmann went to the Kingdom of God embodied in Christ. I will show his rationale for doing this and how he demonstrated that sharing the presence of the Kingdom of God in and through the worship forms the liturgical community, and the Church.

I will consider thereafter Schmemmann's concern for specific liturgical modalities of embodying the eschatological fulfilment of the Kingdom of God, namely baptism, the priesthood, marriage, the time of death, and the time of illness. Within this analysis I will focus particularly on his concept of womanhood and the role of women in the Church, looking for the actual possibilities that such an overview could open for ecumenical and

interreligious dialogue. In the final part of this chapter I will return to the missionary imperative. The relationship between the Church and the world is basically one of mission, and I will show how Schmemmann uses this imperative to further develop and offer new perspectives for the missionary presence of the Church in the world.

In the conclusion of the thesis I will return to the question of the shape of the crisis within the Orthodox Church and Schmemmann's narrative of this ecclesiological aspect of his theology. I will address the pertinence of Schmemmann's methodology used for inquiring into that crisis and I will see how his analysis can be better understood. I will consider several proposals for dealing with Schmemmann's criticism of that crisis and I will set out some suggestions for dealing with the state of crisis within the Orthodox Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## 1. Alexander Schmemmann's Biography

In the first chapter of my thesis I shall present Alexander Schmemmann's life course, tracking its meaningful turning points. This will provide a means to highlight his formation and its evolution in his various roles, not only as a theologian and as a priest but also as a husband and an active member of a Church community. As we will see, changing situations have filled his life, allowing or pushing him to lose old things, habits, friends, and mentalities in order to gain or to accept new perspectives, new understandings, and new knowledge.

Interpreting his life experience will provide me with a contextual grounding for his theological reflection on the crisis within the Orthodox Church. This interpretation will be structured in regard to three main issues: the change of culture, from Russian culture to French and American cultures, the jurisdictional challenge existent among Orthodox churches in the West and its impact on Schmemmann's ecclesiology and the theological ways of Orthodoxy in the West searching for a new voice in order to make itself heard and integrated.<sup>1</sup>

If the principal actor of this part of the thesis is Alexander Schmemmann, the plot of his life consists of numerous personalities, institutions, groups and even nations. All along my inquire I shall associate the course of Schmemmann's life with other contemporary persons in order to highlight the causes, reasons, meanings and consequences of his personal crossroads.

I enumerate here the contexts to which his life and theology belonged: the Russian Religious Renaissance, Communism in Europe, Russian émigrés in Western Europe and America, the patristic renewal, the liturgical movement, the ecumenical movement and the establishment of the Orthodox Church in

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<sup>1</sup> For the main dates regarding this chapter see *Chronology* at the end of this thesis.

America. I shall not get into details concerning these contextual sections, but I shall rather examine his place and role in them.

One technical feature must be mentioned before entering the core of my analysis. *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann 1973-1983* has a meaningful role to play for my thesis. In this writing he retold his life as he felt it, as he interpreted it retrospectively. This book has thousands of entries and provided me with valuable information regarding his life, times, thoughts, concerns, and theology. This diary witnesses Schmemmann's experience in its most overwhelming possibility. In order not to lose the flavour of his style of thought and writing, I will illustrate these by a couple of longer quotations from the diary, on which I will comment.<sup>2</sup>

### **1.1 Direct Impact of the Bolshevik Revolution: Loss of Mother Russia**

The Bolshevik Revolution caused the first massive Russian emigration in modern times. It took place in several complex waves.<sup>3</sup> My concern here are

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<sup>2</sup> From 1973 to 1983 Alexander Schmemmann kept a journal, which was later after his passing, published by his wife, Juliana Schmemmann. It was published in the original Russian (2005), but also in a full-length translation in French (2009) and a shorter version in English (2000). It has subsequently been translated in other languages. For this study I take the references from the English edition of the book: *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann 1973-1983*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 2002. The English version of the *Journals* is Juliana Schmemmann's translation. Besides the fact that her translation is already an outstanding original interpretation of the Russian text, she provided us a relevant general explanation of the content of the book. See J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, Alexander Press, Montréal, 2007, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> For the latest study on the Russian emigration and the fate of Orthodox theology in new contexts outside the "classic" Orthodox countries, see Ivana Noble, Katerina Bauerova, Tim Noble and Parush Parushev, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Yonkers, NY, 2015. This outstanding concise book treats a huge and complex matter together with the newest study on *Modern Orthodox Thinkers: From the Philokalia to the present*, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 2015, by Andrew Louth and will constitute my main sources and inspiration for structuring and contouring Alexander Schmemmann's biography. The second major source will be Juliana Schmemmann's biographical book *My Journey with Father Alexander*. With very subjective and hagiographical tendencies, Juliana's book contains nevertheless precious information and pertinent commentaries that enable my argument to follow the structural path of his becoming a husband, priest and theologian.

the French and American émigrés and their impact on Schmemmann's life experience and afterwards on his theology. The multifaceted history and the specificity of the interaction between the Orthodox presence in Russia and the Orthodox witness among Russian emigrants are basic elements that will convey my argument toward the discovery of that impact.<sup>4</sup>

Paris was the centre of the Russian emigration in France having intellectuals, artists, theologians, nobles and ex-ministers of the Tsar living in a dynamic community. They were editing a large number of reviews in Russian, founding parishes, opening schools and publishing-houses, and meeting in different intellectual circles for discussions. They were developing a wide activity in the domain of art, science and culture.<sup>5</sup> Their life was very poor from an economic point of view, but deeply engaged in raising the psychological character of the Russian émigrés, especially the younger generation.<sup>6</sup>

Even if the Russian émigré community in France was constituted largely of poor people, the struggle against poverty did not overtake their interest and desire to establish further education or to have well-educated children. One major aspect of the Russian approach to culture and education was the theological formation of the clergy and the faithful.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 100, 103-104.

<sup>5</sup> D. A. Lowrie, *Saint Sergius in Paris: the Orthodox Theological Institute*, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1954, pp. 3-4. Ivana Noble has a similar yet more sophisticated view in her theological vision expressed largely in *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>6</sup> J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 21. It is worth noting the activity of the Russian Christian Student Movement established by the Russian theologians Bulgakov and Berdyaev who called for working for the future of Orthodoxy in Russia and abroad, acknowledging that a new Eucharistic time had come in which it was proper to search for a new way of relating to Western Christians. Ivana Noble describes that movement in *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 207. Alexander Schmemmann's life was also linked closely to this movement.

<sup>7</sup> D. A. Lowrie, *Saint Sergius in Paris: the Orthodox Theological Institute*, p. 3. A direct and one-way impact between the Russian October Revolution and the fate of the Russian diaspora was remarked by Ivana Noble who overviewed the parcours of the Russian émigré generations

The vast majority of the Russians dreamt of going back to Russia as soon as it was possible to do so.<sup>8</sup> This kind of spiritual, social and cultural *status quo* determined a two-fold search for identity.<sup>9</sup> One could speak about a kind of isolation from the already less-welcoming French society of that time.<sup>10</sup> However this isolation was not an obstacle for the Russian émigrés to be able to discover Western society and culture. This brings me to the second way of the Russian's pursuit for identity. It was rather a self-protection against the still unknown modern West.<sup>11</sup> Losing the Russian motherland did not automatically mean for the Russians to abandon the Russian way of envisaging life, or to get rid of the Russian manner of relating to God. Being geographically disconnected from Russia for the majority of the Russians brought a conflict between faithfulness to where they came from, the world which no longer

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as follows: "The continuation of pre-revolutionary spiritual, Church, and theological renewal moved for the most part to the diaspora, where many Russian Orthodox theologians, priests, religious, and laity sought possibilities and forms of transplanting the spiritual and liturgical life of the Church and its theology to new ground. The first generation of exiles lived the paradox that after Russian Orthodoxy had finally found its own theological expression to release it from its 'Western Captivity,' it now found itself in the West – and with its newly discovered theological approaches it entered into dialogue with Western thought. The second generation of exiles had already grown up in the West and had been domesticated and begun to cultivate the possibilities that this new home offered." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 181-182.

<sup>8</sup> D. A. Lowrie, *Saint Sergius in Paris: the Orthodox Theological Institute*, p. 5. See also J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Ivana Noble grants us some possible explanation of that search for identity in regard to the wish of maintaining a certain wholeness of the relationship between the Church and the culture: "There was a combination of ecclesial, theological, and personal clashes, and separating one from the other was never easy. At the same time, there was a pull between the desire to return or later to be able to experience for the first time a world that perhaps had never existed and certainly never would again, and the desire to strengthen the roots that had been put down in the new country. In its search to mediate wholeness, the Church and its theologians had to seek out constantly new symbols and new forms." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 230-231.

<sup>10</sup> J. Meyendorff, "A Life Worth Living" in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 1(1988), quoted from *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann 1973-1983*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 2002, p. 345. One can find the idea of a mutual historical rejection between Russia and the West in N. Zernov, *The Russians and Their Church*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1878, pp. 168-169.

<sup>11</sup> *idem.*, pp. 168-183.

physically existed and the necessity of adapting to new life situations which proved, at least for some of them, to be creative.

Concerning the ecclesial structure of the French émigré, they followed the customs brought from Russia.<sup>12</sup> They had a diocese with Slavonic celebrations and with metropolitan and Russian traditions.<sup>13</sup>

### **Parents and His Brother Andrew**

Born into a Russian family in Tallinn, Estonia, with Baltic German ancestors on his father's side, Alexander Schmemann was one of the twins (Andrew is his elder brother) of Dmitri Nikolayevich and Anna Tikhonovna. In the context of the Bolshevik Revolution, the Schmemann family travelled from Tallinn to Belgrade and then to Paris, settling there and becoming a part of the large Russian community in the French capital. Alexander's parents belonged to that part of the Russians who struggled to give to their children a better social and cultural position.<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting Alexander's mother's faith and the formative role that her Russian kind of piety played in the family's life.<sup>15</sup> Alexander's father's way of manifesting his faith was different.<sup>16</sup> Andrew got interested in Russian émigrés affairs, believing blindly in an imminent return of their community to the motherland and working for the accomplishment of this dream. Alexander's interests were different: he frequented the Church and became concerned with the spiritual life.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Schmemann considered that Metropolitan Eulogy was the real organiser of their ecclesial life. A. Schmemann, *Three Metropolitans*, <http://www.schmemann.org/byhim/threemets.html> (30.08.2014).

<sup>13</sup> D. A. Lowrie, *Saint Sergius in Paris: the Orthodox Theological Institute*, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> J. Schmemann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, pp. 13-16.

<sup>15</sup> *idem.*, p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> *idem.*, p. 16, 21.

<sup>17</sup> *idem.*, p. 16. She relates the family Church-commitment back to Anna's parents. See *idem.*, p. 17.

## Academic and Spiritual Formation

Alexander remembered the French years "as an adventure."<sup>18</sup> In the search for money and food to keep life going, life was difficult for Alexander and his family, but yet the mood was somehow carefree.<sup>19</sup> To this period of Alexander's life belong his studies at the new Russian military school, near Versailles, the Corps of Cadets. His first meeting with Russian literature and culture took place during those years. He enjoyed the presence and friendship of General Rimsky Korsakov, a person who inculcated in the young Alexander the love of reading different books, the love of life and admiration for the beauty of life everywhere and at anytime.<sup>20</sup>

Having discovered the importance of a cultural life, Alexander took the decision to continue his studies in the famous French Lycée Carnot in Paris. The reason was simple: he needed to upgrade his previous studies. The main feature of this stage of his life was his thirst for study, for knowledge and for understanding information he received at school.<sup>21</sup> The deep economic poverty of his family lasted.<sup>22</sup> This decision to continue his formation in a French secondary school was decisive for Alexander, in view of his later inclination to relate his Church belonging to secular instances in order to deepen, discover and discern the place and the role of the Church in the world, or vice versa.

It is worth noticing Juliana's remark that Alexander knew two roads: to school and to church.<sup>23</sup> The hagiographic colours of her statement do not overshadow the contours of Alexander's personality, which I look for in order to describe his choices in life and their consequences. He went to Church not

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<sup>18</sup> *idem.*, p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> *idem.*, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 19-22.

<sup>23</sup> She says: "Throughout his years at the *lycée* and the *gymnasium*, while living at home, Alexander never missed a single church service at St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral." *ibid.*, p. 20.

only to attend services, but also to serve there as an altar-boy, then a reader, then later a sub-deacon.<sup>24</sup> Speaking about "spiritual" formation, it is important to remember Alexander's crisis due to an appendectomy, which became infected. He developed peritonitis from which he almost died. He remembers this episode of his life as being an unexpected and very close encounter with death.<sup>25</sup>

Alexander's search for a spiritual life does not mean that he had a perfect and unworldly youth. There are no reports about his way of partying or his tastes for various entertainments practiced at that time, but the fact that he started to smoke and he did it "openly" throughout all his life shows that he looked for earthly pleasures and ways of setting free his frustrations and weaknesses. It is not necessary to overemphasise either his fleshly inconsistencies or his spiritual or intellectual qualities. Alexander was a sociable person gathering people around him.<sup>26</sup> This feature will play a leading role in the establishment of his ecclesiastic career. Reading was for him a pleasure, a way to fulfil the desire for knowledge and investigations into matters that intrigued him.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 20, 22.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>27</sup> Juliana says: "Alexander read intensely throughout his life. The variety of literature he consumed was astounding, but his favourite seemed to be biographies, memoirs, autobiographies. He was fascinated by the depth and diversity of human lives. He would read the lives of atheists, never critical, simply wondering how and why is it possible to be one. He read about homosexuals, politicians, theologians, Jews, Muslims. He never judged the people he read about. He might question false notes, uncovering points of view, but never condemn. He really gave all authors a chance to convince him, not filtering the ideas through his own measures of understanding. Poetry was not only close to Alexander's heart, it was a part of him. He had an amazing memory and could recite by heart Verlaine, Pushkin, Tchutchev, Robert Frost, E. E. Cummings, Rimbaud, just to name a few." J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 89.

### **Ecclesial and Theological Vocation: Formative-years**

After finishing his studies at Lycée Carnot in Paris, Alexander followed his vocation to serve in the Orthodox Church, in the Russian diocese under the Constantinople patriarchate.<sup>28</sup> His interest was focused on the liturgical life of the Church. He had an active role in the celebrations as a sub-deacon under the guidance of Dr Peter Kovalevsky.<sup>29</sup>

He started studying in St Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris where he got in contact with awe-inspiring theologians of the French émigré: Anton Kartashev, Father Basil Zenkovsky, Father Cyprian Kern, Father Nicolas Afanasiev, Father Georges Florovsky and Father Sergius Bulgakov.<sup>30</sup>

Let me say a few words about this institute. One of the main theological, social, and cultural achievements of the Russian émigrés under the leading personality of Metropolitan Eulogy (1868-1946) was the creation of the parish and theological institute Saint Sergius in Paris.<sup>31</sup> This institute with its Russian foundations allowed several generations of Christians to get involved with the Orthodox Tradition in its liturgical, doctrinal and spiritual dimensions in a Western context, sometimes successfully, sometimes in a counter-missionary way. This institute was created with decisive help coming from Christians who were not Orthodox. Money came also from Jewish donors. The ecumenical foundations of the creation of this institute are worth noting while presenting Schmemmann's life context.

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<sup>28</sup> J. Meyendorff, "A Life Worth Living", p. 345.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 345.

<sup>30</sup> N. Zernov, *The Russians and Their Church*, p. 170. See also J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 43.

<sup>31</sup> A. Kniazeff, *L'institut Saint-Serge: de l'Académie d'autrefois au rayonnement d'aujourd'hui*, Editions Beauchesne, Paris, 1974, p. 39. See also D. A. Lowrie, *Saint Sergius in Paris: the Orthodox Theological Institute*, p. 90.



In the period of World War II St Sergius Institute lived through very difficult times.<sup>32</sup> When Alexander Schmemmann entered the institute, the situation was really dramatic; but the very few students who were enrolled kept on studying theology courageously.<sup>33</sup> Wartime in France brought some kind of theological and spiritual fulfilment in the life of St Sergius Institute. The critical and paradoxical situation of the co-existence of an almost complete board of professors and a very small amount of students forged the increase of the theological preparation.<sup>34</sup>

One particular aspect of the theological formation of the students in St Sergius Institute is very significant for my argument due to its implication in Schmemmann's further way of regarding the crisis within the Orthodox Church: the lack of homiletic formation.<sup>35</sup> Even if my thesis does not treat Schmemmann's homiletic theology and work, nevertheless, the huge amount of sermons and podcasts where he teaches and testifies about the Orthodox faith and the Orthodox liturgical ethos is worth noting. As we shall see, Schmemmann reacted strongly to the lack of good sermons in the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church and tried during his whole life to bring close to the faithful the necessary theological things that could strengthen their religious experience. Preaching was for him important due to the proximity to the

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<sup>32</sup> D. A. Lowrie, *Saint Sergius in Paris: the Orthodox Theological Institute*, p. 42.

<sup>33</sup> D. A. Lowrie, *Saint Sergius in Paris: the Orthodox Theological Institute*, p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 50-51. Ivana Noble remarked on another insufficiency in the teaching programme of St Sergius Institute, pointing out the aftermath of that inconsistency: "It would seem that the weakest part of the Institute was its biblical studies. In the study plan it was presumed that each of the theological disciplines, be it dogmatics, ecclesiology, or moral theology, should proceed from biblical roots, but for the same reason this simultaneously problematised biblical studies as a separate discipline. It was argued that the Orthodox approach to the Scriptures does not work with the principle of *sola scriptura* and thus the study of the Scriptures could not be isolated to an independent discipline, since that would not only destroy its connection with other fields but also the spiritual roots of the interpretation of the Scriptures." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 176-177. Unfortunately again, Schmemmann did not pay attention to this lack of biblical studies within Orthodox theology, a fact that influenced negatively his scientific research. He just mentioned it once or twice in his articles.

faithful during liturgical celebration and partaking of the faith. Unfortunately his homiletic activity points him out as one who wished to define the Orthodox faith as against other Christian denominations, this being contradictory somehow with the openness of his actual sharing of Christian knowledge.

In 1945 Alexander finished his studies at St. Sergius Institute with a thesis on Church history, *St. Mark of Ephesus and the Theological Conflicts of Byzantium*, under Kartashev's guidance.<sup>36</sup> Two professors influenced him decisively: Fr. Cyprian Kern and Fr. Nicolas Afanasiev:

Besides A. V. Kartashev, two other members of the St Sergius faculty exercised a decisive influence upon Father Alexander Schmemmann. Archimandrite Cyprian (Kern), his spiritual father and friend, also took him as his assistant in the SS Constantine and Helen parish in Clamart, near Paris. Father Cyprian taught patristics at St Sergius, but his love was for the liturgy and his liturgical taste had a lasting influence on Father Schmemmann. Both also shared knowledge and appreciation of Russian classical literature. Intellectually more decisive, however, was Father Schmemmann's acquaintance with and devotion to the ecclesiological ideas of Father Nicholas Afanassieff, a professor of canon law whose name will be forever attached to what he called "eucharistic ecclesiology" and whose ideas are reflected in many of Father Schmemmann's writings.<sup>37</sup>

Meyendorff's quotation is worth noting because of some technical details. In the second chapter more attention will be paid to Afanasiev's influence on

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<sup>36</sup> Regarding the relationship between Kartashev and Schmemmann, John Meyendorff stated: "Never attracted by the 'sophiological' speculations of Bulgakov – for whom, however, he had the greatest personal respect – Alexander Schmemmann was primarily seeking specialisation in church history. He became a pupil of A. V. Kartashev, whose brilliant lectures and sceptical mind matched Schmemmann's own tendency to critical analysis of reality around him." J. Meyendorff, "A Life Worth Living", p. 346. See also J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, pp. 42, 48.

<sup>37</sup> J. Meyendorff, "A Life Worth Living", p. 346. Juliana Schmemmann mentions a similar point in a lively mode: "Alexander became more than ever involved in his studies. He had many discussions with his professors, especially Father Nicholas Afanasiev who initiated him into his research on liturgical theology. He also had a strong friendship with Father Cyprian Kern, our father confessor and rector of the Clamart parish. They enjoyed a daily cup of Turkish coffee during breaks at the Institute." J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 41.

Schmemmann as against Kern's and Florovsky's. The somehow indistinct stance of Kern and Afanasiev as professors in St Sergius Institute teaching a theological course and, in fact, enjoying one another, shows us that the real personality of that Russian generation is to be sought generally in those domains that enabled people to have a direct relation to God (like praying), rather than an intellectual one. I would note also that Alexander's interest in the history of the Church persisted and took various forms of expression, from his magisterial book *The Historical Road of the Eastern Orthodox Church* to his eucharistic ecclesiology, where we shall see how Alexander combines the historical presence of the Church in the world with her eschatological projection of the Kingdom of God.<sup>38</sup>

Stating that Alexander Schmemmann inherited the theological vision of the modern trends in Russian Orthodox theology, Mathai Kadavil remarked: "Gradually St Sergius, the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Paris, became the centre of theological work for the Russian Diaspora. The theological arena of St Sergius was very decisive in shaping Schmemmann as an Orthodox theologian."<sup>39</sup> Kadavil's use of the word "arena" is not unfortunate, granting us with the real atmosphere reigning in the Institute.

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<sup>38</sup> John Meyendorff emphasised this aspect as follows: "Actually, the Church itself always stood at the centre of Father Alexander's spiritual and intellectual interests and commitments. His discussion of Byzantine theocracy, and his readings in Church History in general – as well as his initial dissertation topic – come from his concern with the survival of the Church, as Church, during the centuries of an ambiguous alliance with the State, and the survival of Orthodoxy in its medieval confrontation with Rome. But, perhaps, he 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 'Russianism': it was alive in and through the Liturgy. Here, the ecclesiology of Afanassieff provided the direction (although not really the model) for Father Alexander's further orientation as a theologian." J. Meyendorff, "A Life Worth Living", p. 347.

<sup>39</sup> M. Kadavil, *The World as Sacrament: Sacramentality of Creation from the Perspective of Leonardo Boff, Alexander Schmemmann and Saint Ephrem*, Peeters, Leuven, 2005, p. 165. Andrew Louth noted also the main personalities who influenced Schmemmann as a theologian and churchman. See A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, p. 198.

During the next 6 years Alexander worked for the Russian diocese in Paris as a professor of Church history, as a redactor at the review *The Orthodox Messenger* and as a priest.<sup>40</sup> This period is decisive for him regarding his further move to America and his way of serving in the Church, as we shall see straightaway.

### **Working Close to Bishops. His Way to the Priesthood**

His Church activity simplified somehow his vocation and laid foundations for his ministry. He describes this period as being his paradisiac ecclesial childhood in the middle of churchly turbulence: "My Churchly *childhood* and that almost unparalleled understanding of the Church as paradise which was linked with that childhood, ended with Metropolitan Eulogy's death. ... These were difficult years, marked by jurisdictional arguments and all kinds of discords. One constantly had to choose, to defend, and to vindicate."<sup>41</sup> This Church turmoil generated in his soul a kind of blessed desperation and disappointment vis-à-vis Church policy and hierarchal politics. The only "clearly untouchable" part of the Church that would remain available for the

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<sup>40</sup> For an outstanding article concerning Schmemmann's work as a redactor see A. Nivière, "Le père Alexandre Schmemmann, rédacteur du *Messenger de l'Exarchat*" in *La joie du Royaume*, pp. 3-16.

<sup>41</sup> A. Schmemmann, *Three Metropolitans*, <http://www.schmemmann.org/byhim/threemets.html> (30.08.2014). A few concise words on that difficult period are worth quoting from Ivana Noble who gives us a glimpse of the tensioned plurality of the jurisdictions in France at the time of Schmemmann's years of spiritual and Church formation: "Jurisdictional division had a huge effect on the diversity of Russian Orthodoxy in Paris. The largest and most active group was formed by the Metropolitanate under the Metropolitan Evlogii which placed itself under the jurisdiction of Constantinople. The second most numerous group remained under the Moscow Patriarchate, under Metropolitan Elevferity (Bogoyavlensky), who Metropolitan Sergius named as the new administrator of the Russian Orthodox Church in Western Europe for the Moscow Patriarchate, after Metropolitan Evlogii changed jurisdiction. On the side of the Moscow Patriarchate, alongside the French bishop Veniamin Fedchenkov and many German Orthodox priests, were also many Russian émigrés, who came to support a more intense inculturation into the West than that proposed at the time by the Metropolitanate. There was a very limited presence of ROCOR in France. The jurisdictional division between the two major groups was seen both in Church life and in education." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 210.

simple faithful was the liturgy. It was in that direction that Alexander began to walk. Metropolitan Eulogy had a special role to play on that path.

A few words about Metropolitan Eulogy are necessary in order to emphasise his impact on Schmemmann's life-experience and theology. This Orthodox hierarch was an outstanding personality of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with enormous experience in serving the Church in pre-revolutionary Russia as well as in Western Europe. Having founded many Russian émigré parishes in Western Europe, he originated a dynamic, friendly and fruitful mission of Orthodoxy in the Catholic and Protestant French milieu, including, as perhaps his greatest achievement, as we have already said, the establishment of the renowned St Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute. His ecclesiological vision was embodied in his pastoral activity in Western Europe. This vision, very contested at that time, proved to be canonical and blessed through the time that has lapsed since those days and in many writings that provide a theological witness. Metropolitan Eulogy's ecclesiology was one anchored in the life of the faithful, filled with festal events and headed toward the Kingdom of God.<sup>42</sup> Many of Metropolitan Eulogy's thoughts, images and insights will be rediscovered, reused and reinterpreted by Schmemmann, as we shall see in my thesis.<sup>43</sup>

Schmemmann worked closely with bishops during this Parisian period of his ecclesial commitment. This experience brought him discernment concerning church-affairs and quite a clear understanding of the ministry of the bishop.<sup>44</sup> Remembering his closeness with Metropolitan Eulogy, he mentioned the tasks he had to fulfil and the meaning those responsibilities had on his

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<sup>42</sup> Metropolitan Eulogy, *My Life's Journey: the Memoirs of Metropolitan Eulogy*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Yonkers, NY, 2014, pp. 692-693, p. 737.

<sup>43</sup> Metropolitan Eulogy, *My Life's Journey: the Memoirs of Metropolitan Eulogy*, pp. 740-742.

<sup>44</sup> A. Schmemmann, *Three Metropolitans*, <http://www.schmemann.org/byhim/threemets.html> (30.08.2014).

ecclesial journey.<sup>45</sup> Later on he interpreted all these liturgical experiences and understood that those times were blessed and unique:

But, since that closeness was always at the altar, because everything in it was related to that sacred and mystical beauty of the Divine Services, it changed more and more into that love and that joy, which for me defines to this day the essential nature of the Church. I could not, I firmly believe, have achieved this experience through later and sad exposures to the pedestrian and consistorial sides of Church life. Through Metropolitan Eulogy and my service to him was opened for me that, which I perceive to be the basic foundation of the Orthodox experience: its grandeur, its boundless loftiness, the remoteness, the awesomeness of everything Divine and at the same time, its immediacy with its joy and radiance.<sup>46</sup>

His statements are relevant for what he would develop later in his articles concerning the liturgical experience of the Church, the healthy piety one should inhabit and the discrepancy between the real, political life of the Church and her inner, sacramental, divine-revealing world. The Church is called to mediate the Kingdom of God to human persons. He speaks here about a transformation of the soul from a neutral subject of the cult to a warm celebrant of God's mysteries. Therefore this transformation has two sides: the first concerns the nature of the Church and its relationship with liturgical celebrations; the second is about the role of a certain personality and its charism for the transmission of the meaning and content of liturgical celebrations. Regarding the nature of the Church and Alexander's transformation into a "living" minister, one should remark the epiphanic character of their relation, i.e. the fact that, according to his understanding, the services in the Church touch the nature of the Church and bring it close to one's soul through their beauty and divinity. As for the bishop's role, this highest minister of the church "handles" the Church's nature

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<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> A. Schmemmann, *Three Metropolitans*, <http://www.schmemmann.org/byhim/threemets.html> (30.08.2014).

to the faithful through his presence as the *king* and through his teaching as the *prophet*, sharing that nature in the liturgical celebrations as the *priest*.<sup>47</sup> The solemnity of the liturgical celebrations has, according to Schmemmann, an epiphanic role. This majesty of the liturgical "show" embodies the beauty of the Kingdom of God.<sup>48</sup>

He was ordained a priest in 1945 by the then Archbishop Vladimir.<sup>49</sup>

### **Alexander's Own Family: His Formative Happy Family Life**

Now I present a brief account of Juliana's life. This presentation is very meaningful for my study because her writings and her testimony granted me precious information and interpretation about Alexander's life sojourn. She was for him a whole meaningful presence, determining and modelling his life, his career, his understanding and interpretation of life and theology, his faith, his priesthood and his teaching. She also came from a Russian traditional family. Born in 1923 in Germany in Baden-Baden, she was the third child of Sergei Ossorguine and Sophia Gagarine. Not long after Juliana's birth, the family moved to France. She received her education in College Saint-Marie and then at the Sorbonne where she studied classical languages.<sup>50</sup> After moving to America she became a teacher in several schools in the States and finally in a famous school, Spence School, where she became headmistress. Today she is a 92 year old mother, grandmother and great grandmother.

While studying at St Sergius, Alexander met Juliana Ossorguine, his future wife.<sup>51</sup> In 1943 they got married. In 1944 Alexander and Juliana became

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Juliana remarked on the "natural" way of Alexander's becoming a priest and the continuity between his previous life and the time after ordination. See J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, pp. 46, 54.

<sup>50</sup> J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 37.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

parents: Anna came to this world bringing with her the joy of the first born in a family. In 1945 Serge was born and in 1948 Maria. Juliana remembers the French period of the young Schmemmann family as being a blessed and happy *passé*, despite the economic poverty.<sup>52</sup>

Alexander's family life increased in his soul the warm feeling of home. He sought for a comparable atmosphere in the Church, but he did not always find the kind-hearted ambience there that he wished for. Nevertheless, the idea of home and family remained forever imprinted in relationship to Church and God's dwelling in the world, as we shall see in the fourth chapter when speaking about the sacramentality of the world.

### **New Plurality within Orthodoxy in France**

Schmemmann's life-experience is to be understood also in the light of the new plurality within Orthodoxy in France engendered by the Russian emigration.<sup>53</sup> Speaking about such a plurality demands a mention of the many faceted theological thought present in St Sergius Institute, the co-existence of the two theological institutes St Sergius and St Dionysius, and the tension between ecclesial jurisdictions. These points are very complex concerning their history and development, hence I shall stay only with those aspects that could

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, p. 48, 53.

<sup>53</sup> For the latest developed account on the Orthodox plurality in Western Europe and America and the subsequent impact on the Russian Orthodox Church see *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 149-182. Introducing the history of St Serge Institute in the context of the Russian émigré in Paris and in relation to the new plurality of Orthodoxy in France, Ivana Noble stated: "Because the growing number of Russian Orthodox parishes abroad needed theologically educated clergy who could no longer be recruited from the mother country, in 1925 Metropolitan Evlogii founded the St Sergius Theological Institute in Paris to serve the Russian Orthodox community. Although this was to be the centre of Russian Orthodox theology in France, it was not, however, the only source. There were other voices and personalities who were never institutionally linked to St Sergius and who remained under the Moscow Patriarchate, such as, for example, Vladimir Lossky or Leonid Ouspensky." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 175.



enlighten and point to Schmemmann's theological evolution and his crossroads in life.

Regarding the history of St Sergius Institute, it is worth mentioning its "conflictual" genesis.<sup>54</sup> This tension was challenging for the institute and bore fruits in its long history. For my argument is important to understand the mechanism of this tension marked in the struggles between generations and between ways of perceiving Orthodox theology.<sup>55</sup> One way of comprehending this tension would be to look at the lives of several characteristic personalities of those generations, but the "technical measures" of my thesis do not allow me to do so.<sup>56</sup>

Within the institute there was plurality due to the openness of the mind of its professors and to the open philosophic context of their theological work.<sup>57</sup> Two major tendencies were held in the institute: one liberal, represented by Fr Bulgakov and one traditional, exemplified in the personality of Fr Florovsky. Both of them wanted to rediscover Orthodox theology by returning to its sources, the Scripture and the Fathers of the Church, but they estimated it in different ways. Schmemmann pointed out this difference stating that:

Schematically, we should distinguish two main streams or trends, two different types of theological approach. One of these types had its roots in the tradition of Russian religious and philosophical thought or the 19<sup>th</sup> century, itself an offspring of the Western tradition, especially German Idealism ... One may describe this school of thought as a "Russian school," because of the importance which all its representatives, regardless of their mutual disagreements, attributed to the problems and ideas which constituted the main bulk of Russian religious thinking. They wanted to move further in the same direction. Florovsky had chosen as a cornerstone of the Orthodox

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<sup>54</sup> D. A. Lowrie, *Saint Sergius in Paris: the Orthodox Theological Institute*, p. 91.

<sup>55</sup> A. Kniazeff, *L'institut Saint-Serge*, p. 45.

<sup>56</sup> *idem.*, p. 51.

<sup>57</sup> *idem.*, pp. 62-63.

theological revival not any modern traditions of the school, but the sacred Tradition of the Church. He called for a 'return to the Fathers,' to the Fathers of the Church Universal – to that 'sacred Hellenism,' which in his expression is an eternal and perennial category of historical Orthodoxy. In other words, to the attempt to reevaluate the ancient Greek tradition in light of modern Russian experience. Father Georges has opposed a vigorous appeal to check and reevaluate the 'Russian' achievement in the light of the 'Hellenic' inheritance, from which, in Dr Florovsky's opinion, Russian thought has been torn away for too long by Western influences.<sup>58</sup>

Another element concerning the new plurality within Orthodoxy in Paris is related to the participation of St Sergius professors in the ecumenical movement.<sup>59</sup> Considered to be the *avant-garde* of Orthodoxy in the ecumenical movement, St Sergius Institute participated in terms of personal encounters or official delegates in practically every ecumenical meeting of importance since Stockholm in 1925. One significant fruit of St Sergius Institute's ecumenical involvement was represented by its role in improving the relations between French Catholics and Protestants.<sup>60</sup> Finally, St Sergius could be regarded as a bridge between different parts of Orthodoxy, both in the East and West.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> A. Schmemmann, "Roll of Honour," in *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, 8(1953), pp. 6-7. Schmemmann's opinion was criticised by Robert Nichols who considered that "it would be more correct to speak of two emphases within Russia's recent theological past which continued to grow and flourish even in emigration after 1919 rather than speak of two groups, only one of which dwelled on the major themes of nineteenth century Russian theology and philosophy. Even Berdiaev, who admonished Florovsky for preferring an abstract and inhuman Byzantinism to Russia's higher spirituality, ends his review by linking Florovsky to nineteenth century Russian themes." "Translator's Note" to *The Way of Russian Theology*, Nordland Publishing Co., Belmont, Ma, 1979, p. XV. Introducing her opinion about the transition from scholasticism to neo-patristics, Ivana Noble contoured some general lines on the issue: "In opposition to the process of transposing Orthodox to Western categories that we spoke about at the beginning of this chapter, a Neo-Patristic theology gradually developed, which later, in emigration and in the diaspora, largely replaced Orthodox neo-scholasticism. ... The inclination to Patristics would later have a notable influence on theology in emigration, on George Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky, John Meyendorff, and Alexander Schmemmann. It offered them a non-nationalist vision of Orthodoxy and enabled an Orthodox mission to the West." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 95-97.

<sup>59</sup> D. A. Lowrie, *Saint Sergius in Paris: the Orthodox Theological Institute*, p. 97.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, p. 105.

It is worth mentioning the "technical" reason for the theological success of this institute. The case in point made by D. A. Lowrie is of great significance for my argument because we shall see later in the third chapter of my thesis how Schmemmann himself acknowledged this situation. But let us see the reason:

One of the fundamental principles of the work of the Academy, and this is surely partly the reason for its prosperity throughout a quarter of a century, is its close combination of theology and ritual. Archimandrite Cyprian calls it "a liturgical theology." As has been pointed out earlier, the whole life of the Academy, students and professors alike, is centred in, and lives with, the liturgical life of the Church. But as Archimandrite Cyprian remarks, "this immersion in the liturgical riches of Orthodoxy is not confined to the fulfilment of the rites and ceremonies themselves. The liturgical tradition lives in the students of St Sergius, in combination with science and history. They learn that the service books are the product of centuries of experience during which compromises sometimes had to be made between the conflicting ideas of various schools and monasteries. The liturgical life of the Church is theology, lived."<sup>62</sup>

Combining fidelity to Tradition with scientific accuracy and openness to the *otherness* of the Christian presence in France and even beyond the French territorial limits, St Sergius Institute ran the danger of being accused of liberalism.<sup>63</sup> This danger was present inside of the institute and also in its outside involvement with the world. The inside was marked by the two groups of theological tendencies represented by Sergius Bulgakov and Georges Florovsky. Its relation with the St Dionysius Theological Institute and its relation with other theological institutions or with church authorities marked the outside.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>64</sup> Ivana Noble uttered rightly the dialogical and complementary relation between the two institutes: "St Sergius was not, however, the only Russian Orthodox centre in France. On November 15, 1944, with the blessing of the Moscow Patriarchate, the French Institute of St

Issuing from the works of the members of the Fraternity of St Photius in Paris, with the blessing of the Russian Patriarch Evlogius (also called Evlogy) of Moscow, St Dionysius Institute began its existence in 1944 under the direction of Father Eugraf Kovalevsky. It collaborated with two great French philosophers of the time, Gabriel Marcel and Gerard Cordonnier. It was destined to be an Orthodox theological institute having the French language as its teaching language and being open to the French liturgical and ecclesiastical traditions from the period of the undivided Church.<sup>65</sup> It is important to mention the church canonical context of its appearance that concerns the jurisdictional tensions and disputes between the Russian Muscovite patriarchate and the Constantinopolitan patriarchate, and also between Metropolitan Evlogy and Metropolitan Anthony.<sup>66</sup>

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Dionysius the Areopagite (St Denis) was opened. This was during the period when the Metropolitanate led by Evlogii had briefly returned under the Moscow Patriarchate. The establishment of a second theological school did not therefore signify jurisdictional competition, but rather a complement for what was missing, namely education in French, openness to a broader range of students, and not having membership of the Orthodox Church as a condition for acceptance. From its beginnings St Denis placed an emphasis on dialogue with Western Christianity, with which and on whose territory Orthodoxy in the West sought for its new mission." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 213.

<sup>65</sup> Some interesting fundamental lines related to this institute are available on its actual website (13.03.2015).

<sup>66</sup> Concerning these issues see Metropolitan Evlogy, *My Life's Journey, the Memoirs of Metropolitan Evlogy*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Yonkers, NY, 2014, D. A. Lowrie, *Saint Sergius in Paris: the Orthodox Theological Institute*, Andrew Blane (editor), *Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual, Orthodox Churchman*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1993. Bulgakov's case belonged to the core of these conflicts and it is still paradigmatic for any presentation of Russian jurisdictional and theological quarrels. Ivana Noble explains succinctly: "The disputes over sophiology touched in their most marked fashion on Sergei Bulgakov, originally a left-wing intellectual, who, under the influence of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Solovyov converted to Orthodoxy and further developed the latter's sophiology, including its apocalyptic emphases, which corresponded well to the brutality of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary Russia. Although Bulgakov shared in the founding of the St Sergius Institute in Paris, where he held the chair of dogmatic theology, and even became its dean, his position within Orthodoxy was never very secure. The post-Revolution metropolitan of Moscow, Sergius (Stragorodsky) urged the metropolitan of Western Europe, Evlogii (Georgievsky), who maintained relations with him for a time, to take action against Bulgakov's sophiology. Even when the discussions with Moscow broke down again, the arguments over

### **Plurality and Conflicts in Theology: the Case of Fr. Bulgakov (1877-1941)**

Even if both theological institutes were opened to the Catholic and Protestant worlds, even if both testified to the actual value, the possible role and the undisputable witness of Orthodox theology in the West, nevertheless they fought against each other on theological terms leaving unpleasant "Orthodox" testimonies in France.<sup>67</sup> The main issue was due to the condemnation by the members of St Dionysius Institute of the theology of Fr Sergius Bulgakov concerning his thesis on Christian Sophiology.<sup>68</sup> For Schmemmann this kind of anti-testimony was to be taken very seriously because, as we shall see in the fourth chapter, he wanted the Orthodox Church to be first of all missionary in her phenomenological relationship to the world, in this case to French society and not a place for doctrinal disputes. Unfortunately the way to full openness from the side of the Orthodox Church was not yet enough a beaten path, so that Schmemmann himself failed to make Orthodox liturgy more accessible for Christians belonging to other denominations.

Schmemmann, a young theologian, just wanted to share, to witness and to uncover his love and experience of Orthodoxy in post-war Paris. He wished to

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sophiology continued. The Moscow Patriarchate issued a decree in which it declared Bulgakov's sophiological teaching heretical and forbade the faithful from having anything to do with it. This decree was more or less accepted by the 1935 Karlovtsy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). After long arguments the bishops of Orthodoxy in the West distanced themselves from the decree in 1937, though they did recognise that Bulgakov's teaching showed many errors." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 102. The choice I made regarding the bibliography which would better present the theological and canonical issues mentioned above is due to its relevance to my argument.

<sup>67</sup> Ivana Noble presented the bitter separation of those two institutes, making her case about the largely engaged dialogue of St Denis Institute with modernity. See I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 214.

<sup>68</sup> Concerning Bulgakov's case, see the concise account of paramount relevance given by Katerina Bauer in *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 263-271. See also A. Arjakovsky, *Essai sur le Père Serge Boulgakov (1871-1944): Philosophe et théologien chrétien*, Parole et Silence, Paris, 2006, p. 46. Beyond the philosophical challenges of Sophiology, it was also a strong social implication of this movement. See I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 100.

avoid any kind of jurisdictional clash or meaningless theological quarrel and so, decided to teach in both institutes. But his colleagues from St Sergius, less opened-minded than he somehow forbade him to do so.<sup>69</sup> This situation left a bitter taste in his life, contributing to his departure to America. Alexander's academic career was challenged by the critical situation of St Sergius Institute where the Russian manner of engaging theology was still on the way to formation, bringing the relation between the Orthodox Church and the world to new possibilities but also to new dead ends.<sup>70</sup> Being "young, energetic and full of missionary zeal" Alexander chose to go to America at Father Georges Florovsky's invitation.

### **Move to America**

The American milieu where the Schmemmann family arrived at the beginning of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was quite complex from all points of view.<sup>71</sup> This still *new world* was continually evolving and Alexander integrated this dynamic while sustaining his vocation in the Church. The context and the sustenance were not easy to put together and to make work. Yet, Alexander believed in his dream and together with his family he fought for it.<sup>72</sup> Alexander went to America because, as he would remember later, he believed in God's presence in his life and he understood that such a crucial decision to change completely and permanently one's dwelling can be a divine call:

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<sup>69</sup> Fighting for *rapprochement* between the two institutes, Vincent Bourne, the pseudonym of Mrs Yvonne Winnaert, a leadership member of the Fraternity St Photius, wrote about how Fr Eugraph Kovalevsky tried to contact the young generation of Russian theologians, among whom was also Alexander Schmemmann. V. Bourne, *La divine contradiction*, tome II, Librairie des Cinq continents, Paris, 1975, p. 14.

<sup>70</sup> J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 53. See also I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 103.

<sup>71</sup> For more details concerning the American context of that time, see N. Grigorieff, "The Historical Background of Orthodoxy in America", p. 9. See also N. Zernov, *The Russian and Their Church*.

<sup>72</sup> J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 62.

Tuesday, June 8, 1976

Twenty-five years ago, around noon, we left Paris for Cherbourg, where we boarded the Queen Mary on our way to the United States. When I woke up, I thought: why did we leave? Surprisingly, how the most fateful, the most important decisions are taken not by the mind, not by convincing arguments, but in some other way. Yesterday, by some coincidence, I wrote a radio script about "Revelation," trying to explain what happened, for instance to Abraham. What appeal did he hear ("rise and go") and how? The whole of life, deep down, is a chain of such revelations. We had weighty reasons to go: three children, no house except a crumbling log cabin, no income ... But we were going to a total uncertainty – for 160 dollars a month! I had a call from Professor Florovsky, and the atmosphere at the St Sergius Institute in Paris was stifling. But these were not the reasons. There was a kind of inner vibration, not choice, which we followed almost unconsciously. A sort of "rise and go"!<sup>73</sup>

This awareness of a divine call never left Alexander's heart. The battles that followed inside and outside his person are the subject of my thesis, especially in showing how this call closed old habits, friendships, mentalities and opened new life-roads, new encounters, new challenges, and new spiritual dimensions in his life.

In 1951 the Schmemmann family went to America at Father George Florovsky's invitation to teach at St Vladimir Theological Seminary. Alexander fulfilled there the tasks of professor of Church history and Liturgics. His reputation also spread to the American academic community: he also became a professor at Columbia University, New York University, Union Seminary and General Theological Seminary in New York. He was invited also to give lectures at other universities all over the world and he continued his involvement in the ecumenical movement.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> A. Schmemmann, *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann*, p. 123.

<sup>74</sup> Andrew Louth remarked Schmemmann's impact on the theology of his time: "For one of the most important facts about Schmemmann was that, as a theologian, he spoke not just to his

While in American Alexander Schmemmann continued to care for his beloved Russia. He kept on making Russian literature and culture known and he mediated for Russians the American understanding of freedom and life.<sup>75</sup>

### **St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary**

Officially inaugurated in 1938 by Metropolitan Theophilus, who was then the head of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in America, St Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary was conceived as an American institution with the aim of planting roots of Orthodoxy on American soil. Quite different from St Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris due to its humbler beginnings, St Vladimir's seminary nevertheless held the similar open ecumenical and missionary orientation of the related Parisian institution.<sup>76</sup> It is worth mentioning two moments in the life of the seminary: the arrivals of Metropolitan Leonty Turkevich and Fr Georges Florovsky.<sup>77</sup> Also it is important to notice the similarity between St Sergius institute and St Vladimir's seminary in terms of the contextual scope of a theological presence in a non-orthodox country.<sup>78</sup>

Georges Florovsky oriented the seminary towards American theological and pastoral needs and worked for its inclusion within worldwide Christian institutions. John Meyendorff (1926-1982), the dean of St Vladimir's seminary succeeding Schmemmann, considers that Florovsky's personality brought St

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fellow Orthodox, or his fellow Russians, but had a voice that was heard throughout the world, and first of all in the USA." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, p. 196.

<sup>75</sup> J. Meyendorff, "A Life Worth Living", p. 350.

<sup>76</sup> J. Meyendorff, "St. Vladimir's Faculty: Our Predecessors" in *A Legacy of Excellence: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary 1938-1988*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1988, p. 12.

<sup>77</sup> J. Meyendorff, "St. Vladimir's Faculty: Our Predecessors", pp. 13-14.

<sup>78</sup> *idem.*, p. 14. Nicholas V. Lossky delivered a similar description in 1988. See N. V. Lossky, "A Visitor's View", in *A Legacy of Excellence*, p. 86.



Vladimir's faculty to a new level of international respect, allowing this establishment to be really involved in the share of postmodern Orthodoxy.<sup>79</sup>

Alexander Schmemmann began to work at St Vladimir Theological Seminary teaching a full load of courses in Church history, liturgics and homiletics. He and his family shared the joys and the concerns of the other professors' families. Describing aspects of the daily life in the seminary, Juliana Schmemmann finishes her story as follows: "All of these trials did not destroy the warm happy feeling of togetherness, living lives full of discoveries and the daily adventures of life."<sup>80</sup> He dreamt of belonging to a theological community which would have the features of a family.<sup>81</sup>

Alexander came to America for the newness of what they had been called to share and to contribute. He wanted to fit into an "Orthodox world" which would become a paradigm for the world. St Vladimir's offered him that possibility.<sup>82</sup> He did his best in order to come to some good complementarity with the new and hopeful reality of the Church to which he belonged and the seminary where he taught.<sup>83</sup> He worked hard to fulfil his dream, even if this brought consequences.<sup>84</sup> After defending his doctoral thesis at St Sergius

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<sup>79</sup> J. Meyendorff, "St. Vladimir's Faculty: Our Predecessors", p. 15.

<sup>80</sup> J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 66.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, p. 60. Andrew Louth praised critically Schmemmann's commitment to the life of St Vladimir's Seminary and his theological influence in the USA: "Fr Alexander spent just over half his life in the USA, and had a profound influence not only over the seminarians at St Vladimir's, but also as a distinctive and audible voice of Orthodoxy in his adopted country, and beyond, as well as over the organisation of the Orthodox Church in the USA. Although he did not found St Vladimir's Seminary, the institution as it now is owes much to his energy and his vision. Under him the language of teaching and worship became English, and by the time he died he had seen the building of a remarkable chapel there, built in native American wood, with fine icons in the style developed by Leonid Ouspensky in émigré Paris: it feels both Russian and American." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, p. 198.

<sup>83</sup> J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 64.

<sup>84</sup> Juliana Schmemmann said: "For Father George Florovsky all these changes were unsettling and he and Alexander had many conflicts, misunderstandings and completely diverging opinions on the vision and the future of the seminary. In the end it became clear that the situation could not be resolved so Father George left the seminary to go to Princeton and Serge Verhovskoy and Alexander began looking for a new and permanent location." *ibid.*, p. 66. John

Orthodox Institute in 1959, he was appointed dean at Saint Vladimir Seminary in 1962.<sup>85</sup>

The influence of St Vladimir Seminary expanded world wide in Orthodox theological life under Alexander Schmemmann's leadership.<sup>86</sup> John Meyendorff stressed:

Perhaps the single most obvious contribution of Father Alexander to the life of St Vladimir's was that he succeeded in integrating the school within the very texture of ecclesial life. During his tenure, it ceased to be simply an academic institution, respected in ecumenical circles, but rather heterogeneous to the life of dioceses and parishes. St Vladimir's produced priests, and these priests, serving not only within the 'Russian Metropolia', but also in other jurisdictions (particularly the Antiochian and the Serbian) were taught the spirit of a universal and missionary Orthodox Church, transcending purely ethnic concerns.<sup>87</sup>

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Meyendorff witnessed: "Conflicts of temperament and style are at the bottom of the regrettable resignation of Father Florovsky (1955), who by the mere prestige of his personality had placed St Vladimir's on the academic and theological map of the country." J. Meyendorff, "A Life Worth Living", p. 348.

<sup>85</sup> J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p 72.

<sup>86</sup> Metropolitan Theodosius states: "Through Fr. Alexander's labours, energy, and inspiring guidance, St Vladimir's Seminary has become a vital centre of theological education and Orthodox witness, its faculty and publications bringing Orthodox theology not only to the specialists, but to the people as well. In fact, Fr. Alexander did not see Orthodox theology as the recirculation of theological ideas among specialists, but rather as the ministry of truth in the Church's life, a ministry profoundly related to the pastoral task of the Church. It was precisely the demands truth makes upon us and the pastoral needs of the Church which led him to be an advocate of organic Orthodox unity in America." Metr. Theodosius, "Amen" in *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 28, 1(1984), p. 34.

<sup>87</sup> J. Meyendorff, "A Life Worth Living", p. 349. He testified similar things later: "Among all the faculty of St. Vladimir's, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983) had the longest tenure as professor (1951-1983) and as dean (1962-1983). ... What can be said here, however, is that he succeeded in integrating St. Vladimir's into the very texture of Church life in America. Before 1950, the idea of college education and appropriate theological training which St. Vladimir's stood for seemed too ambitious and perhaps unnecessary for parish ministry in working-class communities. Fr. Florovsky loaned his personal prestige to the school and lifted the flag of 'Americanisation.' But it was Fr. Schmemmann, with his unchallenged ability to communicate the meaning of the liturgy and the ecclesial dimension of the Eucharist, his personal involvement in the life of the Church, his commitment to inter-Orthodox cooperation and unity, his role in the struggle for America, autocephaly, his speaking and his writing, always in the Church and for the Church, that has the spirit of St. Vladimir's accepted by many (but still

Similar ideas spread out from Juliana Schmemmann's witnessing of Alexander's liturgical life and presence at St Vladimir's.<sup>88</sup>

But not everything was doing well in the seminary. Schmemmann was often sad about several aspects concerning the life of the seminary and its relation with Orthodoxy, not in terms of some "heresy", but related to its consciousness of what they were expected to witness.<sup>89</sup> The lively, yet sometimes ironic atmosphere in the campus balanced the sadness of the conflicts in the seminary. Schmemmann revealed in his journal how he understood the amusing way of cracking the tensions in the church.<sup>90</sup>

All in all Schmemmann's life in St Vlads (this is what the actual staff of the seminary calls this institution) was not an idyllic one. He was not always a pleasant person to encounter and he did not always show the necessary strength and capability to take all the risks for the right decisions. But he identified himself with the life of the seminary, especially the liturgical life, and thus he belongs among those personalities who marked positively and decisively the history of this institution, and through it the Orthodox Church.

### **The Orthodox Church in America**

Alexander Schmemmann was proud of being an Orthodox Christian in America. He understood this in two ways: personal and communal. From the personal point of view, Alexander integrated into American society and culture

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not yet all!) as that which the Orthodox witness really needs today." J. Meyendorff, "St. Vladimir's Faculty: Our Predecessors", pp. 15-16.

<sup>88</sup> J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p 87.

<sup>89</sup> A. Schmemmann, *The Journal of Father Alexander Schmemmann (1973-1983)*, p. 52. Several days before he had remarked: "Yesterday we had a faculty meeting at our house. Rather peaceful, but, Lord, how difficult it is for people not only to agree with each other, but simply to hear the other. If it is the case with a small group of people who are essentially of one mind, what about the world at large? Division and alienation are the essence of the original sin. Unity can be restored only 'in Christ'." A. Schmemmann, *The Journal of Father Alexander Schmemmann (1973-1983)*, p. 51.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

with his whole family and they did it as Russian émigrés and as Orthodox faithful. He also always witnessed publicly to his faith when necessary and he taught his family to do the same. The communal perspective regards his role as assisting in the assimilation of the Orthodox Church into the juridical, social and cultural American context; he believed in the major role that Orthodoxy could play in America in the perspective of marking the Christian faith.<sup>91</sup>

In 1970 Alexander experienced the moment of the declaration of autonomy for the Orthodox Church in America, an event for which he had worked hard. After studying Orthodox ecclesiology and giving it strong sacramental foundations, Schmemmann wanted to turn his theological vision into a concrete reality. His dream was to be fulfilled in America. His experience showed him that in France, in Western Europe, the ground was not yet ready to accept and to welcome autocephaly for the Orthodox presence.<sup>92</sup> Alexander

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<sup>91</sup> A. Schmemmann, "Eastern Orthodoxy" in *The Word*, 2(1966), pp. 8-10. For the latest developed account on the Russian mission in America, the tensioned settlement of Orthodoxy in America and the formation of the Orthodox Church in America see *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 105-148. One remark made by Ivana Noble is quite important for understanding Schmemmann's mentality while working for obtaining autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in America, revealing the conflictual situation in America after 1920 when Russian America was divided jurisdictionally: "The reasons for the break-up of the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church in America were partly theological, partly political, and no doubt partly socio-psychological. The result however was that the original dream of one American Orthodox Church was for the time being left unfulfilled. ... The disagreements and the attempts to established separate hierarchies are symptomatic of the problems that faced American Orthodoxy in the years after the First World War, up to the declaration of autocephaly in 1970, though even then they were not entirely overcome. It would be fair to say that the problems are not particular to Orthodoxy, but rather are especially indicative of exile Churches, where the negative experience of exile can only serve as a unifying force for a certain amount of time before the divisions that had been present in the homeland return." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 217-218.

<sup>92</sup> John Meyendorff noted: "A real watershed in Father Alexander's career in America was the establishment of the autocephalous Orthodox Church in America in 1970. 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." J. Meyendorff, "A Life Worth Living", p. 349.

Schememann came in the ecclesial context prepared by Metropolitan Leonty and he followed and continued the vision of this bishop.<sup>93</sup>

The Orthodox Church in America needed formal independence in order to flourish and to progress. Fear, doubts and uncertainty paved the road to autocephaly. There was fear of newness and of the reaction of the Russian communist officialdom, doubts regarding an eventual loss of roots and of estrangement from historical stability and continuity, and uncertainty concerning the inner process of acceptance of the new situation and concerning the outside recognition of the new status of the Orthodox Church in America.<sup>94</sup> Several historical political opportunities helped the Russian Orthodox community to come to terms with this affair.<sup>95</sup>

The Orthodox Church in America is not yet "accomplished". There is not yet a full communion among the Orthodox jurisdictions in the New World and the task to achieve it is still on the road. But Alexander Schememann, John Meyendorff and their ecclesial team stepped forward in order to bring to life a

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<sup>93</sup> A. Schememann, *Metropolitan Leonty*, <http://www.schememann.org/byhim/leonty.html> (30.08.2014)

<sup>94</sup> Ivana Noble summarily explained the tensioned ecclesiological context reigning in America during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, establishing her statement on the undefined and immature theological and social mentality of the emigrants: "The immigrants who poured into the United States in such vast numbers from roughly 1880-1920 came with so many traditions and needs that it was almost impossible to find a way of bringing them together. The division of Orthodoxy into so many different groups caused and continues to cause both theological and practical problems. Theology and the practical realities of life, especially the life of the migrant, came into conflict, and practical reality was the undoubted winner. The immigrants arrived, it is clear, from very diverse backgrounds. No doubt many of them had not been too deeply influenced by the developing nationalist traditions of their own countries. The clergy, though, were different ... They brought with them to America an emphasis on national particularity, which often took a nationalistic form. Enlightenment concepts of the nation built on language, culture, and political self-determination, typical for the new Europe of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, took another shape in America, and led to national segregation, which, unfortunately, was often a constituent part of the mindset of the new groups in America." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 219.

<sup>95</sup> J. Schememann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p 74.

healthy and normal Orthodox presence on the continent.<sup>96</sup> The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Alexander's passing was marked in Paris by a magnificent conference regarding his legacy. On this occasion his fruitful vision about the establishment of a local church in conformity to the Orthodox Tradition and to the necessity of the new spreading of Orthodox faithful in the world, especially in Diaspora was mentioned and stressed once more.<sup>97</sup>

Due to his visionary spirit expressed in his theology and to his pastoral and spiritual experience "uttered" in his activity at St Vladimir's, Alexander was sought out by bishops for consultations and for all kinds of advice concerning the Church. If he could be accused of being too focused on his own opinions at times, of lacking the vision of a coherent social system for the Orthodox Church in America, nevertheless no one could find in his writings or in people's witness about him anything concerning any kind of disrespect towards bishops and church hierarchy, or anarchism in his behaviour. Yet misunderstandings appeared and impacted his life and love for the Orthodox

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<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, p 75. See also J. Meyendorff, "A Life Worth Living", p. 350. A more scientific and plausible explanation for the still on-going process of the Orthodox Church in America to becoming autonomous is granted by Ivana Noble: "The dream of people like Innocent or Tikhon or even Meletios of having one Orthodox Church in America is still held by many American Orthodox, but it has yet to be realised. Part of the problem may be that in fact Orthodoxy in America finds itself within a culture that values and promotes religious pluralism, so both the historic and current cultural experiences militate against the vision of unity. ... The vision of unity, which stood at the beginning of Orthodox mission on the American continent and which led to the attempt to build one Orthodox Church in America, remains. But the journey to unity will require going against contemporary majority American culture with its tendency to isolate and worship one's own interests. It will be necessary to go against both national segregation and the supremacy of the cultural interests of all Churches who wish to keep their tradition in isolation from others. The search for new forms of unity amidst plurality will have to draw deep from Orthodoxy's own sources rather than from Enlightenment nationalism and the individually oriented pluralism of contemporary America." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 221-224. See also A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, p. 198.

<sup>97</sup> *La joie du Royaume: Actes du colloque international L'héritage du père Alexandre Schmemmann, Paris, 11-14 décembre 2008*, Paris, YMCA-Press, 2012, pp. XIII-XIV.

Church.<sup>98</sup> Belonging to an institution is never easy to bear, and Alexander's case is not to be seen as unusual or extreme.

### **Broadcasting to Russia**

One important activity Alexander had in the Orthodox Church in America, linked with his beloved Russia, was his weekly broadcasts to the Soviet Union over Radio Liberty. His wife, Juliana, published hundreds of broadcasts after Alexander's death as three small volumes entitled *Celebration of Faith*. For Alexander this activity was of maximum relevance due to his feeling of being in contact with persecuted people needing to understand the meaning of their life and the value of their belonging to the Orthodox Church in a context of tyranny.<sup>99</sup> It was almost an ascetic, liturgical and ecclesial enterprise for him, consuming his energy, but also bringing him enormous joy.<sup>100</sup>

### **A Priest Among His Fellows**

Schememann travelled around America and Canada quite often in order to give talks and conferences to the clergy and the faithful. Even if many times they were painful due to the many jurisdictional and spiritual problems of those parishes, he felt at home among the parishioners and fully enjoyed sharing with

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<sup>98</sup> J. Schememann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 72.

<sup>99</sup> Andrew Louth remarked that Schememann's broadcast homilies determined positively generations of faithful in Russia: "One of the factors that kept the faith alive in the Soviet period was the broadcast sermons beamed into the Soviet Union by radio stations like Radio Liberty and, less controversially, the Voice of Orthodoxy. Two men, two priests, in particular are associated with these broadcasts, which took place from the 1960s onwards: from the USA, Fr Alexander Schememann, and from the UK, Bishop (later Metropolitan) Anthony Bloom of Sourozh. Both these priests presented the Christian faith – the Russian Orthodox faith – intelligently and compellingly. What they had to say could not be dismissed as sentimental nonsense; they spoke not just to the heart, but to the intellect. There are many who have testified how much these regular homilies meant for them and their embrace and practice of the faith in the Soviet period." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, p. 321.

<sup>100</sup> J. Schememann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 68.

them his experience and knowledge. Many testimonies from his journal show us the results of long processes of spiritual transformation due to his teaching in the seminary and to his mission regarding the local, eucharistic ecclesiology. On Thursday, December 19, 1974 he noted:

Today (old calendar) is the parish feast of the Whitestone St Nicholas Church. As usual, I feel elated when I see eight young priests, a young choir, the parish full of movement and enthusiasm. I remember the same parish twenty years ago. How painful, how difficult was the breakthrough to renewed vision.<sup>101</sup>

### **Conflict with Fr. Florovsky**

The academic year 1954-1955 was marked in the history of St Vladimir's seminary by the dramatic close of Fr Georges Florovsky's academic

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<sup>101</sup> A. Schmemmann, *The Journal of Father Alexander Schmemmann (1973-1983)*, pp. 58, 66. A similar testimony is to be found elsewhere: "That is the essential problem of American Orthodoxy and of Orthodoxy in the twentieth century, the test of its transcendence, truth, and universality. If its truth is only about this world (sanctification of life), it will fail. If Orthodoxy is the truth about the Kingdom of God, then it will be victorious. The early Church was victorious only through eschatological joy, the undoubted experience of the Kingdom, which comes in power, in the feeling and the vision of "the dawn of a mysterious day." For the vast majority of Orthodox, it sounds bookish and abstract. For them, the only alternative to the "body and blood," to concrete Orthodoxy ways, to rationality, is in disembodied spirituality, quite individualistic. There is one other alternative. ... The Church is the mystery of the Kingdom. The question is why Christians are forgetting it, and how can one come back to it? The essence of Orthodoxy revival and universal mission should be to bear witness to the Kingdom, to call people to the Kingdom. Everything is there: overcoming secularism, answer to contemporary problems of culture, history, religion, etc. Few people hear it, least of all theologians who are quite surprised that the world and the Church are so different to their scientific research. Why do people prefer either to reduce the Church to Russian, Greek, or some other, or to throw themselves into (at time dubious) spiritual literature. We preach to people that Orthodox Christianity is not Russian, not Greek, not whatever. We tell them it enlightens the whole life. But people feel Russian, or whatever, and demand from the Church that it enlighten *their* lives, *their* reality. For the sake of what reality do we ask them to overcome their wish? "For the sake of the Church." we answer. But where *is* the reality of the Church? That is the question. In fact, the Church lives in and by the Kingdom; *this* is the reality, its life, truly its very own life. The mission of the Church is to carry to the world the experience of the Kingdom, not to reduce the Kingdom of God to anything in the world." A. Schmemmann, *The Journal of Father Alexander Schmemmann (1973-1983)*, p. 59. I have chosen this long quotation due to its paradigmatic structure and content for Schmemmann's journal and theology. Many of its theological elements will be investigated in the next chapters.



presence in the life of that institution. The official statement about this event was offered in ambiguous yet respectful lights due to the fact that there were various personal points of view and personal relationships, especially the one between Fr Florovsky and Fr Schmemmann.

Father Georges was frequently exhausted by his many schedules, and eventually relations with the student body and most of the faculty strained to the breaking point. The break was widely misunderstood (e.g., by some of the WCC bureaucracy and a writer in the *Christian Century*) as a conflict between a liberal Florovsky and reactionary Orthodox forces, a view fostered to some extent by Father Georges and Xenia. Since this view is utterly false, and must appear so in the light of subsequent events to any careful observer, this is probably the best point to leave the question at present and the Florovsky era at St. Vladimir's with it.<sup>102</sup>

What is worth noting for my argument is the fact that this event cast a complete shadow over the relationship between Florovsky and Schmemmann, leading the latter to embrace an attitude of sadness vis-à-vis his former professor and exemplar. This shadow lay also on the general view of the Orthodox academic life in America, which hardened Schmemmann's effort to open Orthodox theology to the contemporary world.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, Schmemmann tried to be reconciled with him, but all efforts were in vain.<sup>104</sup> The very end of their relationship, according to Schmemmann, dwells in the world of

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<sup>102</sup> W. S. Schneirla, "The Florovsky Years", in *A Legacy of Excellence: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1938-1988*, St Vladimir Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1988, p. 27. Fr Georges Florovsky's biographer, Andrew Blane wrote the following: "The seemingly secure future that lay before the Florovskys in the autumn of 1954 vanished within a matter of months. Before the academic year run its course, the episcopal synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in America had – in the gentle words of George Williams – asked Father Florovsky 'to lay down the deanship.' He was deeply hurt by the action. A proud man, he still felt some of this hurt, and some anger too, a decade and a half later when I regularly visited him in Princeton. But in the many conversations I had with him over an extended period of time, he did not discuss nor elaborate on the matter." A. Blane, *Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual – Orthodox Churchman*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1993, pp. 109-110.

<sup>103</sup> A. Schmemmann, *Journal (1973-1983)*, p. 58.

<sup>104</sup> The memories Schmemmann had on the occasion of Florovsky's funeral are eloquent. See *ibid.*, p. 619.

genuine mystic encounters and reveals the power of the after-life-forgiveness.<sup>105</sup>

This conflict, which was not singular in either of the two cases, shows clearly the "humanity" of the Orthodox Church, the fact that people belonging to this community of faith are weak and sometimes mean. Both of them shared a faith considered to be perfect and able to bring a human person to perfection, but the reality of the human life of the faithful often takes a different path than the one proposed by the faith of that human being. This conflict does not alter in any way the beauty of the Orthodox faith, but it rather brings it to its fleshly dimension, calling all the other faithful who share it to look for salvation in faith in Christ and not in any cultural, social or earthly manifestations of that faith.

### **Schmemann and Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008)**

The Russian ethos of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is marked by the complex presence of Alexander Solzhenitsyn in Russia and abroad. Schmemann was sensitive to this presence and "fate" allowed these two personalities to meet and to share an amazing multifaceted relationship.<sup>106</sup> Due to the historical data, their relation must be regarded in relationship to Schmemann's American period of life.

Schmemann wrote letters to Solzhenitsyn, wrote about him, spoke widely about him and most especially spoke to him during their long friendship. Their relation was a very dialogical one, in the literary and theological point of view.<sup>107</sup> Their relation had ups and downs, witnessing paradoxically the sincerity they shared and the courage to engage totally one's

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<sup>105</sup> Schmemann's notes from the Journals would belong to a contemporary *Life of Saints*. See *ibid.*, p. 621.

<sup>106</sup> For more details regarding this relationship see N. Struve, "Le père Alexandre Schmemann et Soljénitsyne" in *La joie du Royaume*, pp. 70-77.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*, p. 70.

own life-vision and life-path.<sup>108</sup> What the reason was for them becoming friends, why they split finally and how their relationship influenced Schmemmann's life will be the questions I propose an answer to in what follows.

To their relationship belong both praise and criticism, mutual literary and theological influence, acceptance and rejection, friendly proximity and respectful distance.<sup>109</sup> Solzhenitsyn was, in Schmemmann's eyes, a writer of experience, grounding his literature on experience and leading the reader to come back to his own experience. This is also a certain Russian feature to Solzhenitsyn writings. The reality of the plot of Solzhenitsyn's novels and the realism of his literary images are just two complementary aspects of his great work. For Schmemmann, Solzhenitsyn was a profound Christian writer due to this type of realistic existentialism. Solzhenitsyn rose against the lie of the Soviet society, against the monstrosity of the contemporary Russian dictatorial leaders and this gave him closeness to the ultimate Christian Truth.<sup>110</sup>

What Solzhenitsyn wrote in classic literary form, Schmemmann did in the realm of theology. Schmemmann's vision of the world, a subject which will be the subject of one chapter in my thesis, testifies to very similar preoccupations like Solzhenitsyn's. One criticised the society of his time revealing negative and even destructive forms of manifestation, the other argued against the Church and her false, worldly commitment. One praised the role of suffering and the absurdity of the communist political ideology, the other interrogated the wickedness of clericalism and the irrationality of any legalistic churchly attitude. Their opposed points of interest and their divergences were paradoxically complementary.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*", pp. 70-71.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*p. 74.

<sup>111</sup> J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, pp. 83-86.

As for the critiques, Schmemmann did not find Solzhenitsyn to be coherent with himself, with his condemnation of the political, social and economic situation in Russia. On Thursday, November 14, 1974, Schmemmann related Solzhenitsyn's literary struggle against communism with the danger of ideology, giving us a glimpse of what I shall discuss in the fourth chapter of my thesis on the sacramentality of the world:

Having read Solzhenitsyn's latest articles and letters, I keep thinking about the inherent danger of "ideologies." It seems to me that any ideology is bad because it is inevitably reductive and identifies any other ideology with evil and itself with truth, whereas both truth and goodness are always transcendent. An ideology is always idolatry: thus it is evil and generates evil people. I thought that Solzhenitsyn would preach a liberation from ideologies which poisoned Russian consciousness as well as the world in general. But, as is the case with many philosophers or writers, one is fatally drawn to crystalize one's own ideology – be it pro or con.<sup>112</sup>

### **Schmemmann's Perception of Russia**

Schmemmann never went to Russia to visit or to live there. Schmemmann was Russian by his ethnic identity, Russian in his family life, Russian in his theology, Russian in his inter-Orthodox relationships, Russian in his literary formation and understanding of culture.<sup>113</sup> But this does not mean at all that he was exclusively Russian in all these aspects. He passed over the boundaries of any narrow Russian self-perception and he opened himself to the universality of culture, to the eschatological meaning of Orthodoxy and to the beauty of a well-integrated family life. He was aware of his personal relation to Russia borne in the context of the Russian emigration in France and America, and he

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<sup>112</sup> A. Schmemmann, *The Journal of Father Alexander Schmemmann (1973-1983)*, pp. 54, 60-61.

<sup>113</sup> Andrew Louth stated: "Though Fr Alexander became immersed in his adopted country [America], he remained deeply Russian, steeped in Russian literature, with an especial love of Aleksandr Blok, Anna Akhmatova and Osip Mandel'shtam; each summer he read *Anna Karenina*; all his books were written in Russian, though he lectured in English." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, p. 198.

considered himself different from the majority of his fellow Russians.<sup>114</sup> This remark is valuable for Schmemmann's relation with Solzhenitsyn: on Monday, January 20, 1975, Schmemmann wrote:

The rapport with Solzhenitsyn made obvious for me our essential difference. For him there is only Russia. For me, Russia could disappear, die, and nothing would change in my fundamental vision of the world. "The image of the world is passing." This tonality of Christianity is quite foreign to him.<sup>115</sup>

One can perceive the strong sacramental understanding Schmemmann had about the world, a fact challenged by many of his friends, and his Orthodox fellows.<sup>116</sup>

According to Schmemmann's journals, Christ was "his" kerygma, especially among his Russian fellows. But the journals testifies also to Schmemmann's "voice in the desert". The crisis within the Russian émigré was really unbearable for him and this suffering made him determined to fight against religious superficiality to the end.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> A. Schmemmann, *Journal (1973-1983)*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>115</sup> A. Schmemmann, *The Journal of Father Alexander Schmemmann (1973-1983)*, p. 61.

<sup>116</sup> The entry from Friday, March 7, 1975 is relevant: "Last evening we had *blini* with some Russian friends. Very nice, friendly. But what a gulf between our life – our vision of the Church, what we need, what is for us most important and what is only secondary – and their life. Coming home I thought about a certain type of Russian who is faithful not to Russia, which he never knew in the way his parents did, but to the emigration itself, its ideas, its way of life. Their consciousness is somehow in captivity, comparable to that of Orthodox Jews. Their childhood spent in émigré struggles and frustrations had a defining meaning for their entire life." A. Schmemmann, *The Journal of Father Alexander Schmemmann (1973-1983)*, p. 68.

<sup>117</sup> The entry from Tuesday, March 25, 1975 is relevant: "I spent the evening with some new immigrants from Russia. They cling to each other uprooted, emotionally strung out. I thought, what could I tell them from deep down, from the heart? What is most important? How to live? It is easier for those whose lives are filled with creative work: Solzhenitsyn, writes. The others are instinctively inventing some occupation, some way of life. I would love to tell them that the only meaningful thing in life is what conquers death, and not 'what,' but 'who' – Christ. There is undoubtedly only one joy: to know Him and share Him with each other. Nothing else matters but faith, hope, love. But it would be "preaching," like a kind of platitude. But for me this is beyond all question, the test – 'in a way,' 'somehow,' 'sometime...'" *ibid.*p. 71.

### Schmemmann's Place Among the Russian Émigrés

Generally speaking, Schmemmann's relation to the Russian émigré community was very dynamic. There was spiritual and cultural proximity, but also political and psychological detachment. Schmemmann considered himself as belonging to the Russian community, and yet he at times disassociated from it. The matter that made him organically close to the Russian diaspora was the culture. The difficulty that separated him from the Russian diaspora was the ecclesial consciousness.<sup>118</sup> The idea that he belonged to the Orthodox Church was for him linked with Christ not with his own parental lineage or to his Russian background. He continually questioned the freedom of the Russian diaspora with regard to its consciousness of the historical role it embodied, an inquiry he inherited from the Slavophiles.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> *ibid.* pp. 106-107. The term of *consciousness* is of paramount importance for Schmemmann's theology as we shall see in the next three chapters.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, p. 152,161. On Tuesday, November 12, 1974, he made a self-inquiry, giving us some thoughts about Russia and its historic path, and also about Christian understanding of history and the crisis within the Orthodox Church: "Last evening there was a seminar for our faculty. It was peaceful and friendly. Two papers by our historians M(eyendorff) and E(rickson). I keep thinking, again and again, about theological education in general, about history in particular. Ideally, the study of Church history should liberate people from enslavement to the past, which is rather typical for the Orthodox consciousness. This is only "ideally." I remember how slowly I became liberated from idealizing Byzantium, Old Russia, etc. and from fascination with that "game." A contemporary student who does not know any history, who knows no history at all, is even less able to find his own synthesis and holistic vision of the world. The Church does not have a sacred history, as does the biblical history. Our teaching, which singles our church history, transforms it inescapably into sacred history and distorts the very teaching about the Church, the very perception of its essence. There is something there that needs to be corrected, but how? I do not know. On one hand, I agree with historians, since without a historical perspective there would be false absolutisms. On the other hand, I agree with those of the pastoral group who tend to limit history for the sake of real, live, existing Church. The basic formula is the same: eschatological. The Church is the presence in time, in history, of the saintly and the sacred. Everything in time and in history is related to the Kingdom of God and is evaluated by this relation. The life of the Church is always hidden with Christ in God. The Church lives not by history but by the Kingdom. The historical events of the Church – such as the Ecumenical Councils – are important inasmuch as they are an answer to the world, an affirmation of salvation and transfiguration. As soon as they are absolutised, as soon as they gain a value *per se*, and not as related to the world, in other words, as soon as we transform them into sacred history, we deprive them of their genuine value and meaning; therefore, the prerequisite for the study of church history must be to liberate it from being a sacred absolute, and not to be enslaved by it – which is so often a burden on Orthodoxy." A. Schmemmann, *The*

Schememann considered that even before the October Revolution, Russia was marked by nationalism, a fact that influenced decisively its encounter with the West through Russian émigrés.<sup>120</sup> The nationalism, which was for him an outcome of the Byzantine theocracy, defines the background of the jurisdictional conflicts that emerged in the Russian diaspora in Western Europe and America.<sup>121</sup>

### **Relationship to Europe**

Schememann's relationship to Europe after his settlement in America was romantic, lively, organic and persevering. He travelled very often to Europe, especially to France, to Paris where a part of his family (his mother and his twin brother) remained. This relationship to Europe shows intrinsically how Schememann remained rooted in several loves and experiences from his youth and how he considered these backgrounds significant. How this passionate relationship to an old historical, cultural and geographical lieu determined Schememann's life journey and his ecclesiology will constitute a question to be answered further.

The relation to Paris is very special. It is in Paris that Schememann had his first religious experiences and where he discovered his Russian identity in its first, packed manifestation. It is there that for the first time he had the

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*Journal of Father Alexander Schememann (1973-1983)*, pp. 53-54. In this paragraph Schememann presents himself as being open toward the world and its dynamic relation with the Church and the Kingdom of God, but he contradicts himself when he affirms that "the Church lives not by history but by the Kingdom." These lines show Schememann's struggle with history in a way that his Russian identity and cultural heritage influenced him much more than he would think.

<sup>120</sup> He stated: "Nationalism always springs from opposition to other countries, from a sense of danger. The incessant struggle with the Latin West and with the Moslem East strengthened the insularity of the Byzantines, and resulted in a nationalism which was unknown to the tradition of Early Rome." A. Schememann, "Byzantine Theocracy and the Orthodox Church", p. 121.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, p. 122. Nationalism in its Slavic form is the first manifestation of the canonical crisis within the Orthodox Church that determined Schememann's life course in a way leading to his ecclesiology.

consciousness of belonging to the Church and determining and being determined by her eschatological "altitude" and "atmosphere." It is there, in Paris that Schmemmann comprehended that without personal otherness there is no ecclesial togetherness. It is there that Schmemmann perceived the necessity of personal utopia remaining utopia and not being transformed into an idol. And that one's utopia is intimate, is priceless and is blessed. He also understood the necessity of "accessing" his own utopia in a sacramental and apophatic way, sharing it with others by means of life, matter and joy:

During my school years in Paris, on my way to the Lycée Carnot, I would stop by the Church of Monceau for two or three minutes. And always, in this huge, dark church, at one of the altars, a silent Mass was being said. The Christian West: it is part of my childhood and youth, when I lived a double life. On the one hand it was a worldly and very Russian émigré life; on the other, a secret, religious life. Sometimes I think of the contrast: a noisy, proletarian rue Legendre (a small street in the 19<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, in Paris) and this never-changing Mass (... a spot of light on the dark wall...) – one step, and one is in a totally different world. This contrast somehow determined in my religious experience the intuition that has never left me: the coexistence of two heterogeneous worlds, the presence in this world of something absolutely and totally "other." This "other" illumines everything, in one way or another. Everything is related to it – the Church as the Kingdom of God among and inside us. For me, rue Legendre never became unnecessary, or hostile, or non-existent – hence my aversion to pure "spiritualism". On the contrary, the street, as it was, acquired a new charm that was understandable and obvious only to me, who knew at that moment the Presence, the feast revealed in the Mass nearby. Everything became alive, intriguing: every storefront window, the face of every person I met, the concrete, tangible feeling of that moment, the relationship between the street, the weather, the houses, the people.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> A. Schmemmann, *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann (1973-1983)*, p. 19.



When Schmemmann moved to America, Paris became his utopia, his dear place to which he kept returning and yet he knew that he would never come back to settle there. Schmemmann's relation to Paris is paradigmatic in understanding his rationale of the Church and the Kingdom of God: once one had "tasted" the "delicious" life in Christ, one understands the necessity of his belonging to the Church and begins to long for the ultimate "meal" in the Kingdom of God. Schmemmann's religious experience engendered his theology, grounding his thoughts on the cosmic and ecclesial interpretation of Christ's presence in one's life.<sup>123</sup>

Generally speaking, Schmemmann's relation to Europe, to the Western world in general, is emotional rather than intellectual. Memories of life, of beauty, of good feelings appear in his journal before intellectual schema or philosophical analyses. When he is in Europe he feels good and this happens due to the presence of freedom and social joy he liked to experience. The entry from Wednesday, June 5, 1974 testifies: "Finally, after the awesome tension of these days, I am alone at the Zurich airport. Again, rain and fog. Again the

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<sup>123</sup> This is the continuation of the last quotation from Schmemmann's *Journals*: "This experience remains with me forever: a very strong sense of 'life' in its physical, bodily reality, in the uniqueness of every minute and of its correlation with life's reality. At the same time, this interest has always been rooted solely in the correlation of all of this with what the silent Mass was a witness to and reminder of, the presence and the joy. What is that correlation? It seems to me that I am quite unable to explain and determine it, although it is actually the only thing that I talk and write about ('liturgical theology'). It is not an 'idea': I feel repulsed by 'ideas'; I have an ever-growing conviction that Christianity cannot be expressed by "ideas." This correlation is not an 'idea' of the Christian world, Christian marriage, etc. This correlation is a tie, not an idea; an experience. It is the experience of the world and life literally in the light of the Kingdom of God, revealed through everything that makes up the world: colours, sounds, movements, time, space – concrete, not abstract. When this light, which is only in the heart, only inside us, falls on the world and on life, then all is illumined, and the world becomes a joyful sign, symbol, expectancy. That's why I love Paris, why I need it! It is because it was in Paris, in my Parisian childhood that this experience was given to me, became my being. And now that I no longer live there, nor have any work or obligation there, Paris has become for me an immersion into that first experience, its renewal. ... In Paris there is sadness and there is joy, and both are always there. The beauty of Paris reflects its place in another level, neither self-satisfied nor triumphant, neither pompous nor heavy. It is a beauty that belongs to a world where Christ lived." A. Schmemmann, *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann (1973-1983)*, p. 20. Similar ideas appear all-over his *Journals*: in the French edition: p. 75,

usual Western crowd, essentially – my world, where I feel comfortable because I belong to it, because inside this world I am free and alone."<sup>124</sup>

Schmemann was a fine analyst of the political and economic Western world where he lived. He criticised it for its shallowness and lack of moral perspective. But, what is even more worth noting in his journal is his criticism of the Christian attitude toward social problems. He cannot agree with the general Christian melange of religious consciousness and political assertiveness, a reality that engenders the strong secularisation of Western society. The political on-going crisis of the occidental world comes along with the crisis of the Church.<sup>125</sup> We shall see more developing items of Schmemann's critique of the Orthodox ecclesial crisis in the next chapters of my thesis. Right now it is simply necessary to mention the essential idea present in Schmemann's mind, that of the failure of the world without a strong understanding of its freedom and of the Christian fulfilment of that freedom in the Church.<sup>126</sup> I note that Schmemann's analysis of the contemporary world situation is as right as is his failure to use this kind of analysis on Orthodox theology. We shall see his ambiguous dealings with theology in the next chapters of my thesis.

### **Immersion in American Culture**

Schmemann's final nationality was American and this was due to a choice he made in his life in a very strong personal and definitive way: he and his wife did want to come to live in America. One of the first things that such a decision would imply for him would be to accept that American culture, in its large supposition, would become his own. This happened, but it happened in

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<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, p. 45. There is also in Schmemann's heart a sentiment of sadness vis-à-vis the superficiality of the European "nature": see *ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>126</sup> A. Schmemann, *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemann (1973-1983)*, p. 50, 55.

his way. For my argument it is relevant to observe Schmemmann's absorption of the American culture because such an initiative would enlighten his ecclesiology, as we shall see. When he became established in America, he proved to himself that he was able to let go of the old world of the Russian dwelling in France and move to the new perspective of a genuine and local Orthodox ethos in America.

Together with the reading of world class American writers, Schmemmann was interested in American policy and its relation to the wider world. His consideration of American culture is similar and organically linked to those concerning Russia and Europe. But they are definitely not the same.<sup>127</sup>

As a citizen living all his life in the West, France and America, Schmemmann was perceptive in evaluating his own cultural environment. Sometimes allowing himself some exaggeration, he was nevertheless right. But his valuable assertions consist mainly in their deep meaning and in the fact that he enriched this culture with his own theology and legacy. What is sad for his theology is the fact that he did not show similar criticism and readiness to change in relation to the Orthodox liturgical witness to other Christian denominations and to the world.

Schmemmann considered American culture to be strongly religiously orientated with all the good and bad inferences of such a stance. When Schmemmann uses the term "religion" one awaits immediately its consequence "secularisation." I shall deal later on with this theological mechanism in Schmemmann's theology of the world. For now it is interesting to see how it works in the context of the American culture. Besides the levity of some statements in the following quotations from Schmemmann's *Journals*, and

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<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, p. 70. The next day's entry, Tuesday, March 25, 1975, continues to testify: "The TV news is awful: bloodbath in Vietnam, police corruption, terrorist bombs in Argentina, in Ireland, everywhere! Then sweet commercials about the softness of toilet paper! No fresh air left in the world." *ibid.*, p. 71. It is incredible for us, people from the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, some 45 years later, to see the *sameness* of Schmemmann's reality to ours.

besides the unpleasant subjectivity of his observations, it is worth noting his point of view on the impact of religion on the American society present under the form of two entities, Orthodox and Mormon:

**Monday, April 7, 1975**

Salt Lake City. Last night was a very pleasant meeting in the Greek Church: interesting questions, an enormous thirst for more knowledge about the faith, the Church, etc. How little does the Church respond to that thirst, how little does she satisfy it. This morning – breakfast with Jaroslav Pelikan in my hotel. I looked through the Book of Mormon. I read the paper about their international conference. The Mormon religion is thriving, spreading, all the speeches reflect a deep conviction, joy. What is the matter? What is the attraction? Obviously not this strange book, rather hard to digest, nor the legends about Smith and the golden tabernacles. But then what? It is the eternal enigma of religion, which never ceased not only to surprise, but to scare me. Strange city with its wide avenues, heavy Mormon Temple that can be seen from everywhere, surrounded by mountains covered with snow.

**Tuesday, April 8, 1975**

I spent yesterday attending the Salt Lake City Greek Church Conference. So many wonderful people. I was quite impressed by the irritation, even anger, against the Mormons – quite extraordinary coming from a usually cordial, well-disposed group of Americans, often inclined to pluralism.

**Wednesday, April 8, 1975**

I arrived back at 2 o'clock in the morning after an endless flight. Before leaving, I went to the Mormon centre, the new Visitor's Centre. The style is that of a wealthy hotel, quite tasteless and luxurious. On the walls, paintings depicting the life of Christ and Mormon history, sickly sweet and simplified. Simplification, enthusiasm, and fanaticism. We flew over Rocky Mountains covered with snow and the Salt Lake. Strong contrast between greatness of water and triumphant lack of taste. Out of a fake world one enters a real temple. America: What a grandiose country!<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> A. Schmemmann, *The Journal of Father Alexander Schmemmann (1973-1983)*, p. 72.

There is theological weakness in Schmemmann's reports and this casts a shadow on his theological integrity. Why are Orthodox activities in Salt Lake City doing rather well and why is the Mormon presence so ugly and repulsive? Is this not clear nominalism and unethical judgment from Schmemmann's part? Nevertheless this example of certain theological limitations is important for my argument because it shows that Schmemmann could fall under the light of his own criticism without noticing it and produce an exception that proves the rule. This example underlines in fact Schmemmann's intuition that Christ is beyond any human assertion, saying that Schmemmann's point of view is to be understood contextually and not absolutely as it happens sometimes with the wise yet human word, especially in some Orthodox extremist traditionalism.

Schmemmann became conservative with the age. This evolution is best remarked in his stance towards ecumenism.<sup>129</sup> After breaking with Florovsky who was a key participant in the ecumenical movement, he felt that his contribution to a common Christian testimony would be better fulfilled through developing his own Orthodox theology. The issue of secularism, which Schmemmann put in a direct line with ecumenism and both of which he criticised sharply, contributed to that change.<sup>130</sup>

### **Last Years**

Moving to America meant for the Schmemmann family moving to a very similar and yet quite different context.<sup>131</sup> The resemblance with Paris concerned the Russian Diaspora which reappeared in the framework of their

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<sup>129</sup> A. Schmemmann, "Notes and Comments: The Western Rite" in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 1(1959), pp. 37-38.

<sup>130</sup> Schmemmann's criticism of Western theology and its aftermath will be engaged largely in the third and fourth chapters. On my research-trip to Alaska, I found a conference on secularism Schmemmann gave to the seminarians from St Herman's Orthodox Seminary on March 23, 1980, where he dealt with the negative influences of Western theology on Orthodoxy.

<sup>131</sup> J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, pp. 59, 64.

life with all the cultural, social and theological queries, concerns and visions.<sup>132</sup> Juliana shows Alexander's tendency to spend time in the midst of people and to share with them the *life*.<sup>133</sup>

Another resemblance with their Parisian life was, at least in the beginning, the poverty.<sup>134</sup> But they had to live their poverty in a different way than in France. Being alone in an even more foreign country than France, the Schmemann family had to deal with the responsibilities of their new situation and, thus, they "had to become used to thinking differently, to being more practical in order to care for their children and for the seminary."<sup>135</sup>

It might seem very curious, but America became their beloved country where they felt at home. This happened according to their own free decision and this implied "making space" in their heart and life for their new identity with all the possible consequences.<sup>136</sup>

Ageing was for Alexander a period of self-analysis, self-inquiry and self-criticism. His journal testifies to this struggle to understand both what was and still is right or wrong, accomplishment or failure, completed past or continuing present life, part or wholeness.<sup>137</sup>

Alexander's last days are of great relevance for this study. Being told that he had developed cancer in his lungs which had metastasised to his brain in an already advanced measure, Alexander remained "totally calm, sober, serious and somehow, instantly on a different level of life."<sup>138</sup> He finished his earthly days in a liturgical tonality, granting those who surrounded him an

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<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, p. 62-63.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>136</sup> J. Schmemann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 81.

<sup>137</sup> A. Schmemann, *The Journal of Father Alexander Schmemann (1973-1983)*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>138</sup> J. Schmemann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, p. 96.

outstanding sermon during the celebration of his last Liturgy on Thanksgiving Day.<sup>139</sup>

### Summary

In this first chapter we have retrieved the life-course of Schmemmann in the sense of bringing it into the fore.<sup>140</sup> We perceived the turning points of his life and we lightly anticipated their impact on his theology.<sup>141</sup> The mutual dependence of both his life and his theology with all its limitations is worth noting. New things came out from old ones, new situations and opportunities

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<sup>139</sup> He said: "Everyone capable of thanksgiving is capable of salvation and eternal joy. Thank you, O Lord, for having accepted this Eucharist, which is offered to the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and which filled our hearts with 'the joy, peace and righteousness in the Holy Spirit.' Thank you, O Lord, for having revealed Yourself unto us and for giving us the foretaste of Your Kingdom. Thank you, O Lord, for having united us to one another, in serving You and Your Holy Church. Thank you, O Lord, for having helped us to overcome all difficulties, tensions, passions and temptations and for having restored peace, mutual love and joy in sharing the communion of the Holy Spirit. Thank you, O Lord, for the sufferings you bestowed upon us, for they are purifying us from selfishness and remind us of the 'one thing needful: Your eternal Kingdom.' Thank you, O Lord, for having given us this country where we are free to worship You. Thank you, O Lord, for this school, where the name of God is proclaimed. Thank you, O Lord, for our families, husbands, wives and, especially, children, who teach us how to celebrate Your holy Name in joy, movement and holy noise. Thank you, O Lord, for everyone and everything. Great are You, O Lord, and marvellous are Your deeds, and there is no word sufficient to celebrate Your miracles. Lord, it is good to be here! Amen. – November 24, 1983, *Thanksgiving Day Divine Liturgy*" J. Schmemmann, *My Journey with Father Alexander*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>140</sup> A year and a half before he died, Schmemmann left us an outstanding example of self-understanding of his own life. See A. Schmemmann, *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann (1973-1983)*, pp. 293-294.

<sup>141</sup> The methodology of this chapter lies mostly in the way the authors of the book *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West* put their understanding of the dialect between one's life sojourn and one's theology. Introducing their perspective on some Orthodox theologians from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they stated: "The discourse of the theologians mentioned above and their life stories led us, however, to seeing the need to fill out their eschatological starting point concerning 'the human way of understanding God's action in history.' [Pavel Ambros, "Návrat k pramenům a postavení křesťana v moderním světě: Poznámky k diskuzi o povaze vztahu metodologie církevních dějin a praktické teologie," in Jiří Hanuš (ed), *Eseje o povaze církevních dějin* (Brno: CDK, 2012), 9-24, at 16.] The attempt to more deeply understand the complicated context in which the lives and theology of Orthodox thinkers in the West were enmeshed led us to valuing historical perspectives. We needed to complement eschatology with history and move from the past to the future, concentrating on the development, without however feeling the need to accept modern concepts of progress, rightly criticised by Orthodox theology." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 11-13.

were born from old habits or customs, but also ancestral realms and eternal epiphanies appeared out of renunciations of worldly mentalities or human theories. Beside a certain unquestionable openness, he kept old habits and he stocked up on tradition more than necessary or expected.<sup>142</sup>

As we have already noted, Schmemann was marked by encounters with many personalities. These encounters opened his mind and heart for new knowledge and deeper self-consciousness, but they also showed him the danger of narrowness and superficiality. He made a distinct differentiation between encounters and meetings, which will help my argument to decode the relation between his life-experience and his ecclesiology. There are also "technical" features concerning Schmemann's life-shaping encounters that will reveal to us, further in my argument, his perception of the sacramentality of the world.<sup>143</sup>

Schmemann himself helped us to understand his life-course throughout his notes from his *Journals*, his wife, Juliana, often took the place of the narrator of the story. If my thesis debates the crisis within the Orthodox Church according to Schmemann and its relation to Schmemann's life, then my argument must identify, as Schmemann does, the crisis of the Church with each person's life and perception of his own life. As we have noted, Schmemann

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<sup>142</sup> He noted on Friday, December 13, 1974: "Reflecting about the debates around Solzhenitsyn, I think that any debate is, before anything else, a debate about the hierarchy of values, about the treasure of the heart, about the 'one thing needful.' Reflecting on my own life, how did the 'one thing needful' get hold of my heart? – Through my mother, the church, friendship, the experience of 'another' vision, of a secret light, a desire, joy in the very fabric of life. Then testing, deepening during the years at the St Sergius Institute, through the subsequent fragmented experience of the Church; then a synthesis: cosmic, historical, ecclesiological. Then Russia: how did 'meeting' Russia and its spirit and culture appear to an émigré child? Emigration: 'if it does not die, it will not live...' The West: its truth and untruth, freedom, liberation, standing in freedom, the ultimate choice, service, sacrifice." A. Schmemann, *The Journal of Father Alexander Schmemann (1973-1983)*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, p. 53.



himself proposes that we look at his religious experience and he shares with us his paradigm of interpreting the crisis within the Orthodox Church.<sup>144</sup>

We shall go now to examine his eucharistic ecclesiology, his liturgical theology and his theology of the world.<sup>145</sup> We shall do this having in mind his concern with the crisis within the Orthodox Church.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>145</sup> Commenting on Khomyakov's ecclesiology and its impact on further generation, Ivana Noble stated: "Despite the attractive characteristics of this mystical, agapic, and communal ecclesiology [Khomyakov's], the absence of other manifestation of the Church and of other authorities is at the same time its disadvantage. Nevertheless, post-revolutionary Russian theologians in emigration, in their majority, took over and further developed the basic features of this ecclesiology. As John Behr says, 'Eucharistic ecclesiology is the expression of *sobornost* in the diaspora, where it lost the dimension of the link between Church and society.' Among the most significant proponents of Eucharistic ecclesiology in the Russian diaspora were Nikolai Afanasiev and his pupil Alexander Schmemmann." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 95.

<sup>146</sup> W. Jardine Grisbrooke noted: "(Schmemmann's) background is threefold. First, there was Schmemmann's vivid consciousness of what he called the theological and liturgical crisis of contemporary Orthodoxy – and he was certainly not one of those Orthodox who think that in any contact with the western theological world the Orthodox vocation is simply to teach, and that of the west simply to learn. Second, there was the influence of the western liturgical movement in his student days: while he was certainly influenced by some of his teachers at St Serge, notably Georges Florovsky, Cyprian Kern, and Nicholas Afanassiev, he was even more influenced by such men as Jean Daniélou and Louis Bouyer, and by the whole efflorescence of western liturgical scholarship in the 1940s and 1950s. Third, he was later in some ways undoubtedly influenced – and I would say unfortunately influenced – by the chaos which has ensued upon the post-Vatican II liturgical reforms in the Roman Catholic Church." W. J. Grisbrooke, "An Orthodox Approach to Liturgical Theology: the Work of Alexander Schmemmann" in *Studia Liturgica*, 2(1993), 140-157, p. 141.

## 2. Formative Influences on Schmemmann's Ecclesiology

In the second chapter of my thesis I focus on three major influences present in Schmemmann's theological thought: Nicolas Afanasiev, Cyprian Kern and Georges Florovsky. All three figures who decisively marked Schmemmann's own approach were priests in the Orthodox Church and professors in various theological institutions such as St Sergius' Theological Institute, St Vladimir's Theological Seminary, Columbia, Harvard and Princeton Universities.

First I look at the life-context of these theologians, highlighting the similarities between their lives and Schmemmann's. This is significant for my argument because, once again, it takes into account the importance of the life-context in one's theology. Social, political, cultural and ecclesial realities determine different people to react similarly in given situations. This fact gives theology the special feature of being stimulated by human life and returning to it.

In our case it will be the period when the crisis within the Orthodox Church began to manifest itself fully. The jurisdictional, theological and liturgical setting of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shaped their theological thoughts and was influenced by their theological research.<sup>147</sup>

Together with the context of the three theologians, Afanasiev, Kern, and Florovsky, the following will be considered and assessed: their ecclesiology, pastoral, patristic and liturgical theology.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Describing metaphorically yet relevantly the Orthodox diaspora in the West, Ivana Noble pointed out the plurality of Orthodox testimony in the West along with its unity. See I. Noble, "The Future of the Orthodox Diaspora" published in French "L'avenir de la diaspora orthodoxe" in *Contacts*, 243(2013), pp. 477-497.

<sup>148</sup> All three of these theologians belonged to the group of Russian intellectuals searching for the improvement and the contextualisation of Orthodox theology within an open dialogue with modernity. Ivana Noble gives us a glimpse of their main theological features which issued from this dialogue. See I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 212-213.

I will start with the presentation of the influence of Nicolas Afanasiev on Schmemmann. Although Afanasiev was older than Schmemmann, they both responded to similar questions which shaped their ecclesiology. Here the influence is the most traceable and therefore it will be elaborated on the most. However I will also consider Afanasiev's influence on Schmemmann's understanding of canon law.

The second theologian who had an impact upon Schmemmann's ecclesiology and liturgical theology is Cyprian Kern. Besides the friendship between these two theologians certain technical theological aspects will be engaged: Kern's openness to the contemporary challenges of theology and their impact on Schmemmann's way of understanding the theological rationale of Orthodox ecclesiology, and Kern's concern with pastoral care in the Church and its impression on how Schmemmann consequently analysed the role of the clergy in the Church and for the world. Kern's patristic theology will be engaged within his theology of the Church and canon law.

Georges Florovsky's personality and theology will be the last influence considered. I will introduce his life context and afterward I will analyse his view on contemporary theology and its impact on Schmemmann's further theological development. This initiative will focus mainly on Florovsky's historical theology. Florovsky's neo-patristic theology will be analysed in its facets that directly had an impact on Schmemmann's way of considering the role of the liturgy in the life of the Church and the dialectics between theology and liturgy. After that I will focus on Florovsky's ecclesiology and on the sway that Florovsky's rather systematic ecclesiology had on Schmemmann's more pastoral view of the Church.

This chapter will not be an exhaustive presentation of all the influences that Schmemmann received in his life and theology, but just an instrument used

to describe Schmemmann's ecclesiology and his understanding of the crisis within the Orthodox Church.

### **Nicolas Afanasiev's Influence on Alexander Schmemmann's Theology**

Nicolas Nikolayevich Afanasiev, the elder of the two children of Nikolai Grigoryevic Afanasiev and Praskovja Jakovlevna, was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1893 in Odessa in Russia. At the age of 27 he became a priest and teacher. He attended courses at the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade and graduated from the faculty in October 1925.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of November of the same year, he married Mariamna Nikolaevna Andrusova in Prague. In the autumn of 1930, he was invited to Paris by the Orthodox Theological Institute of St Sergius to give lectures on the "Source of Canon Law".<sup>149</sup> Meanwhile, he was assistant to Professor Basil Zenkovsky, who headed the department of Religious Pedagogy at the Institute.

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<sup>149</sup> St Sergius Institute was the meeting point of different theological tendencies represented by streams of theologians. Ivana Noble exemplifies such cases, bringing on scene the four personalities who influenced Schmemmann the most and ascribing to each of them the cultural context from which they emerged: "At the St. Sergius Institute different theological orientations present in pre-revolutionary Russia came together. Especially the first dean, Sergei Bulgakov, who also headed the dogmatic theology department, brought an interest in sophiology. His attempt to transpose tradition to the new key of Russian religious philosophy was complemented by the professor of patristics, George Florovsky, who brought to the institute not only interest in the works and lives of the Church Fathers, but also an attempt to reflect on their relevance for new times and situations. There was also Cyprian Kern, professor of patristics and liturgy, and Nikolai Afanasiev, professor of canon law. From the beginning of the twentieth century Kern had been following the renewal of the liturgical movement in the Roman Catholic Church and he showed how closely it was linked to the Orthodox renewal movement. Afanasiev also drew on the legacy of the Slavophiles, especially on Khomiakov's ecclesiology. He insisted that the Church is not in the first place a legal institution whose life is to be determined by laws analogous to those of other institutions. Such an approach would go against the demand for a new life in Christ, which is indeed also organised in the Church by canons, but which cannot be dominated by any other power than the 'power of love.' Afanasiev sought to show that an overly strict jurisdictional and institutional understanding of the Church comes from a failure to grasp its deeper sacramental-liturgical roots. On the basis of this he then built his own Eucharistic ecclesiology." I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 176.

From 1932 onwards he was entrusted with the entire course on Canon Law, as well as a part of the New Testament Greek course.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1940, Metropolitan Evlogy ordained him priest. Less than a year later, during the winter of 1940–41, he had to quit Paris along with his family in southern France. In July 1941, a new charge was entrusted to him: Bishop Vladimir, sent him to Tunisia, where he was put in charge of a large parish of about 2000 Russian families, spread out over a large area. As a pastor he was not content with the mere celebration of the liturgy but was also involved in charitable activities among the large population of the area regardless of their religion. This pastoral mission in Tunisia lasted till 1947 and pushed him to acknowledge the necessity of a realistic Orthodox ecclesiology.

Back in Paris during the same year, he again began to lecture at St Sergius. Soon he would present his *opus magnum*, *The Church of the Holy Ghost* as a doctoral thesis at the Institute. In the autumn of the same year, he was promoted to the grade of ordinary professor of Canon Law. With the departure of Schmemmann for New York in 1951 and the death of Professor A. V. Kartachov in 1960, Afanasiev found himself entrusted with the additional charge of teaching Church history. It was probably somewhere in this moment that he felt the discrepancy between the sadness of the Orthodox historical dwelling in the world and Christian eschatological idealism. He was also an active player in "Rencontres du Saulchoir" and "Semaine liturgique de Saint-Serge" and most of his theological contributions in the 1950s were occasioned by these colloquia. His ecumenical engagement was of pioneering relevance which lasts to our day.

During the last year of his life, he lived a moment of great joy. It came at the close of the 4<sup>th</sup> session of the Second Vatican Council where he was invited as a guest of the Secretariat for Unity. To his great joy, he saw some of his seminal ideas influence the conciliar deliberations and the resulting

constitution on the Church. An "ardent Apostle of unity", he had then the privilege of witnessing the lifting of excommunication between Catholic and Orthodox churches on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 1965. Even if such an ecumenical involvement is not yet by far "absorbed" among Orthodox theologians, Afanasiev's ecumenical witness is still a genuine Christian attitude towards a desirable ecclesiological unity. Exactly a month after this event, Afanassieff fell ill and died on Sunday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1966.<sup>150</sup>

### **General Biographical Remarks**

First of all I would mention that several general characteristics present in Afanasiev's case are suitable also for Kern and Florovsky. They concern the Orthodox contextual theology in its Russian émigré framework within Western society.

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<sup>150</sup> This is the *In Memoriam* note that Alexander Schmemmann wrote in *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, 4(1966), p. 209: "With the passing away of Father Nicholas Afanasiev, one of the last members of the old St. Sergius faculty leaves the theological battlefield. Born in 1893 in Odessa, he, as so many of his friends and colleagues, came to theology only after the Russian Revolution of 1917. In 1925 he graduated from the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade, where he worked under the guidance of the well-known Russian Church historian A. P. Dobroklonsky. After five years of teaching at the Serbian Orthodox Seminary in Skopje he joined in 1930 the faculty of St. Sergius as professor of Canon Law, and, with an interruption during World War II, he remained there till his death. Father Nicholas leaves no heavy volumes. His *opus magnum*, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, in which, in 1948, he received his doctoral degree, remains unpublished. He was at his best in short and scholarly essays, a collection of which, I hope, will soon appear in English. In some ways Fr. Nicholas was a man of one idea, or, it may be better to say, *one vision*. It is this vision that he described and communicated in what appeared sometimes as "dry" and technical discussions. A careful reader, however, never failed to detect behind this appearance a hidden fire, a truly consuming love for the Church. For it was the Church that stood at the centre of that vision, and Fr. Afanasiev, when his message is understood and deciphered, will remain for future generations a genuine renovator of ecclesiology. This ecclesiological teaching and the questions it raises deserve a full size study, for which there is no room here. But as I write this, on the day of his funeral, and remember years of friendship, communion in theological interests, sharp debates sometimes, I want to express again that gratitude which I have had to feel and express so many times in these last years -- as we lost one after another our teachers of that unique and glorious generation, the gratitude for having known Fr. Afanasiev and shared his friendship and been given so much by him."

Afanasiev is part of the next generation after the Slavophile movement, both through his formation as a theologian and through the theology he practiced. The same things are to be said about Cyprian Kern and Georges Florovsky, even if the latter sharply criticised that movement. Among the Slavophiles who influenced Afanasiev, I would mention the personalities of Kireyevsky and Khomiakov, a fact emphasised recently in the latest and most relevant study on *The Ways of the Orthodox Theology in the West*:

Cyprian Kern (1899-1960), who taught liturgy and patristics, and Nikolai Afanasiev (1893-1966), who taught Church history and canon law, contributed to a new concept of Eucharistic ecclesiology, which linked the insights of Kireyevsky and Khomiakov in a more organic way with the liturgy and canonical concepts of the Church.<sup>151</sup>

The history that formed around the Russian Orthodox community in France and the problem of its canonically and legally belonging to Moscow or Constantinople, caused among Russian theologians in France a specific type of questioning of the life of the Church and this also happened to Afanasiev. Being aware of the embarrassing and endless canonical and legal controversy of his diocese, Afanasiev took refuge in the formal theology.<sup>152</sup> But this retreat

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<sup>151</sup> Ivana Noble, Katerina Bauerova, Tim Noble, Parush Parushev, *The Ways of the Orthodox Theology in the West*, p. 212. Ivana Noble explains this influence, calling for a deeper evaluation of the relationship between the Slavophile movement and Russian émigré theology: "we can see that the Slavophile movement did not die out with the ideology of pan-Slavism. Khomiakov's notion of *sobornost* partly found its new expression through Fr. Afanasiev's eucharistic ecclesiology and then Fr. Schmemmann's liturgical ecclesiology. Nevertheless, in my view, Khomiakov's mystical anthropology and ecclesiology combining mutual love and freedom, as well as Kirijevsky's notion of integral knowledge bringing together the scientific approaches with the reasons of heart still await being more deeply valued." I. Noble, "The Future of the Orthodox Diaspora", p. 453.

<sup>152</sup> Katerina Bauer provides us with some general characteristics of the clash between the conflictual jurisdictional life of the Orthodox Church in diaspora and the search for clearness, unity and continuity (even if at a personal level) among Orthodox theologians belonging to the Russian émigré. See K. Bauer, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 274-275.

was not marked by an escape from reality, but by addressing it in terms of theological science within its own strict historical context.<sup>153</sup>

The empirical reality of the Orthodox Church in France made up by the faithful of Russian origin, led Afanasiev to consider as relative the character of universality of the Church and to direct his attention to the specific reality of a diocese, of a local/territorial church.<sup>154</sup> The historical, cultural and spiritual settings of the assembly of the faithful in Paris gathered in order to celebrate the sacrament of the Eucharist, raised a series of questions and concerns in the mind and soul of the young Afanasiev. One could estimate that the vast discrepancy between the official theology of the Church and its practical implementation, also created frustration in Afanasiev's thought. The major goals of the Slavophiles speaking of unity, freedom and love in the Church were not present in practice among the Russian community in Paris.

All the conflicts between different jurisdictions, the difference between Orthodox theology presented in the catechism or in the sermons of that time and the theology located in the patristic and biblical texts, awoke in Afanasiev's consciousness the necessity to seek viable solutions.<sup>155</sup> The

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<sup>153</sup> He says: "A historian, a church historian in particular, does not live outside of time. If his work is for the Church he must serve the Church." N. Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, p. 7. Commenting on the many-sided context of the Orthodox diaspora in the West Ivana Noble called for changing of the perception of diaspora according to its inner tensioned evolution. See I. Noble, "The Future of the Orthodox Diaspora", p. 479.

<sup>154</sup> I find it proper to use Afanasiev's terminology on which I shall give more explanations in footnotes. Here I would just like to mention the difference of meaning between empiric and experiential. This difference one finds in Afanasiev's theology and I use it also to keep the meaningful idea. *Empiric* means for Afanasiev the "Church's factual life" in *The Church which presides in love*, p. 65. We can give some examples of its use: "Cyprian may have thought that the mere empirical unity of a number of local churches could not be properly guaranteed." *idem*, p. 59; "For this reason 'Catholic Church', empirically speaking, means the same thing to Cyprian as 'Ecumenical Church' – the Church on earth at a given time." *idem*, p. 61.

<sup>155</sup> Solutions are still in the process of being expressed, assimilated and applied. Ivana Noble indicates some possibilities of dealing with the Orthodox juridical discrepancies, possibilities that were somehow viewed also by Afanasiev and Kern. See I. Noble, "The Future of the Orthodox Diaspora", p. 495.



academic rigor of the Paris school led him to seek for advantage in scientific arguments for his opinion.

Concerning the religious experience of the Russian emigration, we should conjure up the relationship between the Church and the world (society). The two world wars, the Russian revolution of 1917, the major changes brought by the industrial revolution which began in the eighteenth century in Western Europe, all these events reshaped in the minds and in the hearts of the people at that time the relationship between world and God, between world and Church and between mother-Church and Church-abroad. Dialogue with "the other" was settled and Afanasiev took an active part in it. Afanasiev was aware that Church had to say something in the dialogue with modernity, both in terms of its own guilt and responsibility concerning this dialogue.<sup>156</sup>

### **Afanasiev's Experiential Method**

Let us now enter directly into Afanasiev's theology. Afanasiev established an ecclesiology grounded on the Eucharist, maintaining the importance of the quantitative character over the qualitative. Scholars generally underscored this aspect in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>157</sup>

For Afanasiev there are two fundamental principles in eucharistic ecclesiology, like two axioms in mathematics, which he regards as granted: 1) The Church exists only locally, embodied in a local community that has a

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<sup>156</sup> He concludes: "We live in an extremely difficult time. If one wished to indict our ecclesial life there would be no chance for an acquittal. Indeed everyone is guilty. History knows the periods when the disorganization of ecclesial life was no worse than in our time." N. Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, p. 7. Ivana Noble traced the major contours of the encounter between the Russian émigré and their newly established home within the cultural context of post-modernity. See Ivana Noble, "The Future of the Orthodox Diaspora", p. 498. Underlying the problematic Orthodox ecclesial system practiced in the West she takes also the example of the Orthodox Church in America in order to propose pertinent solutions. See idem, p. 499.

<sup>157</sup> A. Nichols, *Theology in the Russian Diaspora*, Cambridge University Press, NY, 1989, p. 164.

geographical/territorial identity, 2) the local church is ontologically defined solely by reference to the sacrament of the Eucharist.<sup>158</sup>

For Afanasiev, experience is the main part of a fundamental methodological process in the development of his theology. He finds his thought on his own experience and similarly on the experience of the Fathers of the Church, which he interprets from patristic texts. Tracing his ancestors' steps, for Afanasiev, meant to look and to learn from history from theology and from the empirical life of the church.<sup>159</sup>

A noteworthy aspect one could remark on is the experiential method and practicality of the theological conclusions drawn by Afanasiev: the basic image of the Church is given by the Sunday assembly of the faithful for liturgy, around the sacrament of the Eucharist. In his article "The Church which presides in love," Afanasiev starts with an analysis of the reality of the twentieth century church to conclude that the early church did not work according to the same principles. Therefore he seeks to justify his conclusions with historical notes and practical information related to that period of Church history. According to Afanasiev, the analysis of a real current situation should be made by comparing it to an empirical reality found in the history of the Church.

Returning to the ontological link between the local church and the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist, one could note that Afanasiev is firmly persuaded about the fundamental character of this dynamic: "Every 'local' church is the Church of God in Christ, for Christ dwells in His Body in the congregation at the Eucharist, and the faithful become members of His Body by virtue of communicating in the Body of Christ."<sup>160</sup> According to the

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<sup>158</sup> N. Afanasiev, *The Church which presides in love*, p. 58.

<sup>159</sup> N. Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit* (the French edition, 1975), p 13.

<sup>160</sup> N. Afanasiev, *The Church which presides in love*, p. 75.

Russian theologian, the ultimate presence of Christ in the Eucharistic Body and Blood determines ontologically the fullness of the local church.

Also related to the method used by Afanasiev, one should specify the biblical and patristic texts which are taken into consideration: in the New Testament he focuses on I Corinthians 11, 12 and among the Christian authors he examines Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyon, Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, Justin the Martyr, Clement Pope of Rome. His trend is to seek and identify the two axioms mentioned above both in the biblical and patristic texts. This made him determined to be very selective in the choice of these texts and in their interpretation.

### **Different Traditions of the Understanding of the Mystery of the Church**

There are three distinct periods identified by Afanasiev used for interpreting the dialectic Church–Eucharist: 1) the apostolic period (first century), 2) the early church (second to fourth century) and 3) the Church after the council of Nicaea. Later we will see that similar historical periodization will be found in Schmemmann's liturgical theology. Afanasiev's preference is the first period and some authors of the second, especially Ignatius of Antioch. Afanasiev rediscovers the vision of the apostolic Church and takes it as a starting point of view of his ecclesiology.

He states that if the Church is to recover that most authentic ground all external forms that were added in the historical evolution of the Church must be removed.<sup>161</sup> While professor of Canon Law, Afanasiev did not seek

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<sup>161</sup> N. Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 255-256. Commenting on Schmemmann's similar choice to grant normative the same patristic period for understanding the Orthodox tradition, Ivana Noble stated: "For Alexander Schmemmann Orthodox theology cannot have any other source of renewal than the creative patristic synthesis. He echoes Florovsky in saying that the spirit, the categories and the methods of the Fathers cannot be replaced by others, be they neo-scholastic or modern. According to Schmemmann, people of every time and culture need to be taught in the spirit of Christian Hellenism, in which texture the Christian existence is permanently captured. This permanent reference point is still further specified. For

confirmation or theological support in this field for his thesis on eucharistic ecclesiology, precisely because Canon Law is a part of the historical influences that entered in the eternal nature of the church.<sup>162</sup>

### **The Holy Spirit as the Giver of the Fullness of Life to the Church**

The twentieth century is the period of the rediscovery of the "presence" and of the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Afanasiev engaged ecclesiology through the prism of Christology and Pneumatology. This means that for him, the Church was the assembly of the faithful in Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit. According to him, there was no opposition between these two theological perceptions, but a perfect synergy: the Church is the Body of Christ which lives by the grace of the Holy Spirit.<sup>163</sup>

According to Afanasiev, the Church has a strong charismatic fundamental aspect. The charismatic nature of the Church has two characteristics: 1) At baptism, every Christian receives the grace of the Holy Spirit, becoming a new man in Christ, becoming king, priest and prophet of

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Schemmann primarily the Church Fathers of the second- and third-centuries, in whom we find the symbolic understanding of reality in a more complex form, are contemporary in every time. They are not to be adapted, but we are to adapt to be able to enter into their experience. What is so attractive in their response to their experience, Schemmann makes masterfully clear, is that they offer a holistic participatory way of understanding, a non-dualist anthropology in relation to the world, the church and the Kingdom of God, and as such, they offer an alternative to those theologies which had separated the divinely marked parts of life, such as sacraments, as a supernatural – other-worldly – reality, and thus in effect secularised and impoverished the rest of reality. Schemmann sees their holistic vision as rooted in liturgy where, according to him, all our existence is included into the 'all embracing vision of life'. I. Noble, "History Tied Down by the Normativity of Tradition? Inversion of Perspective in Orthodox Theology: Challenges and Problems" in *The Spirit of Tradition: Context and Normativity*, Colby Dickinson (ed.), Peeters, Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA, 2013, pp. 283-296, p. 288.

<sup>162</sup> He states: "In the course of the history, law penetrated ecclesial life and gradually became its organizing principle. External factors belonging to the "former age" found their way into the Church, which was the beginning of the 'last days'. Law belongs to the 'former age' and is alien to the Church. ... Once established in the Church ecclesiastical law was created, based upon Roman law. The ecclesial consciousness approximated the ecclesiastical canon (*kanon*) to civil law (*nomos*)." N. Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, p. 257.

<sup>163</sup> *idem.*, pp. 1-2.

God.<sup>164</sup> The relationship between the Church and each of its members is fundamentally linked to receiving the charisma of the royal priesthood<sup>165</sup> fully manifested in the eucharistic assembly of a community.<sup>166</sup> 2) Once inside the church community, some faithful are called to serve the community in special ways, particularly as deacons, priests or bishops. These people receive a special grace that helps them to fulfill their call.<sup>167</sup>

The role of the Holy Spirit and the charismatic ministry of the faithful in the liturgical community will be amply developed by Schmemmann in his sacramentality of the world, an issue to be studied in the fourth chapter.

### **The Christocentric Character of the Church Assembly**

For Afanasiev the church assembly is the meeting point between Christ, the institution of the Church and the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Eucharist forms and enlivens the Church whilst the Church celebrates the Eucharist.<sup>168</sup> Through this sacrament, she becomes the Body of Christ. The nature of the Church is by definition eucharistic; that is, it is defined and determined by the sacrament of the Eucharist itself.<sup>169</sup>

In this church assembly the people become fully brothers in Christ. Afanasiev insists on the lack of any ontological differences among those who assemble in order to become Church.<sup>170</sup> He highlights the fact that this absence

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<sup>164</sup> N. Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, p. 3.

<sup>165</sup> He concludes: "The idea concerning the royal priesthood of the members of the Church stems from the teaching about the Church. idem., p. 13.

<sup>166</sup> He remarks: "The priestly ministry of all members of the Church finds expression in the Eucharistic assembly. idem., p. 4.

<sup>167</sup> He considers: "The gifts of the Spirit are given not for their own sake but for ministry in the Church and for its building up. The Spirit in the Church is a principle not of anarchy but of organization. idem., p. 5.

<sup>168</sup> I acknowledged that this expression is far more appropriate to the Orthodox theological way of expression than the expression "the Church is the Eucharist."

<sup>169</sup> N. Afanasiev, "Una Sancta" in *Irénikon*, p. 452-453.

<sup>170</sup> He states: "The diversity of ministries does not disrupt the unity of nature of the Church's members. Their ontological unity with each other stems from their unity 'in Christ'. All

does not involve uniformity, but the uniqueness of everyone in Christ for the sake of the communion.<sup>171</sup> Precisely because of this uniqueness and because every person in this assembly keeps a relationship with God, Christians receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. One can feel some kind of ecclesiastical frustration in Afanasiev's insistence on the equality of the members of the Church, irritations due to the cruel reality of the behavior of the Russian Orthodox hierarchy. Schmemmann, in his turn, will comment on similar issues under the form of critics against clericalism.

### **The Canonical Consciousness**

Afanasiev's vision of Canon law, which, as I have already pointed out, not always corresponded with his eucharistic ecclesiology, also influenced Schmemmann.

In his article "Canons and Canonical Consciousness", Afanasiev shows his critical view about the present situation concerning the daily attitude of the Orthodox faithful to the canons. Doing this, he uses the term consciousness, canonical consciousness. It seems that he likes this term because it has a spiritual and apophatic aspect. The similar idea of consciousness will appear largely in Schmemmann's ecclesiological perception of the world. The same must be stated about the use of the term structure of the Church.

Afanasiev is aware of the mutation/evolution of this consciousness in history. For him this mutation is a deviation from the given rule which said the canons should have their unchanging foundation in doctrinal truth and not in

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members possess the same nature, for they all have one and the same Spirit. "There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit ... (1 Cor. 12, 4). No one by his nature should put himself above the others in the Church – even less above the Church – or pretend to speak for the Church in a special manner." N. Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, p. 15.

<sup>171</sup> He underlines: "The diversity of ministries stems from 'the organic' nature of the Church. Each of its members occupies in it his own position and place, proper to him alone." Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, p. 15. He says: "Each one is set apart for the ministry of the royal priesthood, but they all minister as priests to God the Father, all together, for only in the Church is there a priesthood. idem., p. 12.

their historical formulation. The church structure, being defined by canons and determining her life, is placed by Afanasiev in the center of his elaboration. Afanasiev's reasoning is quite simple: while the forms of Church life are changeable, being determined by historical, cultural, political and mostly ecclesial conditions, the doctrine of the Church is the same once and for all. The canons are in the middle: "Canonical structure is only the external expression of the dogmatic teaching about the Church. This teaching is that changeless, timeless nucleus which lies, or must lie, as the foundation of all Church structure."<sup>172</sup> And yet the accomplishment of the nature of the Church may evolve, may get fuller than the former ones under new historical circumstances. The boundaries of the dogmatic teaching about the Church are still the same, but they should leave space for such evolutions because "no form of Church life adequately expresses the fullness of the dogmatic teaching, and is only a relative approach to it under a given historical situation."<sup>173</sup>

### **Eucharistic Ecclesiology as a Critique of the Radicalized Church**

Afanasiev did not agree with clericalism and proved scientifically his opinion and Schmemmann fought against it for a pastoral concern. The basic characteristic of Afanasiev's ecclesiology concerning the relationship between the charismata received by the faithful in the Church and their fulfillment for the glory of God and for the good of the people is one of the topics we can easily trace in Schmemmann.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> N. Afanasiev, "Canons and Canonical Consciousness", p. 2.

<sup>173</sup> N. Afanasiev, "Canons and Canonical Consciousness", p. 3.

<sup>174</sup> Ivana Noble criticised Schmemmann's theological commitment to eschatology underlying some of the inconsistencies which emerged from his use of that category in relation to the evolutive and living tradition in the Orthodox perspective. She said: "[I]n Schmemmann the eschatological becomes in fact finite, particularised. As such it strengthens his reification of tradition as an unaltered, permanent reference point, and stands at odds with his dynamic and relational cosmological-eschatological view of sacramentality. The eschatological reading of tradition remains an important contribution to Orthodox theology after Schmemmann, and yet, precisely here, some further problems need to be renegotiated. Can eschatology be perceived as

Generally speaking, Afanasiev's theological contribution is that he brings attention to the study of early church history and especially the ecclesiology of this period.<sup>175</sup> It is worth mentioning that this contribution emerged within the academic dialogue that he led with contemporary theologians, his Orthodox theology being thus brought up to date. Undoubtedly, placing the sacrament of the Eucharist in the center of his ecclesiological theology, as being the ultimate goal of the Christian experience and also the main way to acquire this experience, is a positive and fundamental feature of Afanasiev's theology.<sup>176</sup> Schmemmann considered him as "the most radical, consistent and therefore controversial exponent of such an ecclesiology".<sup>177</sup>

### **Cyprian Kern's Impact on Alexander Schmemmann's Theology**

Another influence on Schmemmann's liturgical theology comes from his spiritual father and professor at the Orthodox Theological Institute of Saint Serge in Paris, Father Cyprian Kern.<sup>178</sup> His impact on Schmemmann will be

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'closed'? And does not the plurality of the Scriptural and traditional testimonies teach us still more about the need to apply here a better balance between the apophatic and the kataphatic way of knowing?" I. Noble, "History Tied Down by the Normativity of Tradition? Inversion of Perspective in Orthodox Theology: Challenges and Problems", p. 289.

<sup>175</sup> An aspect mentioned also by Michel Stavrou in his article "L'ecclésiologie eucharistique comme moteur de la mission dans le monde du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle", in *The International Symposium of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, Arad, 6-8 June 2007, Accents and perspectives of orthodox dogmatic theology as part of church mission in today's world*, Arad, 2007, p. 281.

<sup>176</sup> L. Bouyer, *L'Eglise de Dieu*, p. 174.

<sup>177</sup> A. Schmemmann, *Russian Theology*, p. 181.

<sup>178</sup> This relationship was outstandingly revealed by Job Getcha in his study "Du maître au disciple: la notion de 'théologie liturgique' chez les pères Cyprien Kern et Alexandre Schmemmann", in *La joie du Royaume, Actes du colloque international L'héritage du père Alexandre Schmemmann, Paris, 11-14 décembre 2008*, YMCA-Press, Paris, 2012, 131-147. In his paper, Getcha underlines mainly the liturgical aspects of the theology that Schmemmann inherited from Kern. This article constitutes a source of paramount importance for retrieving Cyprian Kern's impact on Alexander Schmemmann. Another source would be the *In Memoriam* note that Alexander Schmemmann published in *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, 1(1960), p. 50: "Son of a Russian scientist, he was born in 1900 and received his education at the famous Alexander Lyceum in St. Petersburg. Leaving Russia after the Revolution he graduated from the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade took his monastic vows and in 1927 began teaching at the



analysed in the light of their similar life-experience and the emergence of the consciousness of the crisis within the Orthodox Church.<sup>179</sup>

Cyprian Kern was born Constantine Eduardovich on May 11, 1899 in St. Petersburg, Russia. In 1917, he left Russia during the Bolshevik revolution, traveling to Belgrade, Serbia where he settled and worked as a lawyer. Turning to theology to continue his education, Constantine entered and graduated from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology at the University of Belgrade.

After his graduation he took monastic vows in 1927, receiving the name Cyprian, and began teaching at the seminary in Bitola, then in Yugoslavia. Long before his Paris period, while still living in Serbia, the 28-year-old Hieromonk Cyprian was appointed by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) and the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia to be the Chief of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem journal of Cyprian Kern (approximately 300 meticulously handwritten pages) was recently discovered, which now bear witness to the inner life of the man in his youth, but also brings testimony concerning the "Russian Palestine" of the British Mandate period. The life of the Mission and Russian monasteries, along with the Jewish-Palestinian conflict of the time is recorded, as well as the many contacts with British authorities and correspondence with the Russian diaspora. Finally, the journal

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Seminary of Bitolje. In 1928 Metropolitan Antony Khrapovitzky made him Archimandrite and appointed head of the Russian Mission in Jerusalem. In 1937 he joined the faculty of St. Sergius, first as Professor of Liturgics, and then since 1940 as Professor of Patristics. His major works are: *Flowers of Prayer (Essays in Liturgical Theology)* (1928), *Archimandrite Antonine Kapoustine, Head of the Russian Mission in Jerusalem* (1936), *The Eucharist* (1947), *Anthropology of St Gregory Palamas* (1950), *Orthodox Pastoral Ministry* (1957). In the last years he organised and inspired the "St. Sergius Liturgical Conferences", which became very popular among leading Christian liturgiologists. Father Cyprian was an excellent lecturer, a genuine Christian scholar. To this writer, as well as to a whole generation of St. Sergius students, he was also a dear personal friend. He gave much to us, but of a special, of an eternal significance will remain his deeply inspiring lectures in Liturgics, the way he led us to the understanding of the Eucharist. His death is a great loss for Orthodox theology."

<sup>179</sup> Concerning the theological context when Kern and Schmemmann lived, Job Getcha remarked the differences between the two theologians. See J. Getcha, "Du maître au disciple", p. 144.

reveals the development of Cyprian himself, about whom little had been known from this period of his life.

A sad thing happened in France beginning about the 1920s. The Russian ecclesiastical emigration broke into three warring parties: the Paris Jurisdiction (under Metropolitan Evlogy), the Russian Church Abroad (under Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky), and the Moscow Patriarchate (which recognised Metropolitan, later Patriarch, Sergey). The Paris Jurisdiction tended to be populated by liberal intelligentsia; the Russian Church Abroad tended to be made up of monarchists, conservatives, and monastics; the Moscow Patriarchate tended to be made up of a small group of intellectuals who considered faithfulness to the suffering Church in Russia more important than the fact of its forced collaboration with the new regime (e.g., Lossky, Ouspensky, and the St Photius Brotherhood). The theological currents of the pre-Revolutionary Russian Orthodox Church were divided among these three warring jurisdictions.<sup>180</sup> This situation pushed Kern to withdraw from the political life of the Orthodox Church and to seek refuge, as Afanasiev did also, in academic theology and its spiritual implementation.

In 1931, Cyprian Kern returned to Serbia and remained there until

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<sup>180</sup> Ivana Noble takes the case of the Orthodox Church in America in order to explain different approaches of the jurisdictional, political and social parts among the Russian diaspora: "The non-canonical existence of parallel jurisdictions in the West has been motivated both politically and ethnically. ... Metropolitans Evlogy in Western Europe and Platon in the United States, who also wished to protect the Russian Orthodox emigrants from the reach of a church forced into loyalty to the Communist regime, had no desire to participate in re-establishing tsarist autocracy. In their view tsarism was at least partly responsible for the social and political collapse of Russia. After complicated negotiations the Metropolitanate based in Paris moved under the patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Metropolitanate in the United States proclaimed independence and struggled for autocephaly, which was reached in 1970. There were also those who felt bound to faithfulness to the Moscow Patriarchate, who, while distancing themselves from the pro-communist proclamations of their mother church, had no wish to leave the church in a time of need, and for whom political reasons were not a sufficient justification for such a decision." I. Noble, "The Future of the Orthodox Diaspora", p. 482. She also considers that Kern's experience with ROCOR and his sojourn in Jerusalem made him determined to decide for a more "canonical" diocese under the Constantinople Patriarchate rather the politically engaged diocese of ROCOR.

1936, when he was asked to join the St. Sergius Theological Institute in Paris. In 1937, he joined the faculty of St. Sergius, first as Professor of Liturgics, and then, in 1940, as Professor of Patristics. While teaching at the institute, Kern served as the rector at the Church of Ss. Constantine and Helen in Clamart, near Paris. During the 1940s, Georges Florovsky succeeded Kern as Professor of Patristics.

His involvement in the "Liturgical week" at St Sergius Institute is worth noting, showing him to be one of the Orthodox scholars who understood the necessity of mutual rediscovery of the role of the liturgical life in the Church. The same is to be acknowledged about his comprehension of mystical theology and the Roman-Catholic academic rekindling concerning that theology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cyprian Kern died on February 11, 1960 in Clamart, France.

### **Kern's Academic Activity and its Resonance in Schmemmann's Theology**

Cyprian Kern represents a continuation with the Russian historical school. In his analyses, he uses the historical critical method, exploiting also the philological and comparative approaches. Kern considers that liturgical theology constitutes a science, having pedagogical and didactical usefulness for the faithful as aims. He also underlines the necessity of the acquisition of liturgical knowledge among the students involved in theological research.

One thing that turned out to be decisive in influencing Schmemmann is Kern's concern with the bond between liturgical theology and patristic studies.<sup>181</sup> Even if Kern does not speak explicitly about the theological crisis

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<sup>181</sup> Marcus Plested said: "Other notable scholars of the Russian Orthodox diaspora to contribute to the extraordinary Palamite renaissance of the twentieth century include Archbishop Basil Krivocheine and Archimandrite Cyprian Kern." M. Plested, "Gregory Palamas" in *Willey Blackwell Companion to Patristic*, Ken Parry (ed.), John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, 2015, pp. 293-306, p. 301. Kern had a special role in Schmemmann's formation as a scholar due to his paradoxical genuine and coherent interest both in patristics and liturgics. Ivana Noble enumerates several aspects of such a positive combination while exposing her criticism of the one-sidedness of the neo-patristic synthesis. She calls for "understanding also the good things

generated by the rupture between patristic theology and liturgical theology, nevertheless he acknowledges the inevitability of a reassessment of their relation in the light of a mutual and organic interdependence.<sup>182</sup> He sketched what we may call today liturgical hermeneutics. According to Kern, explaining the ritual theologically and its rationale provides an authentic source of knowledge of God. This initiative must have an ecclesial course.<sup>183</sup>

From the beginning of his interest in liturgical theology, Kern stated the necessity of a systematic approach for this newly founded theological science.<sup>184</sup> The result of this systematisation would be, according to Kern, a strict delimitation of the Orthodox understanding of liturgical theology from similar Western approaches.<sup>185</sup> A similar sharp delimitation between Western and Eastern theological approaches will be argued for Schmemmann as well.

The rediscovery of the liturgical wealth hidden in a liturgical text can open new ways of comprehending the world in its complexity. On this matter Kern had intuitions that his pupil Schmemmann, developed further in the genius sacramentality of the world. It is also worth noting that Kern used the Eucharist as a much higher ecclesial aim than any jurisdictional belonging.<sup>186</sup>

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that the neo-patristic turn brought, beginning with the attention given to the actual detailed study of the Church Fathers, which in fact gave antidotes to uniformity. There the synthesis was counter-balanced with paradox, affirmation with the apophatic way towards the mystery of God. The orientation towards liturgy and especially towards the Eucharistic celebration gave foundations to a non-legalistic, communion-based and eschatological ecclesiology and liturgical spirituality. Historical perspective was complemented by an eschatological one." I. Noble, "The Future of the Orthodox Diaspora", p. 494.

<sup>182</sup> C. Kern, *Litourguika. Guimnografīa i guertologuia*, Moscou, 2000, p. 8, quoted in Getcha, "Du maître au disciple", p. 133. It is worth noting the link Kern realises between Church and liturgical texts speaking of *ecclesiastic poetry*, an issue that will come again when speaking about Schmemmann's way of writing theology.

<sup>183</sup> C. Kern, *Kriny molitvennye*, 5-6, quoted in Getcha, "Du maître au disciple", pp. 135-136. The smooth way used by Kern to introduce the eschatological liturgical presence of the Kingdom of God is remarkable. Also, the experiential connotation of Kern's statement is worthy of attention.

<sup>184</sup> C. Kern, *Kriny molitvennye. Sbornik statei po litourguitcheskou bogoslovii*, Moscou, 2002, p.4, quoted in Job Getcha, "Du maître au disciple ...", p. 136.

<sup>185</sup> *idem.*, p. 137.

<sup>186</sup> C. Kern, *Litourguika*, p. 10, quoted in Getcha, "Du maître au disciple", p. 137.

### **The Eucharist: Kern's Christocentric Ecclesiology**

Once he had spelled out the methodology of liturgical theology, Kern arrived at its core, i.e. the Eucharist. For Kern, the liturgical understanding of the Eucharist has existential and experiential connotations.<sup>187</sup> The Eucharist, following liturgical theology, according to Kern, constitutes the source of one's life and theological understanding.<sup>188</sup> In his book *The Eucharist*, Kern states that theology which is not founded on the sacrament of the Eucharist will be imperfect.<sup>189</sup> He also underscores in this book the danger of an individualistic approach to the Eucharist, a view which would be taken over by Schmemmann and which would become a central critical point of his understanding of the Eucharist. Kern says:

If in our time Eucharistic life is weakened to the point that we have almost completely lost the proper Eucharistic consciousness, and regard the Divine Liturgy being celebrated in our churches as just one of the ceremonies ... then in the times of genuine ecclesiastical life it was not so. The Eucharist was the basis and culmination of all liturgical life. But gradually everything that was concentrated around the Eucharist as the centre of liturgical life – the Sacraments, prayers, orders of service ... where turned in the consciousness of Christians into private rites, became the private business of each individual person or family, having (apparently) nothing to do with the concept of the gathered community.<sup>190</sup>

When in 1959 Schmemmann defended his doctoral thesis at the Orthodox Theological Institute Saint Serge, in Paris, he dedicated his study to Father

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<sup>187</sup> C. Kern, *Vospominania o mitropolite Antonii (Khrapovitskom) i episkope Gavriile (Tchepoure)*, Moscou, 2002, pp. 175-176, quoted in Getcha, "Du maître au disciple", p. 137.

<sup>188</sup> C. Kern, *The Orthodox Pastoral Service*, [http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral\\_theology\\_k\\_kern\\_e.htm#\\_Toc107881576](http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral_theology_k_kern_e.htm#_Toc107881576) (24.08.2015).

<sup>189</sup> C. Kern, *Evkharistia*, Paris, 1947, pp. 25-27, quoted in Getcha, "Du maître au disciple", p. 143.

<sup>190</sup> C. Kern, *Evkharistia*, Paris, 1947, p. 25, cited by A. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, Maine, American Orthodox Press, 1966, p. 27.

Cyprian Kern. The two were emigrants, both sharing a love of liturgical celebration and a pastoral concern for the faithful. Cyprian Kern led Alexander Schmemmann to become one of the major voices of the liturgical renewal in the Orthodox Church. Kern urged the renewal of frequent communion. Again, it is something which, as we will see, influenced Schmemmann, who gave Kern's insights a more systematic place in his own eucharistic ecclesiology and an ecclesial cosmology.<sup>191</sup> Eucharist for Schmemmann joined the two together. Frequent communion strengthens our participation in both the Church and the cosmos.<sup>192</sup>

Even if Kern's impact on Schmemmann's liturgical theology is obvious, yet Schmemmann's view of the monastic liturgical influence remains totally strange with regard to Kern's own "position" as monk and spiritual father of Schmemmann.<sup>193</sup> Similar things could be said about Schmemmann's understanding of mystical theology and Kern's quite opposite perception of this matter.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> C. Kern, *The Orthodox Pastoral Service*, [http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral\\_theology\\_k\\_kern\\_e.htm#\\_Toc107881576](http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral_theology_k_kern_e.htm#_Toc107881576) (24.08.2015).

<sup>192</sup> Speaking of the late Father Cyprian Kern, Schmemmann confessed a kind of "eucharisticity" he inherited from his spiritual father. A. Schmemmann, "In memoriam: o. Kiprian Kern" (in Russian), in *Le Messager de l'Action Chrétienne des Etudiants Russes*, 56(1960), p. 50, quoted in Getcha, "Du maître au disciple", p. 145. Kern perceived the centrality of the pastoral ministry within the sacrament of Eucharist. See C. Kern, *The Orthodox Pastoral Service*, [http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral\\_theology\\_k\\_kern\\_e.htm#\\_Toc107881576](http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral_theology_k_kern_e.htm#_Toc107881576) (24.08.2015).

<sup>193</sup> Delimiting the role of the monasteries in preserving and handling the genuine Orthodox liturgical ethos, Kern pointed out the paramount importance of the monastic liturgical witness. C. Kern, *Kriny molitvennye*, p. 4, quoted in Getcha, "Du maître au disciple", p. 135.

<sup>194</sup> Commenting on Kern's anthropological theology in regard to Palamas' teaching of divine energies, Alexander Negrov quotes from Kern's "The Anthropology of St Gregory Palamas" stating that "in the Orthodox tradition, it is argued that mystical understanding can offer a valid knowledge of God and things divine, because it apprehends God's mysteries about Himself, the world, the beginning and the end of everything – in short, about the things which remain out of reach for the learned theologian. A mystical type of anthropological construction, then 'furnishes the Church with (an additional) awareness *about* the world and man.'" A. I. Negrov, *Biblical Interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2008, p. 140. We shall consider Schmemmann's position on the matter in chapter three. For the time being is worth noting Ivana Noble's statement concerning the tension between liturgical renewal and

## **Kern's Pastoral Theology and Its Impact on Schmemmann's Theological Thought**

Kern had a major influence on Schmemmann through his pastoral theology. Being Schmemmann's confessor, he managed to initiate in his pupil's heart a commitment to the Church's wealth from a pastoral point of view. This emerged from the practical necessity of the Russian flock led by Kern and from Schmemmann's interest in worship as a student studying to become a priest.<sup>195</sup>

Kern distinguished between two approaches to the pastoral ministry: the Levitical and the Prophetic. Whereas the Levitical was missing the point of being creative and thus became bent to become conventional and formal, the Prophetic approach followed the example of Christ's ministry.<sup>196</sup> Kern opted for the second, the prophetic approach, which he saw as better grounded

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its possible and wishful mystical application, a statement issued in relation to Florovsky's and Meyendorff's commitment to the neo-patristic academic synthesis. She said: "liturgical spirituality pushed away hesychast spirituality." I. Noble, "The Future of the Orthodox Diaspora", p. 452.

<sup>195</sup> Introducing Kern's study about pastoral commitment in the Orthodox Church from a biblical point of view, Michael Plekon mentioned some of the major features of Kern's life-course and legacy: "Father Cyprian Kern was one of the founders, along with Fr Nicolas Afanasiev, of the Fraternity of St Seraphim of Sarov, an association of Russian émigré students devoted to the church. ... The rest of his life was given to teaching and pastoral work in Serbia, in Jerusalem with the Russian Mission, and at Mother Maria Skobtsova's hostel in Rue Lourmel. ... He was a teacher of important figures in the next generation, including Frs. Boris Bobrinskoy, Alexander Schmemmann and John Meyendorff. Father Kern's study *The Eucharist* was formative for Fr Schmemmann's development of liturgical theology and liturgical renewal. Father Kern's adherence to the tradition, along with his ability to criticise its decline, are both in evidence in the following selection. The accommodated, theologically impoverished models of pastoral behaviour and service in the Russian church are sharply contrasted with the biblical models of the pastor and disciple." M. Plekon, *Tradition Alive: On the Church and the Christian Life in Our Time, Readings from the Eastern Church*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, MD, 2003, p. 107.

<sup>196</sup> Kern, "Two Models of the Pastorate: Levitical and Prophetic" in M. Plekon (ed.), *idem.*, pp. 107-123, p. 110.

biblically.<sup>197</sup> These two pastoral styles are defined psychologically and spiritually rather than institutionally.

From the beginning of his presentation, Kern outlined the problems of modern pastoral care. Shifting positions between the two above mentioned types among Christian priests formed the history of pastoral care in the Church. Giving good examples, Kern attacks that kind of pastorate which obscures the original kerygma of Christianity, introducing us to the matter of the pastoral crisis within the Orthodox Church.<sup>198</sup> His view is further developed through the negative example of what he calls "Talmudism", the current that shows how "a true submission to the Spirit, in spirit and in truth is distorted into a dead, formalistic service, in a performance of rites and an obsession with rubrical detail."<sup>199</sup> This methodological deviation is, according to Kern, the cause of another abnormality that defines the contemporary Orthodox perception of the Christian life: the confusion between what is eternal, divinely instituted and what is perennial, linked to temporal, cultural, political or social manifestations of life.<sup>200</sup> As one would expect from a person engaged fully in the pastoral work of the Church throughout her liturgical life, Kern points to the Christian cult as one of the places that is contaminated with the disease of formalism.<sup>201</sup>

All these inadequacies existing in the Church are linked, according to Kern, to the issue of the historical dwelling of Christianity in the world.

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<sup>197</sup> M. Plekon, "Relativism and Fundamentalism" in *Between Relativism and Fundamentalism*, Peter L. Berger (ed.), Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 2010, pp. 181-208, pp. 194-195.

<sup>198</sup> C. Kern, "Two Types of Pastorate: Levitical and Prophetic", p. 112. Kern's utterance resonates strikingly with Pope Francis' call for a renewed post-modern Christian approach to early Christian poverty.

<sup>199</sup> *idem.*, p. 113.

<sup>200</sup> C. Kern, "Two Types of Pastorate: Levitical and Prophetic", p. 113.

<sup>201</sup> He argues: "There had been always pastors and laity who would seek their salvation in form, in the letter, in petty prescriptions of the *Ustav*, a manual prescribing minute details of liturgical rites, fasting, etc. developed in monasteries, whether this related to fasting, prayer, or to something else. There was always the desire to replace the essence of the Good News, to shackle the spirit, to elevate sacrifice over mercy, to strain at the gnat of the *Ustav*, and swallow the camel." C. Kern, "Two Types of Pastorate: Levitical and Prophetic", p. 114.



History means evolution and evolution implies better and worse periods. People are tempted to rely on better periods and deny the worse. The Church has not escaped this tendency and the aftermaths of this attitude were already seen in the contemporary life of the Church.<sup>202</sup> Trying to reach a synthesis between accepting and criticizing the past and living in the present with a full consciousness of the task of fulfilling the end, Kern states:

Everything that is being described is by no means, and not even in a small measure, an attack on the holiness of tradition and the legacy from the past, since Christianity is a living reality and not something doctrinaire or bureaucratic. But it is alive only in the Church, only where grace and heritage from the past abide. Without a loyalty to the past, Christianity is incomplete. Thus, by the way, it must be pointed out that the desire to turn back to absolute primitive Christianity, to toss aside the century-old and living experience of the Church is unsavoury and essentially incorrect. "Back to Christ" means to turn away the whole of the Church's tradition. This would be a dissipation of all the riches in the Church's treasure house: those mystical and ascetic experiences, liturgical theology, iconography, etc. In other words, it would be an impoverishment or a rejection of Christianity. The Church and her life do not reflect only primitive Christianity, no matter how tempting it may be for us. That life reflects the fullness of the total experience of humanity of God, in all the ages. Yet the rejection of every approach to that tradition and experience, which is Talmudic or formalistic, is in no way a contradiction of, or irreverence toward, that love and loyalty toward the Church's tradition and experience.<sup>203</sup>

This quotation needs some attention because it contains several elements that will reappear in Schmemmann's theology almost word for word. First of all the very problematic affirmation that the tradition is alive only in the Church without mentioning that it is not about the institution with its historical,

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<sup>202</sup> C. Kern, *The Orthodox Pastoral Service*, [http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral\\_theology\\_k\\_kern\\_e.htm#\\_Toc107881576](http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral_theology_k_kern_e.htm#_Toc107881576) (24.08.2015).

<sup>203</sup> C. Kern, "Two Types of Pastorate: Levitical and Prophetic", p. 114.

cultural, social and political boundaries, but it is about the community gathered in the name of Jesus Christ under the auspices of the Holy Spirit, opening thus the door for ecumenical encounters and avoiding confessional reductionism. Then it would be the positive issue of experience, which in Schmemmann's thought will become widely developed with a strong emphasis on its liturgical manifestation. One can find in Schmemmann's theology a tendency to recall to the mind theological the first four centuries of Christianity for the sake of a kind of golden age of the Church, something that would contradict Kern's understanding of the wholeness of the Christian message.

Kern illustrates his view by giving examples that illustrate his pastoral approach to theology.<sup>204</sup> These paradigms allow him to discern the image of the prophetic pastorate in the Church for the world, conveying his vision towards the ideal Christian minister who "is a bearer of the creative spirit who does not hesitate along the path of his pastoral activity, always hungers and thirsts for communion with the Source of righteousness, sensitive to everything that takes place in the world, not compromising with the deeply rooted evil and falsehood no matter by what authorities of this world they may be sanctioned."<sup>205</sup> Kern establishes links between the prophets of the Old Covenant and the prophetic role of Christian priests, elucidating hence the prophetic relevance of all Christians, an issue underdeveloped by Schmemmann. Kern does not speak overtly about the sacramentality of the world, but he definitely has this perspective in mind.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> C. Kern, "Two Types of Pastorate: Levitical and Prophetic", p. 116.

<sup>205</sup> *idem.*, p. 117.

<sup>206</sup> He says: "The prophet of the old preached the idea of moral renewal and an internal rebirth and condemned social evil and the injustices of the powerful, stirring his people and priests awake. He was an uncompromising guardian of truth. Must not the New Testament prophet and priest be no less than that? Has he not been called to carry out his service toward the mystical transfiguration of the world." *idem.*, p. 117. After scrutinizing Schmemmann's sacramentality of the world, we shall ask rhetorically if he did not hear Kern's questions and why did he not relate his spiritual father's call mainly to the theology of liberation rather than criticizing it.

Mentioning indirectly the sacramentality of the world leads Kern's argument to the liturgical life of the Church. On this battlefield the meeting between the Church and the world is full of tension, is a question of death and life.<sup>207</sup> His final call and warning is worth quoting in full for its actuality:

But first of all, do not dampen within yourself that religious pastoral inspiration. Go forward following the steps of the prophets and the apostles. Do not fear that youthful fire burning in them. Do not quench it. Do not be tempted to cuddle up to the traditional comforts. Do not fall for aesthetics at the cost of spirituality. Do not be afraid, being inspired by the fervent Spirit, not to appear as a contemporary type. Be utopian. Be a fool. Don't be tempted by the comforts of the mediocre spiritual bourgeoisie.<sup>208</sup>

Unlike Kern, Schmemmann did not develop a systematic pastoral theology, but his life and academic activity were profoundly engaged with pastoral care within the Orthodox Church.

### **Becoming a Priest: Kern's Pastoral Vision**

There is a problem in Kern's pastoral theology, which by the way is in direct contradiction with Afanasiev's approach to the issue and which does not appear in Schmemmann's view. It seems that Kern overemphasises the phenomenological and institutional character of the priesthood of the clergy over the priesthood of all Christians received "ontologically" through Baptism while Afanasiev definitely put emphasis on the priesthood of all Christians.<sup>209</sup> Otherwise he proposes a deeply spiritual commitment of the priest to his ministry, a fact that will often be pointed out by Schmemmann in regard to the crisis of the behaviour of the contemporary Orthodox clergy.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> idem., p. 119.

<sup>208</sup> C. Kern, "Two Types of Pastorate: Levitical and Prophetic", p. 120.

<sup>209</sup> C. Kern, *The Orthodox Pastoral Service*,

[http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral\\_theology\\_k\\_kern\\_e.htm#\\_Toc107881576](http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral_theology_k_kern_e.htm#_Toc107881576) (24.08.2015).

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*

Dealing with the necessity of the priest to be prepared to serve the Church for the life of the world, Kern becomes open to the positive influence of Western civilization towards such a ministerial requirement and suggests a similar approach among his Orthodox fellows.<sup>211</sup> But this does not mean that he is completely open to any kind of guidance coming from West. Like many of the Russian theologians living in the West, he condemns the scholastic approach to theology, even if this term and the Orthodox way of using it remain mostly ambiguous, non-arguable and unfounded.<sup>212</sup> Some other remarks concerning the Protestant and Catholic approaches to the ordination of a person to the priestly ministry are examples of the Orthodox understanding of the Western ministry.<sup>213</sup> Such comments show that Orthodox theology in the time of Kern and we can say in our time also, was not prepared to engage the theological views of other confessions in a proper, charitable and fair way. Even his almost positive interpretations of the Catholic ritual vis-à-vis the Orthodox cannot do justice to the complex reality of the Western liturgical and pastoral tradition. Some other critics of the Protestant pastoral tradition are really unacceptable in view of the emergence in Kern's time of Protestant monastic communities in Germany and Switzerland.<sup>214</sup> Kern's position against Western church life is characteristic of Orthodox theology of the middle 20<sup>th</sup> century and it is reproachable because it did not initiate a better evolution of Orthodox theology, not to speak about a deeper and stronger unity among Christians. Some of Kern's final observations are self-accusatory instead of

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<sup>211</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> C. Kern, *The Orthodox Pastoral Service*,  
[http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral\\_theology\\_k\\_kern\\_e.htm#\\_Toc107881576](http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral_theology_k_kern_e.htm#_Toc107881576) (24.08.2015).

<sup>214</sup> C. Kern, *The Orthodox Pastoral Service*,  
[http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral\\_theology\\_k\\_kern\\_e.htm#\\_Toc107881576](http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral_theology_k_kern_e.htm#_Toc107881576) (24.08.2015).

critical of the Western pastorate.<sup>215</sup> It was not only that in the Orthodox Church the service of the biblical word was underdeveloped in Kern's time, but also patristic studies, readings and influence were extremely feeble.<sup>216</sup> Unfortunately for the Orthodox Church, many wrong apologetic tendencies saw the light of day and developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in an anti-Western prejudgement. As we shall see, Schmemmann did not escape this trend.

Several remarks made by Kern concerning the social appearance of the clergy are suggestive for the state of the Orthodox presence in the world and for the crisis undergone in the Church.<sup>217</sup> He does not indicate specific cases, but the fact he gave such advice comes beyond any doubt from the reality of that time. Another point of flagrant misunderstanding of the Orthodox pastoral service in concrete cases is Kern's perception of the sacrament of confession. According to him this liturgical act is predominantly individual and legalist. Discerning the role of the spiritual father he states: "Speaking of the method of confession, it is necessary to recall that confession is an individual sacrament and each penitent is unique, while each confessor can have his personal methods, and therefore there is no possibility of giving any monotonous and exemplary prescriptions, concerning how to confess."<sup>218</sup>

Kern's pastoral theology is ambivalent. It is so because he lived in a period of great changes in the society of his time and because he belonged to a world in deep transition. The Russian émigré "belonged" both to the memory of the Russia they had to leave and to the West where they had to settle down. They longed to go back home and they had to accept the opportunities and the possibilities of the new world in which they had arrived after the October

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<sup>215</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> Kern, *The Orthodox Pastoral Service*,

[http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral\\_theology\\_k\\_kern\\_e.htm#\\_Toc107881576](http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral_theology_k_kern_e.htm#_Toc107881576) (24.08.2015).

Revolution. Kern would like to have seen the priest fitting into the world and serving it and in the meantime to escape the temptations of the world.<sup>219</sup> Therefore his pastoral theology is cosmic and sacramental, having emerged in order to help Orthodox priests to serve the world and transform it through the presence of the Church amidst it and through the divine grace present in the sacraments.

The world, as the unit, hostile to God and to that which is good, is a sphere lying in the evil, but the world as the empirical creation is not at all evil by itself. Man, even if fallen, nevertheless is the image of God: "I am the image of Thine inexpressible glory, even though I bear the scars of transgressions." In the depths of the human soul, there can be whirlpools of sin, but man nevertheless remains the dear creation of God, which the pastor cannot but love, as he cannot but love the world — the empirical creation.<sup>220</sup>

While Schmemmann's ecclesiology is heavily indebted to that of Kern, he went a step further with his ecclesiology rooted in the sacramentality of the world and moved on with the presentation of the mediating role of the Church between God and world.

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<sup>219</sup> C. Kern, *The Orthodox Pastoral Service*, [http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral\\_theology\\_k\\_kern\\_e.htm#\\_Toc107881576](http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/pastoral_theology_k_kern_e.htm#_Toc107881576) (24.08.2015).

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.* A. Schmemmann will definitely retain this idea of the ontological goodness of the world and of the phenomenological tendency to become evil when falling apart from God.

## Georges Florovsky's Impact on Alexander Schmemmann's Theology

Georges Florovsky's relationship with Alexander Schmemmann was complicated and complex.<sup>221</sup> Therefore Florovsky's impact on Schmemmann is hard to retrieve. For my argument's sake, it is important to understand Florovsky's reading of the crisis within the Orthodox Church and his theological way of dealing with it.<sup>222</sup> Also his ecclesiology is to be counted among those influences on Schmemmann. As in the case of the other two Orthodox theologians discussed above, Florovsky's life context is similar to Schmemmann's, therefore their life experience is taken into account when dealing with their theological thought.<sup>223</sup>

Georges Vasilievich Florovsky was born in Odessa, Ukraine on September 9, 1893 as the fourth child of an Orthodox priest. Raised in an erudite environment, he learned English, German, French, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew while a schoolboy, and at eighteen he started to study philosophy and

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<sup>221</sup> For a detailed and marvellous account of Florovsky's life context, intellectual evolution and engagement in the life of the Orthodox Church, including many common elements with those found in Schmemmann's life context survey, see A. Blane (ed.), *Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual and Orthodox Churchman*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1993.

<sup>222</sup> Paul Gavriilyuk remarked: "Along with many of his European contemporaries, Florovsky shared a keen sense of living through a time of crisis. This sense would not leave him in the postwar years." P. L. Gavriilyuk, "Florovsky's Neopatristic Synthesis and the Future Ways of Orthodox Theology" in *Orthodox Construction of the West*, George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (eds.), Fordham University Press, NY, 2013, p. 105. He includes in the footnote Florovsky's statement: "We are in the stage of crisis, of critical transition, of desperate search." G. Florovsky, "Review of Matthew Spinka's *Christian Thought from Erasmus to Berdiaev*," in *Church History*, 31(1962), pp. 459-478, p. 470.

<sup>223</sup> Commenting on Florovsky's life impact on his ecclesiology, George H. Williams said: "Quite probably also Florovsky's personal history – the severing of relationship with the Orthodox Church of his fatherland, the partial shift in America from the Russian-speaking context of his Orthodox life, and his long exposure to a Protestant (when not a secular) environment in his later academic appointments – tended, in the bleakness of ecclesial isolation, to intensify his stress on the collectivity of *sobornost*. But he has contended that his conception of catholicity had little any longer in common with that 'naturalistic or counterfeit catholicity,' the Slavophile *sobornost*. He came, indeed, to dislike the very word, although he himself had formerly intoned it frequently even in non-Russian writings." G. H. Williams, "The Neo-Patristic Synthesis of George Florovsky", in *Georges Florovsky – Russian Intellectual-Orthodox Churchman*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1993, pp. 293-294.

history. Beginning in 1911 he studied at the University of Odessa from which he graduated in 1916. After his graduation with a university diploma and first class honours, he taught for three years at high schools in Odessa, and later following further studies graduated with the master's degree which carried with it the *licensia docendi* which qualified him to teach at the university level. In 1919 Florovsky began to teach at the University of Odessa; but in 1920 his family was forced to leave Russia. Florovsky realised at that time that there would be no return for him, because the Russian authorities did not accept the history and philosophy he taught.

In the 1920s Florovsky had a personal and vocational friendship with the existentialist philosopher Nicolas Berdyaev, but the two became estranged later through Berdyaev's not understanding Florovsky's ordination to the priesthood (1932), and because of the critical attitude to Berdyaev's philosophy of religion expressed in Florovsky's *Ways of Russian Theology* (1937). This breach was a kind of "personal" divorce between philosophy and history.

In 1924 Florovsky received his M.A. in Prague. In 1925 he became professor of patristics at the St. Sergius Institute of Orthodox Theology in Paris. In this subject he found his vocation. The lively debates of the thinkers of the early Church became for him a benchmark for Christian theology and exegesis, as well as a base for his critique of the ecumenical movement. Despite his not having earned an academic degree in theology (he was later awarded several honorary degrees) he would spend the rest of his life teaching at theological institutions. In 1932 Florovsky was ordained as a priest of the Orthodox Church. During the 1930s he undertook extensive research in European libraries and published in Russian some valuable patristic studies, such as his book on *Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century* (1931) and *The Byzantine Fathers Fifth to Eighth Centuries* (1933). These were followed by his magnum opus, *Ways of Russian Theology* (1937). In this work he



questioned the Western-European Christian influences of scholasticism, pietism, and idealism on Orthodoxy especially Russian Christian theology, and called for its reformulation in the light of patristic writings. Florovsky remained professor of patristics at the Institute until 1939, and from 1939 to 1948 taught there as professor of dogmatics.

In 1949 Florovsky moved to the United States of America, to take a position as Dean of Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York City. There his development of the curriculum led to the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York granting the Seminary an Absolute Charter in 1953.<sup>224</sup>

In 1955 Florovsky was asked by his synod overseers to lay down the deanship. He became a professor of divinity at Harvard University, and ended his academic years as a professor at Princeton University. He died on August 11, 1979.

### **Florovsky's Understanding of the Crisis within the Orthodox Church**

The most important "sign" of a crisis within the Orthodox Church in Florovsky's theology is his call for the "return to the Fathers" and the need for Orthodox theology to escape its "Babylonian captivity" to Western theology in terms of its language, its presuppositions, and its thinking.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Commenting on that period in the history of St Vladimir's Seminary, Ivana Noble links chronologically Florovsky's legacy and attempts with Schmemmann's taking over the leadership of that institution. See I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 225-226.

<sup>225</sup> This call was addressed in 1936 in Athens and it was presented in a German paper: G. Florovsky, "Westliche Einflüsse in der russischen Theologie", in *Procès-Verbaux du Premier Congrès de Théologie Orthodoxe à Athènes, 29 novembre-6 décembre 1936*, Ham. S. Alivisatos (ed.), Athenes: Pysos, 1939, pp. 212-231. Concerning the term "Babylonian captivity", I consider that this definition retained rather the idea of captivity with all its negative implications and aftermaths than the positive consequences of that period in Israel's history. Regarding the lecture in itself, Tim and Ivana Noble remarked critically Florovsky's problematic statements: "when Florovsky gave the lecture in Athens in 1936 he did not intend to make any exclusive claims for Hellenism as the only vehicle for carrying forward Christianity, at least not if Hellenism is understood in a narrowly nationalistic way." Ivana

20<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox theology was deeply marked by the desire among the majority of Orthodox theologians to relate more than ever on the patristic sources of their theological heritage. Florovsky is considered one of the main promoters of this movement because of his attempt to construct a neo-patristic synthesis.<sup>226</sup> The best way to understand this patristic synthesis would be to look at it through its contextual generative process.<sup>227</sup>

Today it is evident that Florovsky's negative approach to the Western influence on Orthodoxy and his idea of the "Babylonian captivity" were in fact misleading, because it was not a captivity but just an unnecessary game of hide and seek. Schmemmann discerned this aspect, but he kept on criticising the bad Western influence on Orthodox theology:

Orthodox theology must keep its patristic foundations, but it must also go "beyond" the Fathers if it is to respond to a new situation created by centuries of philosophical development. And in this new synthesis or reconstruction,

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Noble & Tim Noble, "A Latin Appropriation of Christian Hellenism: Florovsky's Marginal Note to *Patristics and Modern Theology* and Its Possible Addressee" in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 3(2012), pp. 269-287, p. 287. The Greek theologian Pantelis Kalaitzidis pertinently stated that: "What is beyond doubt, however, is the fact that both the Russian theology of the Diaspora and other theological movements for renewal in other Orthodox countries flourished and developed in an environment of dialogue with the West, and not in an environment of zealotry and Orthodox introversion. And so, as strange or even scandalous as it may seem to some, it was the meeting and dialogue with the West that led to the renaissance of Orthodox theology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and to its release from its "Babylonian captivity" to western scholastic and pietistic theology." P. Kalaitzidis, "From the 'Return to the Fathers' to the Need for a Modern Orthodox Theology", p. 23.

<sup>226</sup> For a better survey of this movement see the synthetic analysis of the subject in Paul Ladouceur's article "Treasures New and Old: Landmarks of Orthodox Neopatristic Synthesis", in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 2(2012), pp. 191-227. Ivana Noble explains how Florovsky's synthesis is at stake when it comes to make it work theologically. See I. Noble, "Tradition and Innovation: Introduction to the Theme" in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 1(2015), pp. 7-15, pp. 14-15. She also relates three major Orthodox Russian theologians (Florovsky, Schmemmann and Meyendorff) with a special historical period seen as most relevant for being normative for the neo-patristic synthesis: "while all defended the concept of the living tradition, each of them arrived at it by slightly different trajectories. Each used slightly different names for the living tradition as normative for any genuine renewal of Orthodox theology: Christian Hellenism, the Greek Fathers of the second- and the third-centuries of Byzantine theology." I. Noble, "History Tied Down by the Normativity of Tradition? Inversion of Perspective in Orthodox Theology: Challenges and Problems" p. 284.

<sup>227</sup> P. Kalaitzidis, "From the 'Return to the Fathers' to the Need for a Modern Orthodox Theology", pp. 11-12.

the western philosophical tradition (source and mother of the Russian "religious philosophy of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) rather than the Hellenistic, must supply theology with its conceptual framework. An attempt is thus made to "transpose" theology into a new "key", and this transposition is considered as the specific task and vocation of Russian theology.<sup>228</sup>

When Florovsky speaks about the crisis within Orthodox theology, he frequently uses the appellative "ecclesiastical consciousness", implying a certain self-perception of the Church according to different historical periods.<sup>229</sup> It is noteworthy to mention the elements which appear in Florovsky's depiction of the tension between the Church's life and her academic way of being because they will reappear again in Schmemmann's elaboration of a similar issue: theological experience *versus* academic experience, Western theological research *versus* Eastern life foundations, academic verbal *versus* liturgical language. Florovsky's appeal was supposed to

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<sup>228</sup> A. Schmemmann, "Russian Theology: 1920-1972. An Introductory Survey" in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 16(1972), pp. 172-94, p. 178. Ivana Noble integrates Florovsky's neopatristic synthesis back into the dialogue with the Slavophiles, stating similar requirements as Schmemmann: "In order to keep the tradition as living and not reified, Florovsky's way forward to the roots needed to include innovation into the very requirement of tradition. With this change, pseudomorphosis of tradition would include either ignoring tradition and replacing it with other views, or ignoring this very requirement of the tradition to remain alive. His concept of re-hellenisation, when unpacked, was surprisingly less problematic than his notion of catholic transfiguration. While the re-hellenisation did not contribute to building a negative identity against the West, a question remains as to what degree it was used against the Slavic spiritual tradition as praised by the Slavophiles or the Sophiologists. Catholic transfiguration is, in my view, more vulnerable to what Kalaitzidis calls mythologisation of tradition. Its de-particularisation of Christian Hellenism allowed for owning it at a meta-level as a kind of essence of Orthodoxy." I. Noble, "History Tied Down by the Normativity of Tradition? Inversion of Perspective in Orthodox Theology: Challenges and Problems" pp. 294-295. Similar ideas can be found in Ivana & Tim Noble, "A non-synthetic dialect between the Christian East and West: A starting point for renewal of communication" in *Kommunikation ist möglich: Theologische, ökumenische und interreligiöse Lernprozesse*, Matthias Grunewald Verlag (ed.), Finken & Bumiller, Stuttgart, 2013, pp. 273-281.

<sup>229</sup> He says: "The very institution of the schools was a definite sign of progress. However, this transfer of the Latin school onto Russian soil marked a rupture in ecclesiastical consciousness, a rupture between theological 'scholarship' and ecclesiastical experience. ... Prayers were still said in Slavonic, but theology was now studied in Latin. ... Theology was constructed along western lines." G. Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, Paris, 1937, p. 101, cited by A. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 10.

be a step forward in generating modern Orthodox theology and allowing Orthodox theology to become close to the post-modern world, but this evolution was problematic and it still needs study and feedback.<sup>230</sup> What it did change however, was the pedagogical approach of Orthodox Theology in St Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, as pointed out by Schmemmann:

The Western captivity of Orthodox theology has been vigorously denounced by the best theologians of the last hundred years and there exists today a significant movement aimed to the rediscovery by our theology of its own genuine perspective and method. The return to the Fathers, to the liturgical and spiritual tradition which were virtually ignored by the 'theology of manuals' is beginning to bear fruit.<sup>231</sup>

Florovsky wrote about the discrepancy between Orthodox theological teaching and the Orthodox theological way of celebrating the faith in term of *pseudomorphosis*, but he did not settle any further details of this process which could help us to discern a coherent view regarding the crisis within the Orthodox Church.<sup>232</sup> Establishing the tension between liturgy and theology at an educational level granted Florovsky authority to engage this crisis of the Orthodox system of theological formation. The inadequacy of such an initiative comes in Florovsky's case from failing to remind his readers that the meeting between the "Romanizing spirit" of Western theology and the Greek or Slavic

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<sup>230</sup> The argumentation of this statement can be found in the genius article published by Pantelis Kalaitzidis, "From the 'Return to the Fathers' to the Need for a Modern Orthodox Theology" in *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 1(2010), pp. 5-36.

<sup>231</sup> A. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY 1998.

<sup>232</sup> He says: "The first theological schools in Russia, in the seventeenth century, were Latin by language and rather Romanizing in spirit – Aquinas and Cardinal Bellarmine were for a time regarded as one supreme authority. Later on came a sudden change and for the whole of the eighteenth century the theological teaching in Russian seminaries and academies was based on Protestant authorities ... It was an abnormal "pseudomorphosis" of the Orthodox theology. But we have to keep in mind what it is was the school theology that went astray – the worshipping Church kept close to the patristic tradition. A certain tension, divorce and opposition between piety and teaching was the most unhappy outcome of this historical adventure. This tension and divorce were overcome to a great extent in the heroic struggles of the nineteenth century." G. Florovsky, "The Legacy and the Task of Orthodox Theology", in *Anglican Theological Review*, 31(1949), pp. 62-73, p. 68.

way of celebrating was not alien in itself but the problem came from the historical gap existing between two worlds for many centuries due to human reasons, not linked to any objective causes.<sup>233</sup>

Schmemmann fostered the search for an Orthodox identity under the device of a "neo-patristic synthesis", as Florovsky called his theological method. This will be explored in the next two chapters. The main features of this theological system were the existentialist vision of theology and the attempt of de-westernisers of the Orthodox theology. Schmemmann adopted these ideas with some personal changes.<sup>234</sup>

### **Florovsky's Historical Approach to Theology**

In order to continue I will call on Schmemmann's own critical statement concerning Florovsky's legacy and theological thought: "And even if he himself failed to clarify and to explain what he meant by 'neopatristic synthesis' as the goal of the Orthodox theological task; if, in the last analysis, the historian in him seems to have been more articulate than the theologian, his work remains an essential milestone, indeed an inescapable and decisive term of reference for all future developments of Orthodox theology."<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> For a more profound understanding of Florovsky's perception of Latin theology and its relation to Hellenic patristic thought see Ivana Noble & Tim Noble, "A Latin Appropriation of Christian Hellenism: Florovsky's Marginal Note to *Patristics and Modern Theology* and Its Possible Addressee" op. cit. The authors say: "Florovsky does not call for a patriotic war against western theology, not even against western scholasticism as such, but rather against their being allowed to act outside their competence when dominating over Orthodoxy. ... While both Eastern and Western Christians have to follow the inner structure of meaning particular to their tradition, dialogue and cooperation is not only theoretically possible, but present already at the roots of the renewal." p. 275.

<sup>234</sup> I. Noble, "History Tied Down by the Normativity of Tradition? Inversion of Perspective in Orthodox Theology: Challenges and Problems", p. 295.

<sup>235</sup> A. Schmemmann, "In Memoriam Fr. Georges Florovsky," in *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, 23(1979), p. 133. Ivana Noble outlines the general characteristics of the "neo-patristic" synthesis: "One of the biggest achievements of the Orthodox theology in the twentieth-century was rediscovering a creative way to its roots, to the living tradition represented by the Greek Church Fathers of the early centuries and by the Byzantine Fathers. The Orthodox Church in diaspora at that time found itself in a curious position. Leaving behind

Florovsky looked for a regular relation between Orthodox theology and history. The historico-theological crisis was explained by the fact that the classic Orthodox world was for centuries out of "historic" communion with Western culture and with the history of the civilised part of the world in regard to the Ottoman less-civilised rule. He looked for a synthesis where one could properly use the past of the Orthodox world and the future of Orthodox theology.<sup>236</sup> Florovsky's emphasis on experience and on the recapitulation of

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what the neo-patristic theologians called the "Western captivity," in other words dependency on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Catholic and Protestant neo-scholastic theological language and categories, it sought for new and authentic ways of living in the West, and finding its mission amidst Western political cultural, intellectual and spiritual traditions. Theologians of the "neo-patristic synthesis" combined a diligent study of the Fathers with an effort to rehabilitate what they discovered as living and liberating tradition in their own time. In this process they encountered the question of normativity, and while wanting to save the creative and dynamic face of Orthodoxy they found for the next generations, they pleaded for a kind of eschatologically constructed Orthodox identity. This required people to adapt themselves in order to be able to enter into the complex experience and mentality of a designated period, whose achievements were postulated as coming not from history, but from the end times." I. Noble, "History Tied Down by the Normativity of Tradition? Inversion of Perspective in Orthodox Theology: Challenges and Problems" in *The Spirit of Tradition: Context and Normativity*, Colby Dickinson (ed.), Peeters, Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA, 2013, pp. 283-296, pp. 283-284.

<sup>236</sup> He says: "Orthodox theology can recover its independence from western influence only through a spiritual return to its patristic sources and foundations. Returning to the fathers, however, does not mean abandoning the present age, escaping from history, or quitting the field of battle. Patristic experience must not only be preserved, but it must be discovered and brought into life. Independence from the non-Orthodox West need not become estrangement from it. A break with the West would provide no real liberation. Orthodox thought must perceive and suffer the western trials and temptations, and, for its own sake, it cannot afford to avoid and keep silent over them." G. Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, p. II, in *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, vol. 6, pp. 301, 306. Ivana Noble criticises Florovsky's approach to history underlying the inconsistencies generated by Florovsky's lack of real openness towards the normal, historical evolution of the Church in her historical dimension. See I. Noble, "Tradition and Innovation: Introduction to the Theme" in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 1(2015), pp. 7-15, pp. 13-14. Similar critics are stated by Katerina Bauer who puts the Neo-Patristic synthesis in discontinuity with the sophiological disputes, a process that led to the monopoly of that theological trend in Orthodox thought: "At the same time as the sophiological disputes were going on, and to a large extent through people who figured as Bulgakov's opponents, the way forward to the tradition of the Church Fathers was developing as the sole expression of Orthodox theology in modern times. A particular strong expression of this came at the first congress of Orthodox theologians in Athens in 1936. The attempt to overcome the scholastic pseudomorphosis of Orthodox theology would for the next generations be linked with the claim of Neo-Patristic metamorphosis, that is, with the program of a return (even paradoxically a return forward) to the Byzantine mentality, with re-Hellenisation, and

the patristic way of perceiving and living the faith, the radical stress on the complementarity of different types of experience noting time and its historical dimension inside the theological awareness of differences is remarkable. One can observe the existential approach that Florovsky had concerning the return to the theology professed by the Fathers of the Church. He wrote "theological thought gradually digressed from hearing the rhythm of the Church's heart and thereby lost the 'way' to this heart ... to this extent it can be justly characterised as a 'wandering theology'."<sup>237</sup> It is also worth noting the unfortunate distinction between the historical East and West on one side, and the need for complementarity between the theological East and West on the other side.

For Florovsky speaking of Orthodoxy and history means dealing with tradition. When it comes to Tradition, matters become complicated, view the fact that from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards Orthodox theology questioned whether its understanding of this matter was working or not. Florovsky had the intuition to link Tradition with memory, with the human and divine memory. The theological action for bringing alive the human past memory is called anamnesis. The theological action of entreating God's memory to fill the human existence is called epiclesis. Both require the presence and the movement of the Holy Spirit.<sup>238</sup>

Florovsky's emphasis on the historicity of the dogma and of the rite within Christian Orthodox theology led him to acknowledge the importance of the "ecclesial experience". We see thus the move in Florovsky's thought from

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with the acceptance of the Greek Church Fathers not only as a category but as a key to the meaning of Christianity. This program, through the contributions of Florovsky, Alexander Schmemmann, and John Meyendorff emerged as a dominant voice in the ecumenical movement, especially in Faith and Order. The program was part of the basis of the concept behind St Vladimir's Seminary in New York, where most of the Paris Neo-Patristic scholars finally moved." K. Bauer, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 270-271.

<sup>237</sup> G. Florovsky, "Aspects of Church History" in *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, vol. 4, Nordland Publishing Company, Massachusetts, 1975, p. 178.

<sup>238</sup> G. Florovsky, "Patristic Theology and the Ethos of the Orthodox Church", in *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, vol. 4: *Aspects of Church History*, p. 16.

patristic experience to ecclesial experience. Similar steps will be remarked in Schmemmann's ecclesiology. Drawn from his major patristic studies, this idea was not yet developed enough in order to become a chief category of his writings.<sup>239</sup>

Schmemmann borrowed from Florovsky the idea of rites and habits within the framework of Tradition, but he also emphasised the necessity of using them in order to get an Orthodox understanding of human memory. Engaging Florovsky's concern with the letter of the patristic texts in their historical evolution and meaning, Schmemmann reassessed the theological meaning of the texts of the Typicon. At Florovsky's call for a Christocentric approach to theology with a further debate on the Trinity and the Church, Schmemmann searched for a better place for the role and the centrality of the Eucharist. Schmemmann got the historical Christ of his teacher on the altar, bringing the analysis of theology from the classroom into the chamber of the celebrating Church.<sup>240</sup> All these aspects will be analysed in the following chapters.

Florovsky underscored also the importance and the role of cosmology and the creation in Christian theology. These two categories receive a full

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<sup>239</sup> Commenting on this issue, Paul Gavriilyuk stated critically: "For Florovsky, 'ecclesial experience' is a broad category referring to the appropriation of the historical divine revelation by the mind of the Church. Similar to Lossky, Florovsky contrasts ecclesial of catholic (*sobornyi*) experience with the experience of divine reality found in the individualistic forms of Western mysticism. To participate in ecclesial experience is to overcome the subjectivity of private religious experience. ... For Florovsky, ecclesial experience includes a liturgical dimension, a matter that will be developed with great force by Alexander Schmemmann. The 'enchurching' (*votserkovlenie*) of the self is intended to bring about a cognitive transformation necessary to enter into the mind of the Fathers or the "common mind of the Church." P. L. Gavriilyuk, "Florovsky's Neopatristic Synthesis and the Future Ways of Orthodox Theology" in *Orthodox Construction of the West*, George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (eds.), Fordham University Press, NY, 2013, pp. 118-119.

<sup>240</sup> Commenting on Florovsky's Christocentric understanding of Orthodox theology, Paul Gavriilyuk stated: "Florovsky insists that it is by entering into the mystery of Christ first that one can properly survey the rest of the mysteries of faith, including the Trinity and the Church." P. L. Gavriilyuk, "Florovsky's Neopatristic Synthesis and the Future Ways of Orthodox Theology", pp. 119-120.



theological understanding in Florovsky's theology through their meta-historical relevance. In Florovsky's view, history and creation were defined in the polemical tension between the claims of German-Russian Idealism, the Marxist-Bolshevik doctrine and the Christian apprehension with a personal comprehension of these two philosophical categories. As Georges Williams put:

"If Florovsky's concern with a metahistorical judgment of mankind and a universal perfection of humanity in the new creation is to be understood as his Christian counterpart of all utopianism, whether Marxist or Liberal, his doctrine of creation is to be understood not primarily as a doctrine of nature but as a doctrine of historical contingency and the ever renewed possibility of liberation of men from nature and from determinism of every kind, whether predestinarian, dialectical materialist, racist, or progressivist."<sup>241</sup>

Personhood *versus* individualism is Florovsky's device in his struggle for "the collective imagery of the *corpus Christi* in preference to the more individualistic ecclesial image of the *cætus fidelium*."<sup>242</sup> This collective imagery of the Church defined Florovsky's comprehensive, though incomplete, reiteration of his neo-patristic synthesis concerning the world view. Schmemmann recovered this idea and echoed Florovsky's statement when he said that *leitourgia* "meant 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."<sup>243</sup> Schmemmann went even further in his critique of the individualisation of the Christian cult and drew attention to the emergence of clericalism and selfishness of attempting the liturgical services.

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<sup>241</sup> Williams, "The Neo-Patristic Synthesis of George Florovsky", pp. 290-291.

<sup>242</sup> *idem.*, p 293.

<sup>243</sup> A. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, p. 13.

### Florovsky's Approach to the Church-World Tension

In 1955 Georges Florovsky published an article on "Faith and Culture", in which he analyses the contemporary crisis between church and culture, between the Church and the world.<sup>244</sup>

The crisis of the world is seen, in Florovsky's rationale, as emergent from the historical evolution of the changing world. He does not acknowledge a tension between the "organic" way of the manifestation of the world and its "critical" periods, but he rather considers that they act simultaneously.

The next pages of the article deal with the Christian understanding of culture and with several manners of reacting to the tension between the Christian ideal of the Church and the cultural manifestation of her life. He reaches the conclusion that "we need a *theology of culture*", and that this theology must be grounded in the Christian understanding of Creation and Redemption.<sup>245</sup>

In the second part of his paper, Florovsky treats the issue of culture as history, and he analyses the cyclical and linear shapes of history in its cultural acceptance. According to him, "Christianity entered the historical scene as a Society or Community, as a new social order or even a new social dimension, i.e. as the Church. Early Christians had a strong corporate feeling."<sup>246</sup> This Christian corporate dimension entered immediately in conflict with the official social form of existence of the world, i.e. the Roman Empire.<sup>247</sup> This tension

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<sup>244</sup> He states: "We are living in a changed and changing world. This cannot be denied even by those in our midst who may be unwilling to change themselves, who want to linger in the age that is rapidly passing away. But nobody can evade the discomfort of belonging to a world in transition. If we accept the traditional classification of historical epochs into "organic" and "critical", there is no doubt that our present age is a critical one, an age of crisis, an age of unresolved tensions." G. Florovsky, "Faith and Culture" in *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, 1-2(1955-1956), pp. 23-31, p. 29.

<sup>245</sup> *idem.*, p. 37.

<sup>246</sup> *idem.* p. 42.

<sup>247</sup> He states: "Christians did stay in the world and were prepared to perform their daily duties faithfully, but they could not pledge their full allegiance to the *polity* of this world, to the earthly City, for their *citizenship* was elsewhere, i.e. 'in heaven'." *ibid.*

re-enforced the eschatological conscience of the Church and strengthened her consciousness of her sacramental presence in the world:

The Church is here, in "this world", for its salvation. The Church has, as it were, to exhibit in history a new pattern of existence, a new mode of life, that of the "world to come". And for that reason the Church has to oppose and to renounce "this" world. She cannot, so to speak, find a settled place for herself within the limits of this "old world". She is compelled to be "in this world" in permanent opposition, even if she claims but a reformation of renewal of the world.<sup>248</sup>

As an historian, Florovsky underscores the dangers of misunderstanding the true meaning of the presence of the Church in the world, giving two major examples of such a historical distortion of the Church's ontological goal: on one side the Church engages in the monastic way of life, or, in other cases, a sectarian way of life, and on the other side, she engages in the construction of a Christian Empire. Florovsky does not consider any of these cases as being valuable. Similar views will be found in Schmemmann's theological view when it comes to the presence of monastic communities in the Church and outside the world.

The Christian "dealing" with the world means, in Florovsky's understanding, that the Church becomes the source of an eschatological culture which should challenge the world at its foundations in order to transform it into a new spiritual entity ready to welcome the Second Advent of its Creator.<sup>249</sup>

Schmemmann took over Florovsky's vision of the relationship between the world and the Church and granted it with a higher perspective, i.e. the sacramentality of the world. The Church, in Schmemmann's view, is the antinomial gap between the fallen world and the world to come, between the social world and the "society" of the Kingdom of God.

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<sup>248</sup> *idem.* p. 43.

<sup>249</sup> G. Florovsky, "Faith and Culture", p. 44.

Florovsky was one of the first scholars who acknowledged and expressed scientifically the encounter between the Western theological mindset with the Eastern theological vision.<sup>250</sup> He explained this confrontation from a historical point of view, creating a theological field for later theologians to comprehend the transition from an old, historical and antagonist encounter to a new, creative yet tensioned relationship. For Florovsky this event was painful but prolific, allowing Orthodox theologians nevertheless to make their tradition fruitful and renewable.

Florovsky brought his historical understanding of the relationship between theology and the life of the Church into the ecumenical movement where he took an active role and where he sought to sharply define the Orthodox identity.<sup>251</sup> In doing this he engaged the other Christian confessions in sharing in the burdensome task of renewing Orthodox theology and its bond with the liturgy of the Church.

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<sup>250</sup> A major general feature of Florovsky's theology is the search for continuity and wholeness within Orthodox theology. This theoretical stance of Orthodox thinking came into surprising discontinuity with Orthodox practical behaviour. Ivana Noble underlined this quest together with some less positive characteristics of Florovsky's attempt to redirect the shape and the content of modern Orthodox thought. See I. Noble, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, pp. 238-239.

<sup>251</sup> Speaking about Florovsky's project of formulating of neo-patristic synthesis within Orthodox theology with openness toward other theological patristic perspectives, Ivana Noble states: "Florovsky first formulates his project of (neo)patristic synthesis, where creativity is restricted to a creative appropriation of the mind of the Fathers. Florovsky includes into the synthesis primarily the Fathers from the fourth through the eighth centuries, which is both the time when we encounter more elaborate theological systems, but also when the differences between Latin and Byzantine Christianity became more clearly profiled. For Florovsky, this choice does not lead directly to a disregard for Western Christianity. Florovsky himself was an active member of the ecumenical movement. However, his attitudes, which shaped the Orthodox presence in the movement, included a kind of confessional perspectivism, assuming the differences between Christian East and West, Catholicism and Reformation, as key sources for the respective identity-formations. In other words, it was generally accepted that the identities were asserted against the others (even if politely, with a desire to communicate with them and to journey toward unity), against what the particular confessions 'are not.' Thus, the (neo)patristic synthesis was vital for Orthodox identity making." I. Noble, "Tradition and Innovation: Introduction to the Theme" in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 1(2015), pp. 7-15, pp. 9-10.

## Florovsky "Pioneering" Schmemmann's Theology

Summing up Florovsky's influence on Schmemmann and the benefits of that influence on Schmemmann's understanding of the crisis within the Orthodox Church, I would say that Florovsky perceived the crisis on its historical level leading Schmemmann to take up the baton and transfer the historical issue to an eschatological and liturgical meaning and level.<sup>252</sup> Florovsky's concern with history in Tradition and vice-versa pushed Schmemmann to bring dialectic into the Church, in her liturgy. Florovsky saw the solution for the crisis in a theological return to the patristic literature along with its patristic rationale and spirit, opening the road for Schmemmann to perceive the solution in the liturgy and in the liturgical experience of the faithful. Florovsky saw the trouble in the past framework of history and the way the Church dwells in it. This was the thing that enabled Schmemmann to look forward and state the necessity of the eschatological fulfilment of the liturgical life of the Church.<sup>253</sup>

### Summary

In the second chapter we have seen how three major Orthodox theologians, Nicolas Afanasiev, Cyprian Kern and Georges Florovsky,

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<sup>252</sup> For a critical approach to Florovsky's influence on Schmemmann's understanding of the crisis within the Orthodox Church see W. J. Grisbrooke, "An Orthodox Approach to Liturgical Theology: The Work of Alexander Schmemmann" in *Studia Liturgica*, 23(1993), pp. 140-157.

<sup>253</sup> One must acknowledge also the negative aspects remained unsolved during the academic rediscovery of the patristic writings. For example, Ivana Noble utters critically that "we need to say that what has been discovered as the main strength of Orthodoxy by the neo-patristic school became in isolation also its main weakness. The eschatological perspective without the historical one tended towards mythology, the liturgical spirituality without the practical engagement for the poor and marginalised became ungrounded, the mystical theology without reflection of the political use and abuse of Orthodoxy became unreal. In the detailed study of the Fathers, there was a lack of critical awareness of one's own choice of the figures and themes which were included into the synthesis and those which were excluded, more solid work with the patristic interpretation of the Scriptures was often missing, and insufficient attention was given to the less attractive themes in the Church Fathers, such as implicit and explicit anti-Judaism or the demonisation of women. These areas present a challenge for Orthodox theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century both in the East and in the West." I. Noble, "The Future of the Orthodox Diaspora", p. 450. Some of these inconsistencies shadowed Schmemmann's theology too as we shall see in the next two chapters.

influenced Schmemmann's theology. We have observed how the Parisian school marked Schmemmann's ecclesiology and his historical and cultural approach to theology in its main characteristic: the search for a return to its sources, the commitment to rediscover the liturgical, i.e. eucharistic foundations of ecclesiology, the empathy of early ecclesiology with the only genuine and functioning foundation, a critical view on the historical path of Orthodox theology, and finally the cultural approach to theology.

We have spotted how the Russian background of their lives and theological formation patterned their comprehension of belonging to the Orthodox Church. After scrutinizing the basic elements of their systematic theological work, we have realised how the nature and structure of the Church in their liturgical and historical manifestations were perceived according to different cultural, social and political circumstances. This enterprise leads us to wonder why two of them (Afanasiev and Kern) were so nicely opened towards ecumenism and why the third (Florovsky) closed his willingness towards a full commitment to the search for unity among Christians despite his dedication to formal participation in ecumenical encounters.

Due to the fact that Schmemmann has no systematic presentation of his eucharistic ecclesiology, the influence of Afanasiev, Kern and Florovsky was used to gradually introduce elements of that ecclesiology.

We have noted also the formative and opening role of these influences on Schmemmann's understanding of the crisis within the Orthodox Church. If Afanasiev, Kern and Florovsky were pathfinders in the ecclesiological road of Orthodox theology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Schmemmann was nevertheless the one who best acknowledged the dangers along the road. Engaging the ecclesiological features received from his teachers, colleagues and friends, Schmemmann brought new elements to them. If Afanasiev, Kern and Florovsky caught only a glimpse of the crisis within the Orthodox Church, Schmemmann

succeeded in depicting clearly the contours of that crisis in his enterprise of portraying the eucharistic ecclesiology, the liturgical theology and the sacramentality of the world.<sup>254</sup> These elements will be the subject of further discussion.

After having considered these three main Orthodox influences on Schmemmann's theology, I need to recap those others factors which had an impact on him. Some of these influences were Orthodox theologians like Serge Bulgakov, his fellow colleague and friend John Meyendorff, and some were Orthodox institutions and movements such as the Russian Christian Youth Movement (ACER-MJO), and St Dionysius Theological Institute. Some others yet were from other confessional backgrounds such as the Roman-Catholic liturgical movement, Roman-Catholic patristic renewal and the World Council of Churches, an institution in which Schmemmann was involved for many years.

In the next two chapters we will move to Schmemmann's own theological articulation of ecclesiology and sacramental cosmology. While further links to the three formative influences, Afanasiev, Kern and Florovsky will not be included, references to other sources for Schmemmann, or discussion partners, or critics will be mentioned if not in the main text, then at least in the footnotes.

Hence the next step in my analytical work will be to have an inner view of his theology, especially his ecclesiology and his sacramental cosmology.

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<sup>254</sup> I. Noble, "The Future of the Orthodox Diaspora", p. 497. See also P. Galadza, "Restoring the Icon: Reflections on the Reform of Byzantine Worship," in *Worship*, 65(1991), 238-255, p. 253.

### 3. Schmemmann's Hermeneutics of Liturgical Experience

After having considered the main formative influences that shaped Schmemmann's theology, it is time now to look at how he roots ecclesiology in the liturgical celebration of the Church.

Exploring Schmemmann's interpretation of the liturgical experience enables me to deal with his first theological expression of the crisis within the Orthodox Church. For Schmemmann, the liturgical experience is the peak of the worshiping life of the faithful. This experience allows the faithful to live and to basically understand their belonging to the Church, i.e. to her doctrine and her journey to the Kingdom of God. This experience is at stake, is in a state of crisis according to Schmemmann, because it conveys the distortion between the liturgical life of the Church and her doctrinal teaching. This experience has an important role because it is the main bridge between everyday life and the message entrusted in the Gospel. Liturgical experience is the fruit of the sacramental nature of humankind expressed properly. If this experience undergoes a crisis, the life of the faithful is in danger of falling apart from its ultimate goal, i.e. salvation. Therefore Schmemmann's awareness of the crisis within the Orthodox Church takes the liturgical experience as the main vehicle able to convey the solution to that crisis.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Andrew Louth introduces Schmemmann's view on the crisis within the Orthodox Church in regard to the pastoral concern expressed largely in *For the Life of the World*: "The underlying pastoral purpose of liturgical theology for Schmemmann becomes clearer in his next work, the one already mentioned, *For the Life of the World*. Here it becomes apparent that, for Schmemmann, there is a liturgical crisis in the Orthodox world, though the remedy involves less liturgical reform that attention to the deeper themes of the liturgy that have become obscured. For Schmemmann, the Eucharist is about the realization of the presence of the kingdom of God, in which we are invited to participate at the heavenly banquet. This heavenly banquet reveals the purpose of creation: communion with God, sharing his life. This is the goal to which our life is to be directed." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, p. 203. In this book Schmemmann manifests his desire to relate liturgically and sacramentally the emerging crisis in the Orthodox world, the granted salvation in the Christian liturgy and the necessity for the world to perceive and to absorb properly the communion with God mediated by the church. This aspect will be analysed in detail in the fourth chapter.



Schmemmann finds the fulfilment of a life in Christ in the liturgical experience. He locates this experience at a personal/individual level, and from this stage he underlines the communal meaning of the liturgical experience. Schmemmann speaks enthusiastically about the liturgical experience, even when he questions the viability of the contemporary liturgical experience. The aim of this chapter is to ascertain the subject of the liturgical experience, the object of this experience and the inner mechanism of the relation between the liturgical experience, its theological context and the crisis within the Orthodox Church. The subsequent question of this chapter I am going to answer is what forced Schmemmann to speak of the liturgical life of the contemporary Orthodox Church in terms of crisis?<sup>256</sup> When responding, I will ask how Schmemmann's theology works with the concept of experience and its different connotations such as liturgical experience, individual or corporative experience, liturgical piety, and catholic (patristic) experience.

This chapter will target the multiple subjects of Schmemmann's ecclesiology. I mean by this the organism where he arranges different types of experience beginning with his own, the Church's, and those of theologians, Church-goers and liturgical specialists. One of my tasks will be to find out if it is a matter of chaos and a cocktail of subjects, or if there is a systematic meaningful construction that links those subjects. Within this structure there is, according to his acknowledgment, one crisis. There is also, according to basic Christian theology One Lord, i.e. one transcendent "subject" of all those experiences enumerated above. Searching for the order within that configuration and rifling through it in order to grasp Schmemmann's solution for

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<sup>256</sup> He says: "Very few people, I am sure, would deny that the Orthodox Church is in a state of crisis; yet very few also are those, it seems to me, who realize that at the bottom of this crisis, as one of its main sources, lies the double crisis of theology and liturgy. ... A theology alienated from the Church, and a Church alienated from theology; such is the first dimension of today's crisis." Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", in *Church, World, Mission*, pp. 129-146, pp. 129-130.

the crisis within the Orthodox Church will constitute another task I take for this chapter.

Some other questions will be asked: why he did not perceive this experience along with other human emotional, instinctive or intellectual manifestations that form the wholeness of human life? Why in Schmemmann's view is the liturgical experience the culmination of Christian existence? Finally, I look at the role of the liturgical experience in solving the crisis within the Orthodox Church. In order to explore the role of the liturgical experience, I will need to see how he interprets the experience and therefore engage in his hermeneutics of the liturgical life of the faithful.

Throughout this chapter I will bear in mind Schmemmann's search for understanding the settings of the Orthodox Church through the lens of his own experience and through his liturgical theology stemming out of that. This will help me to describe the wholeness of Schmemmann's criticism of Orthodox ecclesiology. I will return to his holistic approach also in the next chapter where I will look at his concept of sacramentality of the world and of life.

One technical remark must be made before moving onto the main text of the next two chapters. Schmemmann's theology is not systematically expressed.<sup>257</sup> He begins to deal with a theological issue, he examines it from a

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<sup>257</sup> Schmemmann had mainly a poetic way of expressing himself and his theology. Speaking about the crisis within the Orthodox Church he focused on life, therefore his choice for a poetic form of expression instead of a systematic one is tenable. In her stunning article dealing with Schmemmann's inclination to poetry, Olga Meerson testifies concerning Schmemmann's tendency to use classic and liturgical poetry in order to explain the *liturgics* of the Orthodox Church and its power to define what is logically indefinable. See Olga Meerson, "The Liturgical Heritage of Fr Alexander Schmemmann" in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 2-3(2009), pp. 353-368. For more details concerning Schmemmann's interest in literature and how this concern influenced his theology and especially his ecclesiology see Olga Sedakova, "Les poèmes en tant que messages: que communiqué la poésie au père Alexandre?" in *La joie du Royaume*, , pp. 41-43; Jean Roberti, "Le rôle de la littérature dans une vie pour l'Eglise" in *La joie du Royaume*, , pp. 43-52; Michel Evdokimov, "Le père Alexandre Schmemmann et la littérature d'après son *Journal*" in *La joie du Royaume*, pp. 52-59; Joost van Rossum, "Le père Alexandre Schmemmann et Tchekhov" in *La joie du Royaume*, pp. 59-70; Nikita Struve, "Le père Alexandre Schmemmann et Soljénitsyne" in *La joie du Royaume*, pp. 70-78; Elena Dorman,

theological or liturgical perspective, but he does not follow a coherent argument describing different features of that subject. For example: after having spoken about the purpose of liturgical theology, instead of going on with its natural development into some practical examples, he jumps to the sacramentality of the world influenced by the liturgical experience of the Church expressed theologically in that liturgical theology he spoke of in the beginning. Or, after remarking the tragedy of the crisis within the Orthodox Church found in the divorce between theology and liturgy, he speaks about the sacramentality of the world and its negative manifestation in secularism, this one being founded on the damaging influence of Western theology on the Christian attitude towards the world. Even if Schmemmann's lack of inner unity does not diminish his brilliant intuitions, nevertheless his amalgam of ideas communicated in such a dispersed fashion makes the task of expounding his theology really difficult, forcing me to repeat myself, and jeopardizing the coherence of my argument.

### **Interpreting Liturgical Experience**

At the beginning of his academic career, in his doctoral dissertation that formed the basis for future research and was published under the title *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, Schmemmann manifests his interest in the hermeneutics of liturgy along with the major aim of hosting his theological thought about liturgical theology.<sup>258</sup> The necessity of understanding "what is

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"La publication des travaux du père Alexandre Schmemmann en Russie" in *La joie du Royaume*, pp. 78-88.

<sup>258</sup> A. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 2003. The first Russian edition of this work was published in 1961 and the first English version appeared in 1966. Even if several articles dealing with the matter of liturgical theology preceded this work, nevertheless I take this book as reference for its academic place in Schmemmann's life and also for its impact on the interest of scholars in it. Schmemmann never uses this terminology of *hermeneutics of liturgy* or *liturgical hermeneutics*. I use it because it represents Schmemmann's desire to explain and interpret the Tradition of the Orthodox Church in its liturgical form. I also use it because it fits best another element in

done in worship" arises, in Schmemmann's view, from the emerging requirement of understanding the fate of ecclesiology in contemporary theological research.<sup>259</sup> What bothers Schmemmann and forces him to look for such an understanding? One major element forced him to inquire: the long-lasting disease of Western theology which infected the Orthodox spirit of the liturgical system and method.<sup>260</sup> His belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church

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Schmemmann's theology which is *liturgical experience*. I need to use outcomes of modern and postmodern hermeneutics of religious experience in order to understand Schmemmann's thought and to develop my argument. Schmemmann's interest in hermeneutics and his work in this area were highlighted by Job Getcha in an article entitled 'Du maître au disciple: la notion de 'théologie liturgique' chez les Pères Cyprien Kern et Alexandre Schmemmann' in *La joie du Royaume*. YMCA-Press, Paris, 2012, pp. 131-147, p. 140. Commenting on the role of the Historical School of Liturgics, Schmemmann says: "It was natural that without an explanation of its historical development there could be no objective understanding of the real nature of worship, and without this there could be no thought of correct comprehension or true interpretation." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 11. Regarding the historical and theological context of the Historical School of Liturgics and the general patristic influences on the Russian interest in liturgics, see Ivana Noble, Katerina Bauerova, Tim Noble and Parush Parushev, *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, chapter 2: Russian Orthodoxy and Its Encounter with Modern Times. Andrew Louth explained what constitutes liturgical theology for Schmemmann in its organic relationship to the sacramentality of the world. See A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, p. 201.

<sup>259</sup> He says: "The revival of a liturgical consciousness, of a new and in fact theological interest in the liturgical tradition, has therefore accompanied the revival of ecclesiology, that genuine return to the Church which has marked the last few decades." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 13. Regarding the question "what is done in the worship" see *idem.*, p. 9. Regarding the matter of the Church's consciousness see Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", p. 130.

<sup>260</sup> He says: "In the West the rupture between theological study and liturgical experience was already a chronic disease. ... It is not surprising therefore that the authors of our own 'school' dogmatics in the nineteenth century – Metropolitan Makary, Bishop Sylvester and others – somehow overlooked the liturgical witness of the Church." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 10. Schmemmann's critics of the West are to be comprehended in the western context of the emergence of his theology, not only in the context of his Russian ethnic roots. Andrew Louth grants us pertinently a synthetic overview of this context: "Schmemmann needs to be understood in the context of developments in Western liturgical scholarship. He needs, too, to be understood in the wider context of the decade of the 1960s ... The Second Vatican Council is one of the events of the sixties, and ushered in (or was the catalyst for) changes that the fathers of the council can hardly have expected. The 1960s were also the decade of the theology of the 'Death of God', a slogan to be traced back in German thought via Nietzsche to Heine and 'Jean Paul' (Richter), ultimately to Martin Luther himself (though his understanding of the death of God was perfectly orthodox); there was talk of 'religionless Christianity' and the acceptance of a post-Christian society. The 1960s were also an important decade, something of a turning point, for Greek theology, partly as the concerns of the West reached Greece, and partly for more local reasons, as Greece emerged from a long period of

community in Paris also determined that he question both himself and the academic community about the relevance of Christian worship in a secularised world. The conflictual situation of the American Orthodox diocese continued to push him to request further ecclesiological answers linked to the liturgical life of the Church. These elements will shadow the argument of this chapter.

Schememann's desire to link liturgics to ecclesiology is formulated without any other explanation right at the beginning of his doctoral dissertation. This puts his enterprise of introducing liturgical theology in direct and unmediated relation within ecclesiology, a fact that has further consequences in his way of understanding and explaining liturgical theology. This theological feature is also due to the fact that Schememann had a smooth path within the Orthodox Church without any existential Christian conversion as had happened to Bulgakov and Lossky. Let us see what this means and how this impacts my argument.

Schememann takes the first step in introducing his argument about liturgical theology by acknowledging the importance of the Liturgical Movement for contemporary theological research and therefore for his thesis, which "lies in the genuine discovery of worship as the life of the Church."<sup>261</sup>

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war, occupation and civil war. There are echoes of the situation in Western theology in Schememann's writings, especially *For the Life of the World*, which can be seen as his bid to reach beyond the liberals who proclaimed the death of religion and the conservatives who clung to religion as an encounter with God himself, the Creator who calls us to the transfiguration of his Creation." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, p. 196.

<sup>261</sup> Schememann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p.14. About the influence that the Liturgical Movement had on Schememann see Thomas Fisch, "Schememann's Theological Contribution to the Liturgical Renewal of the Churches", in *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflexions of Alexander Schememann*, edited by Thomas Fisch, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 2003, pp. 1-10. Andrew Louth emphasises Schememann's link to the liturgical movement, focusing on the practical issues wished by the liturgical renewal that took place in the West: "Many of the aims of the Western liturgical movement are shared by Schememann: the desire for greater participation in the liturgy by the laity, for greater understanding of the liturgical texts, not least the scriptural readings, more frequent communion, and an attempt to promote a liturgical piety, rather than one that had become too individualistic. And it does mean, as liturgical reform did in the West, privileging the ancient, and regretting what came

This movement marked the crucial encounter of the Church with her source of life that is the liturgical celebration. Schmemmann does not define exactly who the Church is who rediscovered her true nature which makes my task of explaining his argument more difficult. What is however helpful is his awareness of the fact that this rediscovery has happened throughout Christianity and "has appeared everywhere closely bound up with a theological, missionary and spiritual revival. It has been the source of a greater realization by Christians of their responsibility in the world. It has been a revival of the Church herself."<sup>262</sup> It seems to me that Schmemmann took for granted the outcomes of the liturgical movement for the Orthodox Church, even when he criticised some of the methodological issues of that movement.

One possible explanation for Schmemmann's ecclesiological consideration of the problem of liturgical theology might be excerpted from the previous quotation: the world and its life. He seeks to solve the issue of Christians dwelling in the world and arrives at the point of the position of the Church vis-à-vis the world. This could be regarded as a kind of circular way to interpret the liturgical experience: analysing the place and role of Christians in the world from a practical and personal experiential viewpoint, going through the matter of corporate Christianity, i.e. the Church, and ending with the

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later – both the outward splendour of the Constantinian and post-Constantinian Church and the influence of monasticism." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, p. 202.

<sup>262</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 14. Thomas Fisch remarks that "the liturgical renewal, for all its beneficial effects in the church's life, had led as well to a liturgical crisis, a crisis which itself is theological in nature. Schmemmann rightly observes that, in spite of their having embraced external liturgical revision and renewal, many of the churches have yet to fully welcome the theological component of the liturgical movement's fundamental vision." Fisch, "Schmemmann's Theological Contribution to the Liturgical Renewal of the Churches", p. 4. Commenting on Schmemmann's attempt to emphasise the symbolic yet tensioned unity between Christian worship and the life of the world, Ivana Noble said: "The fact that the eucharist is not a separate entity not even a separate event is strengthened by Schmemmann's symbolic unity between the world and Christ, which we celebrate in sacraments, and which reveals God's plan for creation." Ivana Noble, "Ecumenical Worship: An Invitation and a Challenge" in *Currents in Baptist Theology of Worship Today*, International Baptist Theological Seminary of the European Baptist Federation, Prague, pp. 69-83, pp. 73-74.

connection between the Church and the world, which is the liturgical celebration. This hermeneutic circle raises the problem of the sacredness and sacramentality of the world, an issue to which I shall return later in the fourth chapter.

### **The Challenges of the Liturgical Movement**

Schmemmann continues to introduce liturgical theology and tries to explain the theological material that came along with the rediscovery mentioned above: the liturgical experience and the Tradition of the Church. In doing this he relates his particular liturgical interest to the general context of the Liturgical Movement. Schmemmann recollected the Liturgical Movement and its theological "reflection" in this way:

Its main efforts were directed toward the practical revival of Church life, by giving worship its real place and meaning. But in the first place it created the necessary condition for liturgical theology by its focus on worship, by its experience of worship as the centre of the whole life of the Church. And second, in its inner development, it finally pointed up the need for a strictly theological analysis of the data of the liturgical experience and tradition of the Church.<sup>263</sup>

The link between the Liturgical Movement and western theology is evident for Schmemmann and is based on the theological (scholastic) analysis of the liturgical content of eastern liturgical traditions. In this context he tries to reach agreement between two paradoxical elements: Western theologians and their interest in the Eastern liturgical tradition: "Thus the uninterruptedness of the liturgical tradition in the Orthodox Church on the one hand, and the intense liturgical interest and research of the West on the other, form a two-fold basis for the creative shaping of Orthodox liturgical theology."<sup>264</sup> This statement is somehow in contradiction with his opinion about the Western theological

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<sup>263</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 15.

<sup>264</sup> Idem., p. 16.

impact on Eastern theology, but I shall come back later to this issue. Just to give an example, in his article "Theology and Liturgical Tradition", Schmemmann enters into a detailed analysis of the conflict between the scholastic approach of the liturgy and the "living reality" of the patristic methodology for studying the liturgy.<sup>265</sup>

The liturgical movement is, according to Schmemmann's perception, the best expression of the encounter between the old manner of "thinking" the liturgy of the Church and the new way of living the ancient liturgical experience of the Church held in her liturgy. This encounter takes various forms and Schmemmann draws attention to them by emphasizing the turning point of the issue: he speaks of "discovery", "return", "revival", "'Orthodox' movement in a non-Orthodox context", "restoration".<sup>266</sup> Even if he presents the liturgical movement in such a positive light, Schmemmann remains completely silent about the "ontology" of this movement and he states ambiguous methodological accounts especially related to the tension of Western research *versus* Eastern sources:

[F]or the Orthodox theologian the material and experience accumulated by the liturgical movement in the West is not something foreign but, on the contrary, one of the most valuable aids to his own work. However paradoxical this may sound, it is very often just the western interest in liturgical tradition, the efforts of just these western scholars, which can help us overcome the defects and limitation of our own scholastic theology. This does not mean that we must blindly accept all that has been done or is being done in this field in the West, nor does it mean the purely mechanical appraisal of western works in the light of the abstract criteria of "Orthodoxy."

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<sup>265</sup> Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgical Tradition" in *Liturgy and Tradition*, pp. 11-20, p. 14. He calls the incompatibility of these two methods "*the metamorphosis of the liturgical consciousness*." This metamorphosis is the distortion of two basic elements I will discuss below: the formal continuity of Christian liturgy with Jewish worship, which is a structural continuity, and consequently the radical transformation of the ethos of the worship in accordance to the Christian religious experience. See p. 15.

<sup>266</sup> *idem.*, pp. 13-16.



In the western liturgical revival we must know how to discern first of all the question which is being addressed to Orthodoxy, which can be answered properly only within the wholeness of the Orthodox perspective.<sup>267</sup>

Schememann receives gladly and constructively the outcomes of Western theological research on the liturgical field, but he does not allow these results to accomplish fully their scientific and ecumenical consequences, binding them into the confessional limits of his Orthodox mentality. His "properly answer only within the wholeness of the Orthodox perspective" reduce this wholeness to a sort of particular view because this answer does not turn back to the question that engendered it. Schememann's liturgics is compromised and so is his ecclesiology. The Western interest in Eastern liturgical tradition cannot be and must not be detached, ontologically speaking, from its initial reasoning. Schememann himself acknowledges the necessity of methodological coherence and methodological wholeness.<sup>268</sup> This contradictory methodological failure will follow Schememann throughout all his further studies. Schememann's

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<sup>267</sup> idem., p. 16. It is not clear from Schememann's explanations how the Western help for Orthodox theologians is compatible with the Western liturgical methodology. Analysing Schememann's understanding of the Western liturgics and the incompatibility that the Russian theologian found between the Western approach to the liturgy and the Eastern way of celebrating, Jack Turner pertinently introduces and explains the issue of the rule of *lex orandi est lex credendi* in Schememann's theological framework. Turner, "Orthodoxy and Western Rite: the Question of Necessity" in *The Canadian Journal of Orthodox Christianity*, 3/2010, pp. 107-125, pp. 113-114.

<sup>268</sup> He states a few pages further: "All that has been said thus far points to the place liturgical theology must occupy in the system of theological disciplines. Of course each of the classifications is conditioned by its own nature. In the last analysis they all have the same goal: the setting forth and explanation of the doctrine of the Church. But some division is necessary, since the one truth preserved by the Church is discovered from different angles and, what is most important, if it is to be discovered at all, various methods or means of apprehension are required." Schememann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 18. The question is: how can Schememann explain the fact that the Eastern liturgical tradition was "preserved" by the Orthodox Church and discovered, analysed and interpreted by Western theologians, facts used afterwards by Eastern scholars? Jack Turner calls also for continuity, coherence and profoundness in Schememann's criticism of the Western liturgical relationship with the Eastern Christendom. J. Turner, "Orthodoxy and Western Rite: the Question of Necessity", pp. 124-125.

criticism of the Western approach to the liturgical movement has a conflictual relevance for his life's experience.

### **The Liturgical Life of the Church**

Liturgical theology thus deals with the liturgical life of the Church. Following the two opening sub-chapters I shall examine the inside of this liturgical life according to Schmemmann's understanding of the historical and operational construction of this life, the relationship between this life and the abstract theology of the Church and the subject of this life. The relationship between the liturgy and the theology of the Church will be examined under the form of Schmemmann's beloved formula *lex orandi est lex credendi*.<sup>269</sup> The search for all these elements will be supported by Schmemmann's desire to explain and solve the crisis within the Orthodox Church.

The liturgical life of the Church is best expressed throughout the theological encounter between historical liturgics and liturgical hermeneutics. In this endeavour, he is inspired by Dom Gregory Dix's theology, which utilises the idea of the "shape" of liturgy. Schmemmann prefers to use the word

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<sup>269</sup> This rule appears for the first time in Prosper of Aquitaine's fifth century work *De vocatione*, 1. 12. Cf. *PL*, 51. 663-665. It is not within the scope of my paper to debate translation from Latin of Prosper's words "ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi", neither asking pertinence of nowadays liturgists' understanding and exploitation of this rule. This formula has different approaches in different Christian denominations. For more details concerning this rule see Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, (Encyclical on the Sacred Liturgy), November 20, 1943, 48, available online on: <http://www.vatican.va>; Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, MacMillan, New York, 1966; Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, Pueblo Publishing, New York, 1984; K. W. Stevenson, "Lex orandi and lex credendi – Strange bed-fellows? Some reflections on worship and doctrine" in *Scottish Journal of Theology* n° 39/1986, pp. 225-241; Paul V. Marshall, "Reconsidering 'Liturgical Theology': Is there a *Lex Orandi* for All Christians?" in *Studia Liturgica* n° 25/1995, pp. 129-151; Mary M. Schaefer, "*Lex orandi, lex credendi*: Faith, doctrine and theology in dialog" in *Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses* n° 26/1997, pp. 467-479; David Fagerberg, *Theologia prima: What Is Liturgical Theology?*, Hildebrand Books, Chicago/Mundelein, IL, 2004; James Alan Waddell, *Lex Orandi Lex Credendi As a Theological Locus of Lutheran Liturgy*, available online on: <http://lexcredendilexorandi.wordpress.com/2009/05/22/lex-orandi-lex-credendi-as-a-theological-locus-for-lutheran-liturgy/>. (14.01 2015)

structure which, in his opinion, fits better the development of liturgical rites and sacraments: "Historical liturgics establishes the structures and their development, liturgical theology discovers their meanings: such is the general methodological principle of the task."<sup>270</sup> Before engaging in this issue of the liturgical structure I shall deepen the idea of the life of the liturgical existence of the Church.

After examining the Church's liturgical patterns, Schmemmann outlines a "liturgical coefficient", which specifies that any element of the Church's liturgical structure must be examined from the perspective of its historical development and within the framework of its liturgical configuration. Then, this component can be developed according to its theological meaning.<sup>271</sup>

All these "cold" theological presuppositions keep on standing somehow against Schmemmann's wish to bring the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church onto the scene. At this moment Schmemmann shifts his argument to concrete examples and after decoding them, he says:

From the establishment and interpretation of the basic structures of worship to an explanation of every possible element, and then to an orderly theological synthesis of all this data – such is the method which liturgical theology uses to carry out its task, to translate what is expressed by the language of worship – its structures, its ceremonies, its texts and its whole "spirit" – into the language of theology, to make the liturgical experience of the Church again one of the life-giving sources of the knowledge of God. What is needed more than anything else is an entrance into the life of worship, into life in the rhythm of worship. What is needed is not so much the intellectual apprehension of worship as its apprehension through experience and prayer.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 22.

<sup>271</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>272</sup> *idem.*, p. 23. Schmemmann's call for apprehending worship through experience and prayer will be magnificently retained by David Fagerberg in his fictive personage Mrs Murphy. See D. Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima: What is Liturgical Theology?* Hillenbrand Books, Chicago, IL, 2004.

Schmemmann is aware of the tension between the structures of the worship in the liturgical life of the Church and that life expressed *ex abrupto*. This awareness is due to his wish to cope with the factual necessities of the Orthodox faithful attending ceremonies in the French and American Orthodox parishes. His solution comes under the presupposition of a wholeness of the life of the Church that includes both structures and living manifestations.<sup>273</sup> There is a fine design that organically incorporates ceremonies, rubrics, piety, personal experience, communal attendance and corporeal commitment. For the time being it is necessary just to mention that Schmemmann distinguishes the sacraments of entrance into the Church, i.e. Baptism and Chrismation, and the sacrament of the Church, i.e. the Eucharist.<sup>274</sup> All these issues will be analysed below.

One problem, however, concerns Schmemmann's emphasis on the liturgical life of the Church: his tendency to oversimplify that life and to radicalise its importance. In his article "Theology and Liturgical Tradition" he states sharply that the *leitourgia* is the "whole life" of the Church.<sup>275</sup> What

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<sup>273</sup> He says: "A study of ecclesiastical rubrics, understood not simply as the expounding of the rules governing the Church's liturgical life but as the general and basic structure of this life, must necessarily be a preliminary step in the study of worship. Before examining the separate parts of the building we must not only sense that we are dealing with a building, but also see it as a whole, having a certain overall design or architectural plan, in which all its elements are set in a mutually dependent relationship." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 25. Introducing her theological understanding of Schmemmann's theology of liturgy, Ivana Noble underlines his critique of the lack of unity between the Church's life and her worship. Ivana Noble, "Ecumenical Worship: An Invitation and a Challenge" in *Currents in Baptist Theology of Worship Today*, International Baptist Theological Seminary of the European Baptist Federation, Prague, pp. 69-83, p. 72.

<sup>274</sup> He states: "Furthermore, while the Eucharist must unquestionably be placed in the centre of the first part of liturgical theology, the essential nature of the Church being actualised in the Eucharist as the Sacrament of the Church's life, it is also true that the sacraments of entrance into the Church (Baptism and Chrismation) lead us into this life and unite us with this essential nature. They lead into the Church and into the Eucharist, and it is appropriate to relate their theological and liturgical explanation to the study of the celebration of the Eucharist itself." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 25.

<sup>275</sup> He affirms: "The *leitourgia*, therefore, is not a cultic action performed in the Church, on its behalf, and for it; it is the action of the Church itself, of the Church *in actu*, it is the very expression of its life. It is not opposed to the non-cultic forms or aspects of the *ecclesia*,

happens then with the social, economic, and artistic life of the Church? Schmemmann expands this methodological error when he continually links the liturgical life of the Church with eschatology, I will return to this issue below, especially in the fourth chapter.<sup>276</sup>

In an article revealing his mature ecclesiology forged after the experience of "fulfilling" the autonomy of the Orthodox Church in America, Schmemmann continues to speak about the life of the Church that is in total discrepancy to her theology and liturgy. Even if he presents this churchly state of affairs in sharp criticism, he remains nevertheless at an abstract level, rendering his statements irrelevant, without any concrete solution.<sup>277</sup>

### **The Liturgical Crisis**

Schmemmann's general remarks on liturgical theology revealing the liturgical life of the Church are challenged by the breaking of the circle of liturgical hermeneutics through the issue of the liturgical crisis. He speaks of it

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because the *ecclesia* exists in and through the *leitourgia*, and its whole life is a *leitourgia*." idem., p. 17.

<sup>276</sup> In an article dealing with Schmemmann's view of the liturgical/eucharistic way of engaging education in and through the Church, the authors said: "Schmemmann seemed to emphasise liturgical worship over everything else, including service to the needy and negotiating one's spiritual journey within the larger context of the worshipping community. Nevertheless, Schmemmann's theological corpus does reveal an intimate connection between liturgy and life." Leanne Stuart and William Mills, "Liturgy as Catechesis: A Rhetorical Perspective on Orthodox Christian Educational Practice" in *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 49(2008), pp. 209-233, pp. 214-215.

<sup>277</sup> He asserts: "What is more serious, however, is the fact that the liturgy – central as it may be within the activities of the Church – has ceased to be connected with virtually all other aspects of the Church's life; to inform, shape and guide the ecclesial consciousness as well as the 'worldview' of the Christian community. One may be deeply attached to the 'ancient and colourful rites' of Byzantium and Russia, see in them precious relics of a cherished past, be a liturgical 'conservative'; and, at the same time, completely fail to see in them, in the totality of the Church's *leitourgia*, an all-embracing vision of life, a power meant to judge, inform and transform the whole of existence, a 'philosophy of life' shaping and challenging all our ideas, attitudes and actions. As in the case of theology, one can speak of an alienation of liturgy from life, be it the life of the Church or the life of a Christian individual." Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", p. 131. Similar idea could be found in Schmemmann, "Liturgy and Tradition", p. 53.

according to his own experience because he feels obliged to raise this issue.<sup>278</sup>

This liturgical crisis has, according to Schmemmann, two levels that are seen also in their causal meaning:

The liturgical crisis consists, first of all, in the mistaken concept of the function and place of worship in the Church, in the profound metamorphosis in the understanding of worship in the mind of the Church. ... We are speaking here about the whole approach to worship and its "experience." A discrepancy has appeared between the basic purpose of worship and the way it is understood, while the membership of the Church has simply not noticed this discrepancy, and the "key" which supposedly leads to an understanding of the Church's worship actually excludes the possibility of this understanding.<sup>279</sup>

Schmemmann's statement of the first cause of the liturgical crisis corresponds to the liturgical system implying the rule of *lex orandi est lex credendi*. He further explains how liturgy ceased to be the revelation and realization of the real nature of the Church, and how the Church missed her goal of embodying in worship her participation in God's Kingdom, and giving to her members a glimpse of the mystery of the age to come.<sup>280</sup>

Schmemmann's concern with the liturgical crisis is consequently mirrored in the relation between the world and the Church. He complains about the Church becoming a "cultic society" and he laments the woeful relationship

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<sup>278</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 27.

<sup>279</sup> *idem.*, p. 28.

<sup>280</sup> He introduces the eschatological coefficient of the liturgical theology and his Christocentric anthropology, two elements which will constitute the subject of further developed analysis in my argument: "Christian worship, by its nature, structure and content, is the revelation and realization by the Church of her own real nature. And this nature is the new life in Christ – union in Christ with God the Holy Spirit, knowledge of the Truth, unity, love, grace, peace, salvation. ... Christ did not establish a society for the observance of worship, a 'cultic society,' but rather the Church as the way of salvation, as the new life of re-created mankind. This does not mean that worship is secondary to the Church. On the contrary, it is inseparable from the Church and without it there is no Church." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 29.

between Church-world-Kingdom that emerges from the inability of the Church to engage the world liturgically for the sake of the Kingdom.<sup>281</sup>

The Church is supposed, according to Schmemmann, to bring true knowledge and new life to the world by celebrating and fulfilling the "normal" (social, cultural, political and economic) life of her members dwelling in the world, and by opening the "ordinary" (social, cultural, political, economic and scientific) knowledge of the world to a more transcendental level. Not accomplishing her role in the world, malfunctioning in her theological mechanism, the Church is subject to questioning.<sup>282</sup> Schmemmann lays before us his vision concerning the issue of the Church's mediation of the Kingdom of God through her liturgy, opening a long discussion about how to solve this liturgical issue.

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<sup>281</sup> *ibid.*, p. 31. Andrew Louth stated: "Fr Alexander's conviction of the central place of the liturgy grew out of his own experience, an experience he shared with many in the Russian émigré community in Paris, where he grew up. ... Schmemmann worshiped regularly in the cathedral in rue Daru where these experiences happened but even if he had worshiped in other very unecclesiastical spaces (such as today's church of Notre-Dame, Joie des Affligés et Ste Geneviève in rue St-Victor which worships in what looks from the outside like a laundrette) these would have been the same experiences. Just as this experience was the inspiration for Fr Nikolai Afanasiev's eucharistic ecclesiology, so it was for Fr Schmemmann's liturgical theology. Elsewhere in his diary, he talks about the way church services 'create a different dimension': 'to reveal this dimension the Church exists. Without this different dimension, the whole teaching, structure, and order of the Church mean nothing.' [Schmemmann, *Journals*, op. cit., April 3, 1973] A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, op. cit., p. 201.

<sup>282</sup> Schmemmann's statements lead us to consider that the liturgical crisis is somehow a hermeneutical crisis engendered by some cultural and even existential factors: "The overwhelming majority of Orthodox people have no interest in the meaning of worship. It is accepted and experienced in mystical and aesthetic but never 'logical' categories. It moves the soul of the believer by its sacredness, by its mysteriousness, by its 'other-worldliness.' And everything that happens to fall within its orbit becomes overgrown with complicated symbolic explanations. It is characteristic that in this symbolism there is no symbolism of the Church." Schmemmann, 2003, p. 31. Furthermore he says: "Little by little the belief has been created within the Church that the Ordo does not even require understanding. It has come to be a dead letter which either must be followed blindly, or may be ignored just because of its lifelessness, with the selection from it of that which pleases one can make an impression on the congregation." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 38. Andrew Louth criticises Schmemmann's ambiguity in approaching the idea of liturgical ordo. Andrew Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, op. cit., p. 202.

While stating the centrality of the liturgical experience in the life of the Church, Schmemmann is not clear about it in its manifestation through the equation *lex orandi est lex credendi*. In his article "Theology and Liturgy" published after long years of discerning that crisis, he fails to overcome the perplexity of the subject of the experience of the Church: "I can now come to the main thesis of this paper: this experience of the Church is primarily the experience given and received in the Church's *leitourgia* – in her *lex orandi*."<sup>283</sup> Not a word will be found in the following lines of that article about who gives or who receives that experience and not a word about what is received in and throughout that experience. This methodological inconsistency is present constantly in Schmemmann's thought. Even if Schmemmann uses words like Christ, Church, Eucharist, epiphany, Kingdom of God, he seems to forget that they receive a different connotation when they are related to the idea of experience.

In his article "Theology and Liturgy" he claims that theology needs a liturgical critique and liturgy needs a theological critique. So far so good! The first thing that enables us to recover his earliest statements is that he sees this analytical circuit in a hermeneutical way that would allow us to "rediscover and to communicate the real "key" of the Orthodox liturgical tradition, to connect it again to the *lex credendi*."<sup>284</sup>

The first step is to put "crisis" under the microscope in order to see its inner structure. For Schmemmann, the Church is gifted with consciousness<sup>285</sup>, and this should be the science of theology, which is a basic reflection of the Church about herself and her problems with a substantial unity of experience

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<sup>283</sup> Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", op. cit., p. 135.

<sup>284</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> This term is particularly dear to Schmemmann, especially when speaking of theology, liturgy, Christianity, Byzantium and Orthodoxy and is closely related with the idea of crisis. It voices the awareness of belonging to, of identity, without any casuistic implications. See Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, op. cit., p. 9, p. 10, p. 13, p. 34, p. 52, p. 71, p. 100, p. 130.



and vision among theologians, be they Fathers of the Church or others. If the Church no longer has this gift, then she is no longer provided with the essential and saving norms in terms of pastoral care, and she is no longer resourced with the knowledge of God which is the very content of life eternal.<sup>286</sup>

Secondly, he considers the liturgy. If the Church is gifted with life, this should be holy and consequently liturgical. In order to remain the exclusive "occupation"<sup>287</sup> of the Church, liturgy is called to cure its disease that is "the growing nominalism"<sup>288</sup> of liturgical life and practice"<sup>289</sup>. Even if the average churchgoer is hardly aware of it, liturgy has faded away from his life because he was encouraged by his ecclesial context to develop an unfortunate kind of liturgical pietism fed by sentimental and pseudo-symbolical<sup>290</sup> explanations of liturgical rites<sup>291</sup>.

Schmemmann focuses spontaneously on life when speaking both of theology and liturgy and of their problems. Be it simply the life of the Church or its life in a social, political and economic context, this life is the Church's fundamental *raison d'être*, her inner meaning of being present in each human existence. This life must also be a new life, a Christ-like life:

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<sup>286</sup> Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", op. cit., p. 129-130.

<sup>287</sup> idem., p. 131.

<sup>288</sup> He says: "By nominalism I mean here the peculiar divorce of the *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." Schmemmann, "The Underlying Question" in *Church, World, Mission*, op. cit., p. 23. I will consider again the issue of nominalism later on, especially in the fourth chapter.

<sup>289</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>290</sup> The term of symbolism along with all its forms and developments is fundamental to Schmemmann's theology and for its understanding. Nevertheless, my paper does not deal with this issue of maximum importance, but I use it only in order to explain my position. For further details cf. Stig Simeon R. Froyshov, "Symbole et symbolisme liturgique chez Alexandre Schmemmann" in *La joie du Royaume: Actes du colloque international L'héritage du père Alexandre Schmemmann, Paris, 11-14 décembre 2008*, YMCA-Press, Paris 2012, pp. 157-183. In this brilliant article there is an additional bibliography concerning symbol and symbolism in Schmemmann's works.

<sup>291</sup> Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", op. cit., p. 131-132.

This double crisis – of theology and of liturgy – is, I submit, the real source of the general crisis which faces our Church today, and which must shape our agenda, if theology is for us more than a quiet "academic" activity, if we understand it as our specific charism and ministry within the Body of Christ. A crisis is always a divorce, a discrepancy, between the foundations and the life which is supposed to be based on these foundations; it is life drifting away from its own foundations. The Church's life has always been rooted in the *lex credendi*, the rule of faith, theology in the deepest sense of that word; and in the *lex orandi*, her rule of worship, the *leitourgia* which always "makes her what she is": the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Today, however, there rapidly develops a dangerous alienation of the "real" Church from these two sources of her life.<sup>292</sup>

It is worth noting the fact the Schmemmann focuses on life and on its liturgical and theological manifestation in, through and with the worshiping community. What seems to be problematic is the fact that he forgets that life is always something more than its manifestations, that life transcends even the religious necessities, that life is crisis without being destroyed by it, that life evolves through diverse critical processes. Theology and liturgy should serve the life to become an accomplished life even when they are in a critical relationship. Schmemmann seems to be scared of the crisis which emerged in the Orthodox Church, and this attitude somehow paralyses him from perceiving all the positive outcomes that could occur from that crisis. He seems to forget that his own life crossroads "forced" and helped him to evolve and mature. The same should be available for the Church.

### **The Historical and Communal Aspect of the Liturgical Crisis**

After introducing the idea of liturgical life and the liturgical crisis and relating the central role of these elements to the equation *lex orandi est lex credendi*, Schmemmann explains whose life he is talking about. He speaks about

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<sup>292</sup> idem., p. 132.

the historical appearance of the liturgical life of the Church and then he comes to the moment of clarifying the tension between the components of the Church: the individuals who compose the liturgical assembly and the corporate, anthropological understanding of the Church as one, the unique Body of Christ.

In order to deepen his understanding of the liturgical experience, Schmemmann returns to practical examples that would make his point. Thus he engages the problem of the Ordo, or the problem of "the collection of rules and prescriptions ('rubrics' in the language of western liturgics) which regulate the Church's worship and which are set forth in the *Typicon* and its 'rubrics'."<sup>293</sup> He turns toward practical examples because his own experience was marked by "the clear-cut divergence between the Ordo and the Church's liturgical life."<sup>294</sup>

With the problem of Ordo, Schmemmann opens a new dimension of the liturgical crisis: the discrepancy between the liturgy of time and the real liturgical practice of the Church. He forges a theology of time in order to express the historical aspect of the liturgical life of the Church within the temporal dimension of Christian worship. Let us see what he means by this tension!

Schmemmann explains his viewpoint by describing the role of the Ordo with the necessity of liturgical knowledge and comprehension among the members of the Church:

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<sup>293</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>294</sup> idem., p. 36. Schmemmann does not restrict himself even in his doctoral dissertation from getting angry with his fellow Orthodox Christians who have distorted worship: "For some people everything that is printed in the *Typicon* or in any 'rubric' is an absolute and immutable law, and to touch or change this material in any way whatever is tantamount to the subversion of Orthodoxy. For such people everything that has at any time or for any chance reason fallen into our liturgical books constitutes, by this fact alone, an unchangeable part of the Tradition, and must be preserved at all costs. The question of a review of the Ordo or of the immense amount of liturgical material contained in the Monthly Service Book (*Menaion*) and the *Oktoichos* is denounced as heresy and modernism by the partisans of this view. To the extent that it is impossible (as pointed out above) to carry out the Ordo in full, it turns out that in the last analysis the deciding factors are taste, local tradition and custom; in other words, accidental factors." idem., p. 37.

Little by little the belief has been created within the Church that the Ordo does not even require understanding. It has come to be a dead letter which either must be followed blindly, or may be ignored just because of its lifelessness, with the selection from it of that which pleases or can make an impression on the congregation. Now the question must be asked: Does this view of the Ordo – as a Law, as an incomprehensible Rule, of finally as Custom – does this view correspond to the worship "in Spirit and Truth" which is to be offered to God by the Church as the People of God, a royal priesthood, a chosen people, the Body of Christ? This is the real and fundamental problem of the Ordo.<sup>295</sup>

Schememann's French and American liturgical experience has shown him the ignorance of the people who came to services without the smallest desire to participate intellectually and physically in the liturgical celebrations. The laziness of the Russian worshipers toward understanding the meaning of the liturgical rules "counterpointed" by the detailed yet visionless observance of the Ordo by the monastic communities pushed Schememann to acknowledge the crisis within the Orthodox Church as being rooted in the role of the liturgical laws in the life of the Church.

The Ordo as a rule functions potentially, in Schememann's view, as a law to be blindly fulfilled because it might bring salvation *per se*. Schememann's question regarding the Ordo comes out from the lack of any basic, ABC-fundamental hermeneutics of liturgical texts. Even if the Ordo is not a liturgical text itself, nevertheless the rule expressed in this liturgical law needs interpretation. Schememann's way of interpreting liturgical texts and their "legal" application is experiential. The liturgy of the Church is founded on the patristic experience and must by all means lead the Church's assembly to experience salvation by partaking in the new life of the Kingdom of God. The patristic experience is a source of theology, Schememann insists in his article "Theology and Liturgical Tradition", opposing this theological approach to the

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<sup>295</sup> Schememann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 38.

scholastic, rigid idea that conceives the liturgy as an object of inquiry.<sup>296</sup> One may criticise Schmemmann because he does not acknowledge the importance of other types of religious experiences that could lead Christians to encounter God and that are highly regarded by the Tradition of the Church as genuine and as available as the liturgical ones.

Schmemmann believes that the transition from a "corporate" to a "private" understanding of worship among people of faith has engendered a change in the hermeneutics of liturgical experience. Insofar as they are "on the wrong side of this road", the people who constitute the Church use liturgical experiences for their own private good, even though, according to Schmemmann, this actually destroys the Church.<sup>297</sup> He insists that even if we allow for the possibility of personal experiences during the liturgy and in worship, such experiences should lead to the edification of the Church and to a common understanding of the meaning of the liturgy, rather than to a sense of individual righteousness.<sup>298</sup> Christian experience is always personal, but it should always lead to community and communion.

According to Schmemmann, the Eucharist as a corporate activity of the Church is the key theological and liturgical level where the dialectic, individual-corporality, is played. It is also the foundation for explaining and understanding the relationship between liturgics and ecclesiology. The Eucharist forms therefore the central point of the two concentric hermeneutic circles I observed in Schmemmann's liturgical theology: Christians, world,

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<sup>296</sup> Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgical Tradition", in *Liturgy and Tradition*, op. cit., pp. 11-20, pp. 12-13.

<sup>297</sup> He says: "this distinction between 'corporate' and 'private' worship is a contradiction of the basic and ancient concept of Christian worship as the public act of the Church, in which there is nothing private at all, nor can there be, since this would destroy the very nature of the Church." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>298</sup> He states: "the purpose of worship is to constitute the Church, precisely to bring what is 'private' into the new life, to transform it into what belongs to the Church, i.e. shared with all in Christ. In addition, its purpose is always to express the Church as the unity of that Body whose Head is Christ." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 24.

Church on one hand and liturgy, theology, liturgical theology on the other hand.<sup>299</sup> I shall come back to this centrality of the Eucharist when I deal with Schmemmann's synthesis concerning the relation between liturgy and theology.

### **Schmemmann's Liturgical Structuralism**

If the Ordo is the written "manifestation" of the structure of the liturgical life of the Church, worship is the same structure of the Church displayed in motion. According to Schmemmann, the static structure of the liturgical life of the Church must be in total accordance with its dynamic expression. This can be accomplished only through a right interpretation of the liturgical structure by virtue of its establishment in the faith of the Church and by virtue of its life-engendered towards the world.

For Schmemmann the idea of structure that we have already mentioned above is crucial for uncovering the liturgical crisis within the Orthodox Church.<sup>300</sup> In order to explain his position, he makes a critical comparison between the dynamic Ordo – liturgical life and canons – the Church's existential structure:

To find the Ordo behind the "rubrics," regulations and rules – to find the unchanging principle, the living room or "logos" of worship as a whole,

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<sup>299</sup> He says: "The Eucharist is *the* Sacrament of the Church, i.e. her eternal actualization of the Body of Christ, united in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Eucharist is not only the 'most important' of all the offices, it is also source and goal of the entire liturgical life of the Church. Any liturgical theology not having the Eucharist as the foundation of its whole structure is basically defective." *ibid.* In the *Introduction*, this paragraph ends with a footnote having a quotation from Cyprian Kern on the subject.

<sup>300</sup> He states: "Methodologically this problem [of Ordo] falls naturally under three headings. First the question must be raised as to the nature of the basic structure of worship presupposed, revealed and established by our present rubrics, by the whole collection of rules which regulate the liturgical life of the Church today. In order to be true to its calling, liturgical theology must always draw its conclusions from the concrete data of living tradition of worship, from the liturgical facts. On more than one occasion we have been made aware of the way in which a theory of worship formed *a priori*, without sufficient attention being paid to liturgical reality in all its variety and complexity, can lead along false paths. It can even be said that this rupture between theory and fact is the central drama in the history of worship." Schmemmann, *idem.*, p. 40.

within what is accidental and temporary: this is the primary task which faces those who regard liturgical theology not as the collection of accidental and arbitrary explanations of services but as the systematic study of the *lex orandi* of the Church. This is nothing but the search for or identification of that element of the *Typicon* which is presupposed by its whole content, rather than contained by it, in short, its general "philosophy." It is the elucidation of those principles upon which all the regulations contained within it are founded.<sup>301</sup>

Even if Schmemmann's great emphasis on structure and his way of systematising his theological insight do not allow one to consider him a scholar of liturgical structuralism, yet it does allow one to state that he is one of those who grounded liturgical hermeneutics on the structural nature of Christian worship.

Schmemmann's use of the structure of Christian worship has several implications. In order to understand them I will now look at his rationale of speaking in large measure about structure in the cult.

The first structure of the cult mentioned by Schmemmann has a historical character. For the outline in his *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* he used three periods in the formation of the Christian cult: the early period from Jesus to Constantine, the second period covering the time between Constantine and the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries and the third period afterwards constituting a synthesis achieved through the liturgical leadership of monks. Even if my argument does not deal with this periodisation, it is worth mentioning Botte's criticism of

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<sup>301</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 39. Furthermore he states: "The relationship of the written rubrics to worship itself is analogous to the relationship of the canons to the structure of the Church. The canons did not create the Church or determine her structure; they arose for the defence, clarification and definition of that structure which already existed and is essential to the very nature of the Church. The written Ordo does not so much determine the law of worship as adapt this law to this or that need. And this means that it presupposes the existence of this law or "general element." The search for, elucidation and explanation of, this basic principle constitutes the problem of the Ordo." idem., p. 40. This comparison sends my argument back to Afanasiev's influence on Schmemmann on the field of canon law.

Schmemmann's tendency to overestimate the first period as being the "golden age" of the *leitourgia* of the Church.<sup>302</sup>

Schmemmann turns his view towards western theologians in order to relate his understanding of the structure of the worship. Here again one can consider his formative years when he pondered Catholic and Protestant theology rather as an inspirational source than a subject of scholastic influence. His main liturgical supports are G. Dix, L. Duchesne, P. Batiffol, E. Freeman, J. Jeremias, A. Baumstark and C. W. Dugmore.<sup>303</sup> The theme of structure has a historic challenge linked to the influences on the early Christian cult. Between the Hellenistic and Judaic influences on the Christian cult, Schmemmann considers the second as being fundamental.<sup>304</sup> Why is this connection important for Schmemmann and why does he explore it in detail? Because it opens to him the theological vista of two fundamental concepts one can find in his theology: the idea of fulfilment and the matter of eschatology. These two elements will constitute subjects to which I will consistently return in my argument.

The first concept mentioned above, i.e. the fulfilment, comes along with a theological clue dear to Schmemmann: the organic transformation of the old into the new, the organic participation of the traditional into contemporaneity, the ontological continuity between the previous and the latest.<sup>305</sup> The historical

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<sup>302</sup> Bernard Botte, O. S. B. "The Role of Liturgical Theology: A Debate on Liturgical Theology" in *Liturgy and Tradition*, op. cit., pp. 21-29.

<sup>303</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., pp. 49-64.

<sup>304</sup> idem., p. 55.

<sup>305</sup> He states: "The history of Christian worship does not begin as the simple continuation of the traditional cult with the inclusion of a few new elements. It begins rather with a situation which can best be described as a liturgical dualism. It is a participation in the old cult and at the same time the presence – from the very beginning – of the cult of the new. Let us stress again that the newness of this new cult comes not from non-Hebrew sources (it is Hebrew both in form and spirit) but consists rather in its new relationship to the old traditional cult." idem., p. 59. This awareness of the importance of the Hebrew pattern in liturgics posits Schmemmann in a total different stance with Florovsky's emphasis on the Hellenistic base of Christian theology. Schmemmann's *lex orandi* does not fit Florovsky's *lex credendi*.



narrative of Christian worship binds this theological process together through the mediation of the religious experience.<sup>306</sup>

Its historical roots give the applicability of the concept of fulfilment. The historical fulfilment requires eschatological completeness. In Schmemmann's liturgical and historical perception, the historical fulfilment of the Old Testament message lies in the historical person of Jesus Christ who opens an eschatological dimension to that message.<sup>307</sup> His point of view regarding the complementarity and continuity between the old and the new of the history of salvation expressed in the biblical narrative allows him to build a meaningful understanding of religious experience; yet the fact that he does not always relate this item to the reality of the Orthodox Church will lead him to fail in assessing the importance of the particular religious experience for the liturgical form it grounds. We will see below how this happens.

As we have already seen, the crisis within the Orthodox Church means, according to Schmemmann's own experience and according to the theological inquiry he accomplishes, a falling-out of continuity and understanding. As far as the Church is able to become aware of this rupture, the problem can be solved. But in order to become aware of it, theological analysis must comprehend the origin of the wholeness broken by the actual state of affairs. This means that the on-going newness of Christian life in its liturgical performance must be perceived in concordance with the stability and continuity of Christian theology in its ancestral revelation.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> He remarks: " The study of the early Christian *lex orandi* must begin with the discovery of its meaning; and of course its meaning must be sought in the faith of the first Christians. At the centre of the Judeo-Christian view stands the faith in the long-awaited and now accomplished coming of the Messiah, the faith that Christians belong to the Messianic society. ... The modern Christian accepts the Old Testament because he believes in the New. But they believed in the New because they had seen, experienced and perceived the fulfilment of the Old." *ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> *idem.*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>308</sup> He explains: "Just as the New Testament does not replace the Old, but fulfils and completes it, so also the new cult, if it is to be the cult of the New Covenant, does not replace or abolish the old, but appears as its necessary fulfilment. The permanent revelations of the Old

Schmemmann needs an example of tension that became crisis and finally was transformed into a paradoxical unity of antinomies that apparently contradict each other and that coexist by virtue of eschatological fulfilment.<sup>309</sup> This example is the eighth day of the week, the Lord's Day, the day of the celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>310</sup> He relies on Jean Daniélou's theology of Sunday and demonstrates that "for the Church the Lord's Day is the joyful day of the Kingdom. The Lord's Day signifies for her not the substitution of one form of reckoning time for another, the replacement of Saturday by Sunday, but a break into the 'New Aeon,' a participation in a time that is by nature totally different."<sup>311</sup>

We have remarked in this sub-chapter how Schmemmann implements the liturgy on historical and biblical foundations and how this enterprise opens the

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Testament concerning God, creation, man, sin and salvation, lives in all fullness within the New, and it is impossible to understand the work of Christ outside this revelation. Everything to which the old cult bears witness is presupposed by the new. For this reason the new has meaning only on condition that the old is preserved. Only in relation to the old is it both revealed and actualised as something eternally new. We must see the liturgical dualism of Judeo-Christianity not as the accidental phenomenon of a passing era, but as the primary and fundamental expression of the Christian *lex orandi*." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

<sup>309</sup> Schmemmann has a highly accurate intuition of the role of paradox in theological research: "the liturgical tradition of the Church is fundamentally antinomical in its nature. It is a cult which eternally transcends itself, because it is the cult of a community which eternally realises itself, as the Body of Christ, as the Church of the Holy Spirit, as ultimately, the new *aeon* of the Kingdom. It is a tradition of forms and structures, but these forms and structures are no longer those of a 'cult,' but those of the Church itself, of its life 'in Christ.' Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgical Tradition", op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>310</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 77. The idea of a "accomplished" crisis in an eschatological way is even more strongly pointed out a few pages below: "Within the time of history the coming of the Messiah and His Passover, the descent of the Holy Spirit and in Him the manifestation of the 'New Aeon' in the world represent a decisive crisis, in the literal sense of this word. But time and the history of salvation continue. In the Messiah they acquire their whole meaning, and also a new goal: the ultimate cosmic victory of the Kingdom is already manifested in the Messiah. For this reason the Christian Passover is the same Passover of the chosen people of God, the Passover of the Exodus and of deliverance from bondage, the Passover of the desert, the Passover of the coming into a promised land." Schmemmann, *idem.*, p. 87.

<sup>311</sup> *idem.*, p. 80.

possibility of fulfilment and eschatology.<sup>312</sup> We need to bear this process in mind in order to understand further steps regarding Schmemmann's hermeneutics of the liturgical experience.

### **The Impact of the Eucharist on the Theology of Time**

When Schmemmann enters into the deepest parts of the liturgical structure of Christian worship, he finds the necessary ground for supporting the relevance of the underpinning of the liturgy by time. This relevance springs from the liturgical cycles: daily, weekly and yearly. In the centre of this liturgical time, Schmemmann puts the Eucharist.<sup>313</sup> The liturgical interpretation and understanding of these cycles forms, according to Schmemmann the liturgy of time. The relationship between Eucharist and the liturgy of time is paradoxical because the Eucharist is a once-and-for-all commemorative-celebration, while the liturgy of time implies cyclical celebration:

The worship of the Church has as its real centre the constant renewal and repetition in time of the one unchanging Sacrament; unchanging, that is, in its meaning, content and purpose. But the whole significance of this repetition is in the fact that something unrepeatable is being recalled and actualized. The Eucharist is the actualization of one, single, unrepeatable event, and the essence of the Sacrament consists first of all in the possibility of the conquest of time, i.e. the manifestation and realization (within this Sacrament) of a past

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<sup>312</sup> Andrew Louth emphasises the role of eschatology in Schmemmann's theological thought, underlying the liturgical comprehension of this wide theological concept: "The heart of what Schmemmann thought liturgical theology to be can be put in another way: in terms of *eschatology* – eschatology, not as concerned with what lies beyond death, but rather with the presence of the ultimate, the end, communion with God, in this life: what is sometimes called 'realised eschatology,' again very much on the themes of Western theology from the interwar period onwards (beginning with C. H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias on the parables and reaching beyond that into most post-war systematic theology)." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>313</sup> Schmemmann takes as granted the liturgical place and role of the Eucharist in the life of the Church: "The centrality of the Eucharist in the liturgical life of the Church is self-evident." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 42. It is questionable if this statement comes from his own liturgical experience or from the theological analysis of the problem.

event in all its supra-temporal, eternal reality and effectiveness. ... The celebration of the Eucharist is placed within the framework of the liturgy of time, so that being neither bound essentially to time nor determined by it, it is a "correlative" of time.<sup>314</sup>

The paradoxical relation between the Eucharist and the liturgy of time, between the uniqueness of the eucharistic celebration and the repetitive structure of worship enable my argument to focus on another aspect of the crisis within the Orthodox Church according to Schmemmann: the paradox as a theological place for the coexistence of antinomies or inconsistencies. We have already met the use of this concept in his argument. As far as the paradox is well explained and rightly understood, it helps to form the wholeness of theology and liturgy. When the paradox is perceived in its separate forms, it becomes a tool for breaking the unity of theology or the wholeness of the worship. The idea of paradox will come back in Schmemmann's thought together with the idea of apophatic theology.<sup>315</sup>

Schmemmann concludes his analysis of the Eucharist and the liturgy of time by raising an alarm concerning two dangers linked to the misunderstanding of the relationship between these two liturgical elements.<sup>316</sup> The Church is threatened in her liturgical structure by the malfunction of her liturgy of time. How does he comprehend a way to solve this menacing situation constitutes the next problem I examine in my argument.

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<sup>314</sup> idem., pp. 44-45.

<sup>315</sup> I would just mention here briefly that Florensky has already largely used the term *antinomy* and that Lossky made *apophatic theology* the turning point of his patristic theology. The interdependence of these factors might be subject of future interesting theological research.

<sup>316</sup> He says: " On the one hand we have the danger of reducing the whole liturgical tradition to a single Sacrament [the Eucharist] with a corresponding neglect of its other elements. On the other hand we have the widening of the concept of Sacrament to include all worship. In both cases an error in spiritual and theological perspective threatens a serious distortion not only of the *lex orandi* of the Church, but also of her *lex credendi*, as it is expressed, inspired and nourished in worship." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

## The Eschatological Structure of Time

Schmemmann is not content to introduce the idea of eschatology only from the point of view of a solution for the tension between the Judaic and Hellenistic structure of worship. He therefore explains eschatology in its relation to the structure of time. For Schmemmann, time means history filled with God's salvific presence, an idea he holds from Florovsky, as we have already seen. Despite this beautiful acknowledgment, as in the case of his teacher, Schmemmann has no coherent system of analysing and interpreting history in the light of God's presence within it. His main concern is to clarify how time is meaningful for worship and therefore eschatology for the liturgy of time. Let us see what he means by eschatology in this case!

Schmemmann's support for this argument is Oscar Cullman and his book *Christ and Time*.

The eschatological point comes out from the meeting between the Judaic linear conception of time and the cyclical Hellenistic narrative of time. The true *raison d'être* of time lies in its meaning, an issue that goes beyond the above-mentioned distinctiveness. There is nevertheless a meeting point between the Judaic Messianic attempt and the Christian perception of eschatology. That meaning comes through the mediation of an element higher than time, which in the case of Christianity is the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of the eternal God:

The difference between Christianity and Judaism is not in their understanding or theology of time, but in their conception of the events by which this time is spiritually measured. Judaistic time is eschatological in the sense that it is still directed toward the coming of the Messiah and the messianic Kingdom. In Christian time the Messiah has already come, is already revealed, the Kingdom of Yahweh is at hand.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p. 71.

From this statement Schmemmann has just one step to make in order to relate the person of Christ to the Eucharistic celebration of the eschatological event of the presence of the Kingdom of God in Christian worship. We see now how he develops this system by calling for a hermeneutics of eschatology.

Schmemmann justifies once more his argument about the positive tension between the Eucharist and the liturgy of time when he examines the historical context of the appearance of the Eucharist and the reason it became the core of the Christian cult. For Schmemmann the liturgy of time is a sort of continuation of the Judaic cyclic cult. The Eucharist, in its turn, is the liturgical fulfilment of the Messianic promises found all along the Old Covenant. The Eucharist is the new life brought by Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God incarnate, life shared with his disciples in order to let them taste the inaugurated Kingdom of God. The Eucharist is not therefore an abolition or substitute for the liturgy of time, but rather the accomplishment of all the Messianic expectations, beliefs and promises preserved in the Jewish tradition and manifested in the Jewish cyclical liturgical celebration of the history of the People of Israel. Schmemmann insists on the idea of new and accomplishment, persevering in keeping the historical and eschatological bivalence of the Christian liturgy.<sup>318</sup>

It is worth noting here the presence, in Schmemmann's understanding, of a crisis within the historical development, fulfilment and transformation of the Old Covenant cult into the Christian celebration of the presence of God in the

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<sup>318</sup> He states: "The liturgy of time (now recognised as the old Jewish cult preserved by the Church) was therefore preserved in a way by necessity – as the completion of the Eucharist, without which the application of the Eucharist to time or any real sanctification of the life of this world would be incomplete. The Eucharist does not replace the liturgy of time, since by nature it is the manifestation in this aeon of another Aeon, it is the communication of the faithful in eternal life, in the Kingdom of God already "come in power." It cannot abolish the liturgy of time, because then time would be really emptied and deprived of meaning, would be nothing but "interval" between celebrations of the Eucharist. Thus the new cult, an eschatological cult in the deepest sense of the word, required for its real fulfilment inclusion in the rhythm of time, as the affirmation of the reality of the world which Christ came to save." *idem.*, pp. 74-75.

midst of his people for the life of the world. The crisis is required in order to engender the newness of the old, in order to fulfil the meaning and *raison d'être* of the old. In this case crisis means also conversion and Schmemmann calls the Church to a permanent conversion of her own understanding of her liturgical life. This crisis is nothing but another manifestation of the tension we have observed between the eighth day and the Judaic sabbatical worship. It is not yet clear from Schmemmann's statements if this conversion implies reformation or not.

### **Liturgical Piety and Its Ecclesiological Meaning**

Schmemmann continues his exploration of the historical development of the liturgy in Christendom and arrives at the fourth and fifth centuries, periods characterised by fundamental changes in the Christian cult. According to Schmemmann, this period is important because it starts with a crisis, the crisis of the novelty brought by the emperor Constantine.<sup>319</sup>

There are characteristics that did not change and there are new liturgical elements which appeared in that period. A major feature of continuity in Schmemmann's view is illustrated in the fact that "the Church saw herself at the very centre of the world, she confessed herself as the salt and salvation of the world."<sup>320</sup> Another thing "eternally" present in the Christian cult, yet paradoxically a source of continuous changes, according to Schmemmann is piety, "the religious sense."<sup>321</sup> This factor binds the Christian to the spatiality and temporality of his earthly dwelling. Emphasising the contextual factor of the manifestation of religious piety, Schmemmann affirms that

A "coefficient of refraction" determines the "piety" or "religious sense" of the period, and this in turn affects the further development of the religion itself in

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<sup>319</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical theology*, p. 91.

<sup>320</sup> *idem.*, p. 96.

<sup>321</sup> *idem.*, p. 97.

its objective content. This religious sense can be defined as liturgical piety. This is the psychological acceptance of the cult, its experience within the religious mind, its refraction within the consciousness of the believer. Above all it is important for the historian of worship to know that the "liturgical piety" of an epoch can in various ways fail to correspond to the liturgy or cult of which this piety is nevertheless the psychological perception or experience. This means that piety can accept the cult in a "key" other than that in which it was conceived and express as text, ceremony or "rite." Liturgical piety has the strange power of "transposing" texts or ceremonies, of attaching a meaning to them which is not their plain or original meaning.<sup>322</sup>

This quotation requires special attention due to the fact that it expresses some of Schmemmann's principal intuitions of his hermeneutics of liturgy. But before commenting on these features I must note that with liturgical piety he touches the core of the liturgical experience and its hermeneutics.<sup>323</sup> Along with

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<sup>322</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., pp. 97-98. For the state of the ecclesial consciousness see Schmemmann, "Liturgy and Theology", op. cit., p. 51. This article represents Schmemmann's mature theological view concerning the role of that consciousness in the ecclesiastical shapes. For similar ideas concerning liturgical piety see idem., pp. 58-60. Schmemmann's understanding of liturgical piety and its derivation, secularism, draw Andrew Louth's attention, pushing him to comment the following on that issue and some others related to it: "There is much that is attractive and powerful about Schmemmann's vision (his own word, one he repeated) of the liturgy: the dangers of pietism and secularism are evident, and what Schmemmann has to say about the dangers of the Church giving in to secularism by presenting itself as a kind of spiritual psychotherapy that will make humans happier and more contented is compelling, as true now as when he uttered it in the 1960s. It is, in many respects, Schmemmann's vision that has guided the changes in the way the Divine Liturgy has been celebrated over the last half-century or so: introduction of the vernacular, greater simplicity in ceremonial and music, a way of celebrating that follows the structure of the liturgical action, greater participation by the laity, not least in terms of frequency of communion, and so on, though these are all a matter of degree, not fundamental changes of the kind the West has seen over the same period, at least in the Catholic and Anglican Churches." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, op. cit., p. 206.

<sup>323</sup> Quoting a sound liturgist Schmemmann says: "As Gregory Dix has said: 'It is one thing to know the history of worship, that is when such and such a custom was introduced, and where; it is much more difficult task to understand the real causes leading to these changes.' And we must regard the evolution and development of liturgical piety as one of the major causes." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 99. Andrew Louth complains academically against the misuse of the critics of the individual piety employed in the Russian diaspora. A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, op. cit., pp. 208-209.



eschatology, liturgical piety will form the subject of on-going inquiry in my argument because they depict his understanding of the crisis within the Orthodox Church. Despite the lack of basic notes concerning the source of his statements, Schmemmann balances his description of liturgical piety between communitarian subject and individual perception. We have already met this dialectic of community – individual. His appreciation of the psychological factor within the religious sense is very superficial, if not inconsistent. There is no room in Schmemmann's view for growth or going beyond limits in someone's religious sense and there is no room for spiritual progress in his presentation. The psychologism uttered by Schmemmann leaves no space for mystical encounter and for spiritual discernment.<sup>324</sup> What is worth remarking in his apprehension is the fact that liturgical piety can damage someone's liturgical perception of the celebration, especially due to its primary role in sensing the liturgy. There is, according to Schmemmann, a mutual influence between liturgical piety, the person or the group of persons engaged in the liturgy and the all-embracing context of their lives.

Speaking about historical forms of liturgical piety, Schmemmann differentiates sharply between the liturgical piety of early Christianity and that which came later.<sup>325</sup> Schmemmann continues his exploration and exemplification of various liturgical pieties that appeared during the millenary history of Christian worship, noting especially the changes brought with new manifestations of those religious senses: the breakthrough of mysteriological piety, the historical shift of sensing the cult, the apparition of the discrepancy

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<sup>324</sup> It is worth noting the sadness of the attitude of blame that the Orthodox mentality has towards psychology and its scientific outcomes in modern society. Schmemmann did not escape such an attitude.

<sup>325</sup> He states: " This liturgical piety of the early Church, which can be called quite accurately eschatological and ecclesiological (just as the eschatology and ecclesiology of the early Church may well be defined, in the words of Fr N. Afanasiev, as Eucharistic and liturgical), gave a completely unique character to the Christian worship of the first three centuries, revealing the significance of its *lex orandi*." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 103.

between religious and profane inside the religious perception of the Church and her liturgical elements and finally the idea of sanctification through liturgical experience. For Schmemmann all these liturgical estrangements deeply affected the self-perception of the Church and her relation with the world.<sup>326</sup>

### **The Impact of the Subject of Liturgical Piety on the Liturgical Experience**

A particular liturgical piety engenders a certain hermeneutics of experience.<sup>327</sup> According to Schmemmann, liturgical piety is grounded eschatologically and ecclesiastically for Christians.<sup>328</sup> Although Schmemmann analyses various kinds of liturgical piety, I will limit my discussion to the following questions: Who has the experience? Who is the subject of piety? On whose piety is the Church built? However, before returning to these questions, we should note that there are some difficulties with Schmemmann's understanding of piety. For example, he reduces monastic experience to a form of mystical piety, which he finds unacceptable from an academic perspective.<sup>329</sup> I will consider this topic again later.

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<sup>326</sup> *idem.*, pp. 103-131.

<sup>327</sup> *idem.*, pp. 97-110.

<sup>328</sup> *idem.*, p. 103.

<sup>329</sup> Vladimir Lossky and Dumitru Stăniloae are among those who emphasise the importance of this mystical experience and its hermeneutics. After several years of uttering the crisis within the Orthodox Church as an outcome of wrong monastic and somehow mystical influences, Schmemmann understood the necessity of grounding his statements on the mystical theological renewal of Orthodoxy in the West, but even then his propositions were superficial and without real impact on the state of affairs: "Yet it is precisely faith *as experience*, the total and living experience of the Church, that constitutes the source and the context of theology in the East, of that theology at least which characterised the patristic age. It is 'description' more than 'definition' for it is, above all, a search for words and concepts adequate to and expressive of the living experience of the Church; ... It is itself a part and a fruit of that experience, and it is in this sense that Vladimir Lossky calls it 'mystical theology.' Its criteria lie not in formal and, therefore, autonomous 'authorities,' but in its adequacy to and consistency with its inner life and experience of the Church." Schmemmann, "Liturgy and Theology", *op. cit.*, p. 54. Concerning the relationship between liturgy, theology and practicing asceticism see Fagerberg, D. W., *Theologia Prima: What is Liturgical Theology?* Hillenbrand Books, Chicago, IL, 2004.

Schmemmann assigns experience to the personal level.<sup>330</sup> Yet, he fails to explain how the Church can preserve the personal characteristics of an individual's experience during the process of elaborating the communal dimension of the liturgy. This preservation of personal experience implies that personal existence continues within the community of the Church in a way that is fundamentally different from the manner in which it occurs in any other kind of community.<sup>331</sup>

Schmemmann has a profoundly ecclesial view of liturgical experience. For him, experience finds its fulfilment in the community that gathers for liturgy. He distinguishes "between the forms of the cult (its structure, language, and ceremonies) and its acceptance or experience by the community".<sup>332</sup> Then, he emphasises the communal nature of the Christian cult.<sup>333</sup> After discussing differences that characterise the forms of various cults, he goes on to examine discrepancies in their content. The content of the Christian cult is identical with the liturgical event. The cult actually celebrates and proclaims the saving event:

The Christian cult is not experienced as a repetition of the saving fact in which it is rooted, since this fact was unique and unrepeatable. The Christian cult is the proclamation of the saving nature of this fact and also the realization and revelation, the actualization of its eternal efficacy, of the saving reality created by it.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Schmemmann presents a remarkable analysis of faith in the New Covenant, which sees it as being typologically experienced and fulfilled through the Old. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., pp. 59-60. A similar idea appears on pages 99-103.

<sup>331</sup> Regarding the dangers of certain types of personal experience in the Church, the issues raised by individualism, and Schmemmann's fight for the eradication of such tendencies, see Mills, C. W., "Faire voler en éclats les castes cléricales: vers une Eglise conciliaire", in *La joie du Royaume*, op. cit., pp. 277-291.

<sup>332</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>333</sup> He affirms: "the cult is the sole content of the cultic society, outside it the society has neither reality nor purpose. Its purpose in performing the cult is to 'communicate' to its members what they are looking for in the cult: sanctification, happiness, etc. On the other hand in Christianity the cult establishes the reality of the Church. Its purpose is not the individual sanctification of its members, but the creation of the people of God as the Body of Christ, the manifestation of the Church as new life in New Aeon." idem., pp. 107-108.

<sup>334</sup> idem., p. 108.

The experience of the community appears again in Schmemmann's argument when he speaks of the cultic space that is offered by the concrete church building.<sup>335</sup> He proposes that in the case of the mystery religions, the "sacred-profane" dialectic – toward which he is so hostile when it comes to liturgy – generated an unhealthy mentality that set the superiority of individual experience over against communal involvement in the cult.<sup>336</sup> In his opinion, this struggle between individualistic liturgical piety and the Church's communal experience was continued by monastic traditions of Christian worship. In his desire to draw a line between himself and the "evil" world, the monk also drew a line between himself and the Church – which was supposed to be the leaven of the world in an eschatological sense. The communal eschatology of the Church thus became individualised.<sup>337</sup> Schmemmann uses these two examples of the "metamorphosis of liturgical piety" to present an ecclesiological understanding of liturgical piety. Yet, his critique of monastic practises fails to take into account the theology of personal encounters between

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<sup>335</sup> He states: "in the centre of the faith and consciousness of the early Christian community there was the experience of the Church as the reality of a living temple, actualized in the Eucharistic assembly. Thus the whole significance of the building in which the assembly took place was that it made possible this realization, or fullness of the Church in a given place. As with all things in the experience of early Christianity, the idea of the temple or church building was subordinated to the idea of the Church, and was expressed in the categories of Eucharistic ecclesiology." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>336</sup> Regarding pagan mystery religions, he writes: "the basic idea in this liturgical piety was the distinction between the profane and the sacred and, consequently, the understanding of the cult as primarily a system of ceremonies and ritual which transmits sacredness to the profane and establishes between the two the possibility of communion and communication." idem., op. cit., p. 126. Then, after reproaching the Christian mind for accepting such an attitude, he states: "the Sacrament was celebrated on behalf of the people, for their sanctification – but the Sacrament ceased to be experienced as the very actualization of the people as the Church. ... The idea of communion as a corporate liturgical action "sealing" the Eucharistic breaking of bread was modified into the idea that it was an individual-sanctifying action, related to personal piety and not at all to the ecclesiological status of the communicant. In the practice of administering communion, one can indeed speak of a "revolution" since the understanding of communion as an individual action obscured its original ecclesiological and truly liturgical meaning." idem., pp. 128-129. Similar ideas are developed in his article "Theology and Liturgical Tradition", op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>337</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 138.

the divine and the human that was developed by biblical authors and is indispensable for connecting theology and worship.

For Schmemmann, the hermeneutics of experience involves interpreting the corporate reality that is experienced in the Church through liturgical events and as the content of Christian doctrine. As the theophany of divinity in its encounter with human beings, the Church is experience. By indirectly acknowledging the pivotal role that hermeneutics plays in the relationship between liturgy and theology – between the Church's doctrinal dimension and her liturgical life – Schmemmann introduces his primary thesis concerning the interaction between liturgy and theology.

### **The Materialisation of Liturgical Piety**

If the clash between the Judaic cult and its fulfilled Christian expression was expressed mainly in the newly forged liturgy of time with a combination between cyclical commemoration and linear implementation, the meeting point between the pagan mysteriological worship and the Christian cult took place on the "geographical" ground of the liturgical life of the Church. Holy places and holy buildings emerged.

Schmemmann gives examples of this type of liturgical predicament using the time of Constantine's reign. His first concern is yet to remind us that the initial understanding of the idea of place or building in relation to worship in Spirit and truth was definitely eschatological. The liturgical experience was leading the faithful to the spiritual and ecclesiological understanding of his belonging to a new, heavenly reality:

In the centre of the faith and consciousness of the early Christian community there was the experience of the Church as the reality of a living temple, actualized in the Eucharistic assembly. Thus the whole significance of the building in which the assembly took place (*domus ecclesiae* – a term appearing in various places quite early) was that it made possible this

realization, of fullness of the Church in a given place. As with all things in the experience of early Christianity, the idea of the temple of church building was subordinated to the idea of the Church, and was expressed in the categories of Eucharistic ecclesiology.<sup>338</sup>

Schmemmann's second concern is to bring the state of fact to contemporaneity. He does this using an example from the period of the Russian émigré in France. This shows how Schmemmann managed to relate different religious experiences to one ecclesiological and eschatological reality. If in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and right afterwards the glorious yet somehow superficial expansion of Christianity required bigger and more impressive buildings for the cult, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in a time of threatened existence in a foreign country, the religious experience of the Russian migrants in Paris adapted to a humble yet rich spiritual reality. Schmemmann's narrative of those memories is worth published in full:

In the first years of the Russian emigration, when worship had to be celebrated in cellars and garages converted into churches, we became aware of the complete impossibility of celebrating it "as it should be," according to all the canons of elegance and solemnity proper to the synodical style of Russian Orthodoxy. This became especially apparent on the days of services conducted by the archbishop or on special solemn festivals. In a very short time a piety was created which was not only by necessity but also in essence opposed to any show of pomp or external solemnity in worship, which would endure such pomp with suffering, as something undesirable and inappropriate to the nature of the Christian cult. For many people these wretched garage churches will remain forever connected with the fullness of liturgical experience, something which becomes impossible in churches of magnificent and grandiose design. The same process began in the Church – only in the

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<sup>338</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 114. There is nevertheless obvious a smooth transposition of Schmemmann's own religious experience within the Russian liturgical obsessional taste for huge and pompous churches into the liturgical piety of the early Christians.

opposite direction – when large and more or less costly churches began to appear.<sup>339</sup>

Schmemmann's description of that type of liturgical experience is the more precious and pertinent as other Christians testified about similar things.<sup>340</sup> Speaking about solemnity in cult, Schmemmann proposed a double understanding of that earnestness: an inside comprehension aiming to circumscribe the inner meaning of the worship and an outer perception intending to enhance the atmosphere of sacredness and fearfulness.<sup>341</sup> This hermeneutical procedure shed light on his more general process of perceiving the liturgical experience of the faithful. There is also a certain level of frustration present in those lines that Schmemmann wrote. I would say that what Schmemmann felt about Orthodox liturgical life he felt also about Orthodox theology in opposition to Catholic or Protestant theology. The churches in garages were symbols for the unobserved Orthodox liturgical and patristic wealthy treatises.

### **Theology, Liturgy, Piety According to *Journals***

I would introduce now some testimonies from his journals. This method is worth doing because of the very personal and touching fragrance it offers. It grants precious images about the danger of nationalism and liturgical

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<sup>339</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>340</sup> See I. Noble & co. *The Ways of Orthodox Theology in the West*, chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>341</sup> He states: "In liturgics, or rather in the phenomenology of cult, it is high time that a distinction was made between inner and outer solemnity. Inner solemnity lies in the fullness of religious meaning invested in an action, no matter how simple it may be: the breaking of bread, the lifting up the hands, etc., or more accurately, it is the complete awareness and acceptance of this meaning by those who are performing the ceremony or who are present at it. ... External solemnity, on the other hand, consists in the sacralisation of sacred ceremonies and actions, in emphasizing that they are not 'simple,' in building around them an atmosphere of sacred and religious fear which cannot fail to influence the way they are received and experienced by the participants in the cult. In the light of this distinction one can say that early Christian worship was profoundly solemn with an inner solemnity, and devoid of external solemnity." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 120. Needless to say for a contemporary Orthodox worshiper how true are Schmemmann's observations concerning the heaviness of the Orthodox cult?

superficiality that Schmemann would never deal with formally in the academic society. Such passages are many and this thesis is not the place to expose them all. Nevertheless a foretaste of them is necessary for their authenticity.

The entry from Wednesday, November 7, 1973 provides us Schmemann's remarks concerning personal piety as a result of belonging to the Church:

On Saturday I heard the confession of a pious man who told me that "general confession" was too easy for him. "I prepare for my personal confession, I do not sleep half a night..." But after that comes a series of superficial worlds and reasoning, torturous and needless spiritual chatter and condemnation of all those who do not "understand" him... And *that* is piety?<sup>342</sup>

The "practical" misunderstanding among the people, who took their commitment to the Church lightly, was an endless source of sorrow for Schmemann. He took pains to make these people perceive the meaning of their belonging to the community of those to whom Jesus Christ is the Shepherd and the Master, and this church-activity made him suffer a lot. He had to fight against prejudices and "traditions", against nationalism and churchliness.

The actual situation of the Orthodox Church and the fake piety experienced almost everywhere at that time, are the subject of the entry from Thursday, February 21, 1974. Schmemann speaks here openly of the liberating role of belonging to the Church. He comes to the conclusion that the faithful rather prefer the "security" of narrow interests found in "so-called spiritual literature of dubious quality" than the new life in Christ: "Instead of teaching man to look at the world through the Church's vision, instead of transforming man's view of himself and his life, one feels obliged – in order to be 'spiritual' – to clothe oneself in an impersonal, soiled 'garment of piety'."<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Schmemann, *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemann 1973-1983*, op. cit., p. 17

<sup>343</sup> idem., p. 33.



Seven days later, he encountered again the pseudo-piety of those who hide themselves under this cloak of spiritual invisibility.<sup>344</sup> Even if his conclusions are true and even if the tendency among the faithful is still the same after many years of great effort from the part of many theologians and good spiritual fathers, yet his difficulty in confessing is quite problematic. It should be regarded rather under a personal tonality of spiritual background, heritage and formation. It is also linked to the general tendency of Russian émigré theologians to reject monastic life.<sup>345</sup>

Experiencing the victory of life over death on Lazarus Saturday, April 6, 1974, Schmemmann got to understand that victory as being his own personal victory.<sup>346</sup> Philosophising liturgically about Christ's Passion and Resurrection brings him to link the liturgical celebration with everyday life.<sup>347</sup>

One of his biggest interests was about death and its theological link to life. In the entry from Monday, September 16, 1974 we have a meaningful note about this subject. While preparing his new course about *The Liturgy of Death*, Schmemmann comes to the complexity of the problem and tries to solve it by stating that "death is in the centre of religion and of culture, and one's attitude towards death determines one's attitude toward life."<sup>348</sup> He starts his analysis by acknowledging two tendencies among people who take death seriously into account: denial that leads to neurosis (immortality) and acceptance that involves asceticism and denial of the flesh. Here he commits a great

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<sup>344</sup> He says: " First Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts yesterday. Before the Liturgy, two hours of confessions. The usual impression: the narrowing of man's conscience through piety and, therefore, what one hears is not a confession of sins but of 'difficulties' that should not occupy our attention. I always try to call people to life higher, more openly. This morning I lectured about sin – a reconstruction of the sacrament of repentance, its true dimension, ecclesiastical, eschatological. How far is that dimension from the habitual view of confession which leads to a rather dull, grey digging into one's self. How much unnecessary fuss in the Church, how little air, quiet, light." *idem.*, p. 34.

<sup>345</sup> Maria Skobtsova's and Paul Evdokimov's counter examples sustain this rule.

<sup>346</sup> Schmemmann, *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann 1973-1983*, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>347</sup> Schmemmann, *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann 1973-1983*, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>348</sup> *idem.*, p. 45.

misunderstanding concerning asceticism. He has already criticised monasticism in his doctoral thesis, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, and in others articles, but here he exaggerates. His statement from his *Journals* is too short to be evaluated correctly, but even so, understanding asceticism as a kind of acceptance of death is erroneous. Christian asceticism is based on Christ's victory over death and on the possibility, blessed by God, of transfiguring the human body from a body of flesh into a body of glory. Christian asceticism is the manifestation of the wholeness of life and it is not the sign of denying the flesh by the fatalistic acceptance of death. His further statements contradict his theological ones. He continues his inquiry and he criticises the Church's discourse about life and death as being separated in connotation.<sup>349</sup>

Schmemmann makes a kind of mixture of different categories taken from religion, theology, sociology and culture. What is certain is that such reasoning cannot change things fundamentally and cannot help the faithful to understand the reality of death. His merit for this entry consists in reporting the Church's failure to deal with death and its consequences and in reminding us about Christ's Resurrection. For Christians, death is a personal, therefore communal issue and its real meaning is to be understood in the framework of the community celebrating the new life brought by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. In order to come to terms with death, Schmemmann points out the horridness of living aimlessly in this world:

What disappears in death? The experience of the ugliness of this world, of evil, of the fluidity of time. What remains is the beauty that gladness and in

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<sup>349</sup> He states: " Life must not be a preparation for death, but victory over death, so that, in Christ, death becomes the triumph of life. We teach about life without relation to death, and about death as unrelated to life. When it considers life only as a preparation for death, Christianity makes life meaningless, and reduces death to 'the other world,' which does not exist, because God has created only one world, one life. It makes Christianity and death meaningless as victory; it does not solve the neurosis of death. Interest about the fate of the dead beyond the grave makes Christian eschatology meaningless. The Church does not pray *about* the dead; it *is* (*must be*) their continuous Resurrection, because the Church *is* life in death, victory over death, the universal Resurrection." *idem.*, p. 46.

the same moment saddens the heart. "Peace." The peace of the Sabbath which opens the fullness and the perfection of Creation. God's peace. Not of death, but of life in its fullness, in its eternal possession.<sup>350</sup>

One week later he comes back to this issue writing about the sacramentality of the world. How could one live in this world, rejoice in its beauty and then die as if it were the end of all? To this question, his answer claims that the function of the heart is to remember and the function of the world is to indicate towards something "original", which was at the origin of the world.<sup>351</sup> Maybe it was not necessary to give details about what one would remember in eternity ... but his belief concerning the link between this reality and the prototype of the world, which is God's beauty, is excellent. This theological understanding of the sacramentality of the world came to him from his own experience expressed in non-academic forms.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Schmemmann, *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann 1973-1983*, op. cit., p. 46. We touch here the subject of the fourth chapter where we shall deal with Schmemmann's understanding of the sacramentality of the world.

<sup>351</sup> He says: " The horror, the terror of death is one of the strongest existing feelings: regret about leaving this world, 'the gentle kingdom of this earth.' (G. Bernanos). But what if this 'gentle kingdom,' this open sky, these hills and woods flooded with the sun, this silent praise of colours, of beauty, of light, what if all this is finally nothing other than the revelation of what is behind death: a window of eternity? Yes, but this unique, greyish day, the lights suddenly coming on at dusk, all that the heart remembers so acutely – they are not anymore, they cannot be brought back... But the heart remembers, precisely because this grey day has shown us eternity. I will not remember that particular day in eternity, but that day was a breakthrough into eternity, a sort of remembrance of the eternity of God, of life everlasting." *idem.*, p. 47.

<sup>352</sup> He states: "All this has been said a thousand times. But when it reaches the heart and becomes a living experience... where from, why? Such peace, such joy, such dissolution of fear, of grief, of depression, fills the heart. And one wish remains: to be able to carry that feeling without spilling it, to not let it dry out or lose its fragrance in our daily bustle." *ibid.*

## The Monastic Ecclesial Challenge<sup>353</sup>

Schmemmann's life experience was not deeply linked with monastic personalities. Even Father Cyprian Kern and all the Orthodox bishops he worked with throughout his entire life are not to be seen as major monastic influences on Schmemmann's theological thought. His relation with the monastic realm of the Orthodox Church is really an issue to be taken into account for its theological concerns. What is important for my argument is to understand Schmemmann's position vis-à-vis monasticism and the Church and the liturgical implication. Why this? Because Schmemmann calls the world to be heavily involved in this equation and thus, his liturgical hermeneutics along with his cosmic sacramentality are directly affected by this problem.

Schmemmann criticises monasticism in a polite but sharp way:

It is necessary first to remember that monasticism began as a lay and indeed private movement. Neither of the founders of organised monasticism – St Anthony and St Pachomius – has any sacerdotal order; both in fact regarded it as incompatible with the monastic vocation. Early monasticism must be defined as "private" in the sense that it did not begin as an establishment or institution of the Church. It was something elemental and sporadic. It was not

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<sup>353</sup> Vassa Larin pointed out the link between monasticism and ecclesiology in her article concerned with analysing two "antinomical *phenomena: Alexander Schmemmann and monasticism*". She said: "the tension between Fr Alexander Schmemmann, a married priest and ardent missionary of Orthodoxy in the West, and traditional Orthodox monasticism, is almost inevitable. Indeed, the tension created by this antinomy seems inherent to the very existence of the Church, whose life pulsates in a productive, albeit tense, interplay of both the 'contemplative' and 'active' charismas. For this reason a reflection on Schmemmann's place within this antinomy can elucidate, more than anything else, his *ecclesiology*, i.e., his vision of the Church, as well as his special vocation in it." Larin, "Fr Alexander Schmemmann and Monasticism" in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 53/2009, pp. 301-318, pp. 301-302. Andrew Louth looks critically at Schmemmann's way of envisaging the monastic tradition of the Orthodox Church, linking Schmemmann's point of view with the mysteriological piety, two central visions in Schmemmann's liturgical theology: "The criticism that strikes me as most important are related: his rejection of what he calls mysteriological piety, which, on investigation, disposes of a good deal of Orthodox liturgical reflection over the centuries, and what I think we could call his distaste for monasticism. These are bound up with each other, as it is in monastic circles that what Schmemmann called mysteriological piety flourished. They are also fundamental, for, as I shall argue, they are closely related to Schmemmann's central vision of the liturgy." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, op. cit., p. 206.

only a departure out of the "world" but also in some sense a departure from the organised life of the Church. We must qualify this at once by saying that this departure was neither a setting of oneself in opposition to the Church nor a protest against her. There was not even a hint of catharist or montanist feeling in early monasticism. Dogmatically monasticism not only thought of itself as part of the Church, it also regarded its way as a realization of the ideal bestowed on and in the Church. Nevertheless this anachoritism or separation was the real novelty of monasticism as it developed from the beginning of the fourth century. It was unprecedented in the life and consciousness of the Church. And if we recall the "ecclesio-centricity" of the early Christian cult, its significance as a manifestation and "realization" of the Church, its inseparability from the idea of the assembly of the people of God, then it becomes evident that the "liturgical situation" of monasticism in the first, basic and determining stage of its development was something radically new.<sup>354</sup>

One can read in these lines Schmemmann's frustration that the monastic communities in Russian society remained stuck in the Middle Ages. Acquiring political and ecclesiastical power during Tsarist Russia, the monks formed a church within the Church, and gathered enough authority to live wealthy and comfortable lives. Schmemmann's statements about monasticism in his *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* are unfounded and malicious. Moreover

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<sup>354</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 133. After mentioning that in his previous book *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, Schmemmann had a positive perception of monasticism, Vassa Larin explains how Schmemmann founded his critic on monasticism as his eschatology turned towards the outer experience of the Church in the world. Leaving aside the inner necessary spiritual repentance or struggle, Schmemmann, in Larin's view, "arrives at an increasingly 'eschatologized' vision of the Church, according to which the Church's principle calling is to illuminate, evangelise, fulfil 'this world' and 'this life.' Monasticism falls short of this objective." Larin, "Fr Alexander Schmemmann and Monasticism", op. cit., p. 308. Professor Andrew Louth commented also on Schmemmann's linking monasticism with eschatology, criticizing the tension emerging from his theological vision: "there is some kind of conflict between Schmemmann's emphasis on eschatology and the way in which monasticism, as its best, sees itself as preserving an eschatological dimension in relation to a Church that has reached some sort of compromise with the world; it is almost as if Schmemmann feared that the very existence of monasticism might let the Church in the world off the hook, rather than being a constant, and often awkward, reminder of the Church's true vocation." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, op. cit., p. 209.

these affirmations are not consequent. In his article "Theology and Liturgical Tradition", he gives as an example the hesychast movement (a genuine monastic movement of patristic and spiritual revival) as a non-scholastic way of dealing with the rule of *lex orandi est lex credendi*.<sup>355</sup> His aversion to monasticism should be also read through the lens of his distaste for the Slavophile movement, a stream that rooted itself in the monastic tradition, which was central for the Russian society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Recalling Louis Bouyer's idea that "monasticism arose as an almost unconscious and instinctive reaction against the secularization of the Church," Schmemmann channels his argument about the impact of monasticism on liturgical piety towards the eschatological dimension of this new way of living the Christian call. His conclusion is all but a critical perception of the relation between monastic communities and the world: "in monasticism the renunciation of the world took on certain radical forms, so that it almost dissolved the original cosmic element in the Christian faith and sometimes became a denial of the worth of the world and man."<sup>356</sup> Schmemmann's criticism against the monastic departure from the world is to be looked for also in "those motives which compelled the monks to prefer the anachorite life to participation in the Church's cult, to the general 'ecclesiocentricity' of early Christianity."<sup>357</sup> The relationship of the monastic communion with nature and the monastic involvement in social and charitable activities in European history comes in direct contradiction with Schmemmann's approach to this theme.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgical Tradition", op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>356</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 132. The issue of secularism will be extensively analysed in the fourth chapter.

<sup>357</sup> idem., p. 135.

<sup>358</sup> Let us take some examples of total contradiction between Schmemmann's statements and the historical testimony: he stipulates that "What was new here [in monasticism] was the idea of prayer as the sole content of life, as a task which required a separation from and renunciation of the world and all its works." idem., p. 138. The question is: what then happened to all the monks who worked discretely all their life in order to help poor people or the monastic communities that sustained whole regions in Asia and elsewhere economically? In order to

Despite the fact that Schmemmann's assertions on monasticism are completely wrong, his intuition regarding the relation between the Church, her "deviation" i.e. the monastic life and the world are fundamental for the course of my argument showing how Schmemmann came to perceive the crisis within the Orthodox Church.

The change formed in the consciousness of early Christians concerning the equation world – Church – Kingdom of God engendered the monastic movement. According to Schmemmann, beginning with the fourth century the world overtook the place of the Church and of the Kingdom through the accommodation to the individualisation of the religious perspective. Schmemmann has in mind the individualisation of the rule of prayer, something to be rejected if one looks at the rapid and natural development of the monastic communities.<sup>359</sup> As I have already remarked Schmemmann's approach to the monastic way of life in the Church is detached from the reality presented in

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comprehend Schmemmann's attitude towards monasticism I call for professor Andrew Louth's explanations that take into account the larger context of the Russian diaspora in the West at that time: "Schmemmann's distaste for monasticism also echoes scholarly prejudices in the West, at least among Protestants, and is bound up closely with the rejection of mysteriological piety: Chapter 3 of his *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* discusses both of them, and sometimes runs them together, as when he says, 'The 'mysteriological' terminology became a kind of common language for describing the rise of monasticism and for speaking of the sanctifying quality of worship.' [Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 113] ... There are, however, a number of ways in which this distaste for monasticism might be put. First of all, more generally, as we have had occasion to notice already, the Russian emigration, at least that belonging to the exarchate under Metropolitan Evlogy, seems to have had problems concerning monasticism, problems it seems to have bequeathed to the Orthodox Church in America. ... Schmemmann's attitude to, his distaste for, monasticism was something that seems to have characterised at least part of the Russian diaspora." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, op. cit., p. 208.

<sup>359</sup> He says: " In the early Christian understanding prayer was not opposed to life or the occupations of life, prayer penetrated life and consisted above all in a new understanding of life and its occupations, in relating them to the central object of faith – to the Kingdom of God and the Church. ... And yet monasticism was a departure out of life and its works for the sake of prayer. It was rooted in the experience of times, when the original eschatological aspiration of Christians, which has made possible the simple relating of all work to the "Lord's Day," was becoming complicated, hesitant, modified." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 137. One should ask: how should we look at all the testimonies of mystical experiences that shaped Orthodox theology from the very beginning of monasticism and that are genuine examples of eschatological encounters with Jesus Christ?

historical testimonies. The monastic departure from the world was not a renunciation of the commitment to the cosmic salvation mediated by the Christian kerygma, but a departure from the temptations residing in the fallen world. This was not for the sake of Christians only, but for the sake of all.

An individual moralistic system replaced the communal existential vision. This is Schmemmann's reproach towards the context that led monasticism to enter the Church's framework.<sup>360</sup> In the time when monasticism appeared, the prayer of the Church was no longer experienced as mediation between heaven and earth, but as a rule to be accomplished in itself.<sup>361</sup> Jesus' own example followed by the Apostles and early Christians contradicts Schmemmann's evaluation of the dialectic he conceives in the monastic life between life and prayer. The decadence of the monastic life in Medieval Russia must be the reason for his rationale of such a jaundiced view of monasticism.

### **The Mysteriological Tension within the Rule of *Lex Orandi Est Lex Credendi***

In observing the very first period of Christian development of liturgical piety Schmemmann identifies for his argument the struggle between mysteriological piety and the Christian liturgical experience. Even if his analysis of this issue is lacking in technical dimensions, nevertheless it constitutes for Schmemmann's theology a fundamental vantage point concerning

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<sup>360</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>361</sup> He states: " If in the first early Christian view every undertaking could become a prayer, a ministry, a creating of and bearing witness to the Kingdom, in monasticism prayer itself now became the sole undertaking, replacing all other tasks. The labour prescribed by the monastic rules (the weaving of baskets, makings of rope, etc.) was in this sense not a "task." It had no significance in itself, was not a ministry or vocation. It was necessary only as a support for the work of prayer, as one of its means. This is not the illumination of life and work by prayer, not a joining of these things in prayer, not even a turning of life into prayer, but prayer as life or, more properly, the replacement of life by prayer." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 138.



the use of the rule of *lex orandi est lex credendi*. Let us see how he returns to this issue.

Stating that liturgical theology discloses the meaning of worship, he rejects any use of "superficial and arbitrary symbolism". From his point of view, there are two major elements that need theological clarification: liturgical symbolism and liturgical commemoration.<sup>362</sup> According to Schmemmann, theology is called to be a system of concepts that has faith and doctrine as its content, with liturgy serving as the expression of that content in the Church's life. Experience is the holistic presupposition of the life of the Church, as this is embodied in her faith and articulated in her liturgy.<sup>363</sup> This assessment grounds Schmemmann's liturgical hermeneutics in a rounded process that starts with liturgy as the Church's most public act, passes through theology as the Church's authentic method of inquiry, and closes the circle with liturgical theology, which represents the crowning analytic act of the life of the Church.<sup>364</sup> Schmemmann uses a special expression in articulating this process:

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<sup>362</sup> In preparing this affirmation of liturgical commemoration, Schmemmann commits an uncharacteristic error by failing to mention Dom Gregory Dix's authoritative work *The Shape of the Liturgy*, Dacre Press, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1945: 238, chapter IX: The Meaning of the Eucharist. In this chapter Dix deals with the issue of liturgical commemoration. He used Dix's book in his doctoral dissertation. See p. 22, 99, 122.

<sup>363</sup> He asserts: "the examples mentioned are enough to show what the explanation of worship ought to be: it ought to be the elucidation of its theological meaning. Theology is above all explanation, 'the search for words appropriate to the nature of God', i.e. for a system of concepts corresponding as much as possible to the faith and experience of the Church. Therefore the task of liturgical theology consists in giving a theological basis to the explanation of worship and the whole liturgical tradition of the Church. This means, first, to find and define the concepts and categories which are capable of expressing as fully as possible the essential nature of the liturgical experience of the Church; second, to connect these ideas with that system of concepts which theology uses to expound the faith and doctrine of the Church; and third, to present the separate data of liturgical experience as a connected whole, as, in the last analysis, the "rule of prayer" dwelling with the Church and determining her 'rule of faith'." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>364</sup> He says: "if liturgical theology stems from an understanding of worship as the public act of the Church, then its final goal will be to clarify and explain the connection between this act and the Church, i.e. to explain how the Church express and fulfils herself in this act." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 17.

the ancient rule of *lex orandi est lex credendi*.<sup>365</sup> The chief difficulty with this explanatory schema arises when one attempts to apply this system in a concrete way; theology and liturgy tend to be separate systems with static and impermeable boundaries in the Orthodox Church. Schmemmann is aware of this reality and therefore he attempts to keep the wholeness of Orthodox theology making theology and liturgy work together. How does he do it? Paradoxically by looking for an equal place next to dogmatics for liturgical theology, by stating that

Liturgical theology is therefore an independent theological discipline, with its own special subject – the liturgical tradition of the Church, and requiring its own corresponding and special method, distinct from the methods of other theological disciplines. Without liturgical theology our understanding of the Church's faith and doctrine is bound to be incomplete.<sup>366</sup>

Schmemmann's system is not yet completely defined, lacking the centre of the circle, the thing to be mediated by liturgics and grasped by dogmatics. Schmemmann comes to this articulation in the next scientific step when he completes the introductory section of the *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*.

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<sup>365</sup> He states: "... the early Church firmly confessed the principle *lex orandi est lex credendi*. Therefore the science of liturgics cannot fail to be a theological science by its very character and purpose; and theology as a whole cannot do without the science of liturgics." *idem.*, p. 18.

<sup>366</sup> *idem.*, p. 19. Elsewhere he falls into a kind of liturgical fundamentalism linking theological enterprise with the liturgical life of the Church: "The formula *lex orandi est lex credendi* means nothing else than that theology is *possible* only within the Church, i.e. as a fruit of this new life in Christ, granted in the sacramental *leitourgia*, as a witness to the eschatological fullness of the Church, as in other terms, a participation in this *leitourgia*." Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgical Tradition", *op. cit.*, p. 18. He continues this exaggeration claiming the spirit of the patristic revival of the Orthodox Church: "The problem of the relationship between liturgy and theology is not for the Fathers a problem of priority or authority. Liturgical tradition in not an 'authority' or a *locus theologicus*, it is the ontological condition of theology, of the proper understanding of *kerygma*, of the Word of God, because it is in the Church, of which the *leitourgia* is the expression and the life, that the sources of theology are functioning as precisely 'sources'." What about the patristic mystical theology grounded on the experience of prayer, a theology forcefully underestimated and even criticised by Schmemmann? Or about *lectio divina*? Are they not sources for theology and do they not join the liturgical life of the Church in a non-liturgical way?

The negative tension between ancient pagan piety and the new Christian liturgical "stance" lies in "the tremendous difference in the understanding of the significance and function of the cult; or to put it even more accurately, we are concerned with the interrelationship of faith and cult."<sup>367</sup> If mysteriological piety was conceived as a faith in the utility of the cult leading to sanctification, the Christian attitude was the preaching of a saving faith having the cult as its result. If mysteriological piety was found in the mediation through cult of a higher spiritual yet totally different reality, Christianity kept the idea of mediation inherited from the Old Covenant cult and emphatically stated its historical uniqueness and eschatological significance.<sup>368</sup> Retrieving Florovsky's theological point on the importance of the place of the *kerygma* in the Christian cult, Schmemmann states the necessity of history as the only required element in order to make the liturgy a real mediation between the world and the Kingdom of God. Here again the relationship between liturgics and ecclesiology characterises Schmemmann's theological thought.

Schmemmann's interest in the historicity of the cult is supposed to balance the historicism brought by that new liturgical piety under a pagan influence. The "mysteriological colouring of the Christian cult" changed liturgical piety from its eschatological direction to a historical approach.<sup>369</sup> This means, according to Schmemmann, that different historical events from the history of salvation became aims *per se* in the structure of cult changing the purpose of the theology of time from manifesting the possibility of

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<sup>367</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>368</sup> He says: "Here also we see the fundamental difference between the Christian and the mysteriological cult, a difference both in function and content. In the mystery the "myth" is subordinated to the cult and is indeed a myth, acquiring whatever reality it has from the cult, while in Christianity what is primary is fact, with its historicity and reality, the cult having reality only in so far as the fact is real. If in the mystery the historical authenticity of the drama reproduced and enacted in the cult is secondary and has no decisive significance, in Christianity the "historicity" of the fact is *alpha* and *omega* of its whole faith and preaching." idem., p. 107.

<sup>369</sup> idem., p. 122.

experiencing the mystery of the Word into enabling the faithful intellectually to comprehend the Word's historical narrative.<sup>370</sup>

The acceptance by the Christian cult of neo-Platonic mysteriological features implied, according to Schmemmann a change in experiencing the sacraments of the Church. Sanctification changed place with participation. The sacraments became utilitarian objects in the hands of the faithful instead of being theological places of conversion, revelation and communion:

The Sacrament was celebrated on behalf of the people, for their sanctification – but the Sacrament ceased to be experienced as the very actualization of the people as the Church. ... In the practice of administering communion one can indeed speak of a "revolution" since the understanding of communion as an individual action obscured its original ecclesiological and truly liturgical meaning.<sup>371</sup>

Schmemmann speaking about sanctification throughout liturgical mediation causes the reader to think about Lossky's way of dealing with patristic *theosis* within a mystical context.<sup>372</sup> Both had the Church as a central meeting point, but from a quite different theological angle, which made their approach complementary.

### **The Mysteriological Sanctification of Time**

Another outcome of the mysteriological influence on the Christian cult can be found, according to Schmemmann in the multiplication of Holy Days.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> idem., pp. 121-125.

<sup>371</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>372</sup> V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1998.

<sup>373</sup> He says: "The dogmatic and mysteriological concept of the feasts as a kind of special and isolated liturgical event gradually changed its 'relationship' to the whole, to any single theology of time embracing the whole liturgical life of the Church. ... It would not be hard to show that our present Church Year has no real organic wholeness." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 177. A contrary approach to the mysteriological piety than Schmemmann has, and a critical statement towards Schmemmann is to be found in Andrew Louth's utterance of the third chapter from Schmemmann's *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*. See A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, op. cit., pp. 207-208.

This multiplication broke the primordial Christian understanding of time as a place for the integration of the eschatological fulfilment of the new time, the new aeon instituted by Christ. Schmemmann uses this moment of the development of his argument in order to correlate the liturgical crisis of the mysteriological influence with the cosmic understanding of the liturgy of time in early Christianity.<sup>374</sup> This sacramental perception of the cosmic dwelling of the Church in the world will be scrutinised in detail in the fourth chapter of my thesis.

While dealing with Feast Days in early Christianity, Schmemmann touches the issue of the sanctification of life under the concrete manner of holy people. He sees in the increasing tendency of venerating more and more persons in the post-Constantine period a problem concerning the character of saints of all the Christians accepted in early Christianity: "It is an accepted fact that the early Church knew nothing of our distinction between glorified or canonised saints and 'ordinary' members of the Church."<sup>375</sup> Schmemmann's way of analysing the stance of the Orthodox Church concerning this aspect that differentiates drastically the Orthodox Church from her Protestant sisters constitutes a positive ecumenical facet of his theology. The advanced point in his theological position is embodied in his statement about the relation between (all) the saints and the Church community:

Furthermore the cult of saints in the early Church was not mediatory. ... Nor was it sanctifying, in the sense of a sanctification of the Church. It was

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<sup>374</sup> He explains: "The early Christian theology of the 'eschaton' did not destroy, did not empty time, or abolish its significance, but transformed it into the 'time of the Church,' into the time of salvation. Within the Church time becomes a progressive movement toward the fullness of the Kingdom of Christ, toward His cosmic and historical triumph. ... The Church does not simply dwell in this world, waiting for the end of the world. The very fact that she is dwelling in the world is its salvation. The Church condemns it to exhaustion and death, but she also is its resurrection and the beginning of new life. The Feast Day in the early Church was eschatological because it was the manifestation and actualization of the Church herself, as the new life, as an anticipation of the unending day of the Kingdom." Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 181.

<sup>375</sup> Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 186.

sacramentally eschatological. It was "sacramental" in the sense that the presence of Christ attested to by the martyr's exploit was manifested in his body. It was eschatological because the martyr by his death demonstrated the power given to him by the Church, ... and because in his decision to die that he might live he manifested its reality.<sup>376</sup>

Unfortunately Schmemmann goes too far with his critic of the veneration of the saints in the Orthodox Church forgetting in his argument the testimonies of the New Testament concerning the impact of Paul's vestments on the early Christians and their veneration of them.<sup>377</sup> Once again, Schmemmann's own experience in the Church, this time concerning the liturgical behaviour of many Russian old women especially around the presence of relics, caused him to take such a sharp position.

The Christian cult is called to produce space for conversion. It flows out from faith and requires conversion of the heart in order to introduce those who celebrate it into the dimension of life in Christ. This new realm was historically grounded by Christ and is revealed by the Church in her liturgy.<sup>378</sup> Schmemmann contoured this space according to his understanding of the relation between time and worship, between the neo-Platonic influence and Christian initial kerygma, between the tension of the dialectic sacred-profane and the dialectic history-eschatology.

Dealing with the issue of nominalism which is the discrepancy between the true content of the heritage of Tradition and the Church's forms of expression (theological, canonical and liturgical forms)<sup>379</sup>, Schmemmann comes

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<sup>376</sup> idem., p. 187.

<sup>377</sup> He says: "The remains of the saint, and later even articles belonging to him or having once touched his body, came to be regarded as sacred objects having the effect of communicating their power to those who touched them. Here is the basis of the cult of the saints which appeared in the Church in the fourth century." idem., p. 189.

<sup>378</sup> idem., pp. 107-110.

<sup>379</sup> He explains: "Hence the tragic *nominalism* which permeates the entire life of the Church and prevents her from fulfilling her essential mission, her task of judging, evaluating, inspiring, changing, transforming the whole life of man, of generating that creative tension between

to the conclusion that this tension must be overcome by the same dialectic of form and content but in a deeper existential way: "the experience of the Church as new reality, new creation, new life"<sup>380</sup>. Once again Schmemmann speaks of theology as the Church's rhetoric in its relationship with the Church's manifestation in and through her liturgy.<sup>381</sup>

### **The Ecclesial Experience of Freedom**

Schmemmann presented a more mature vision of his eucharistic ecclesiology in a paper on 'Freedom in the Church' in which he dealt with this issue in terms of the difference between Western and Eastern views of this matter. In that essay, he presents Khomiakov's understanding of authority in relation to the Church. His conclusion brings together freedom and mystery because "it is by entering the *mysterion* of the Church that one understands it as the mystery of the freedom."<sup>382</sup> In fact, there is no freedom in the Church because freedom and Church are not two different categories, but one coin with two heads.<sup>383</sup> The most important consideration for my argument is the

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herself and the world which makes her into 'the salt of the earth.'" Schmemmann, "The Underlying Question", op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>380</sup> Schmemmann, "The Underlying Question", op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>381</sup> He states: "Thus I am convinced that the 'alienation' of theology from the *real* Church and her *real* life always begins with its divorce from the experience of the Church, the Church as experience. By this, as the reader will see, I mean primarily, although not exclusively, the liturgical experience, that *lex orandi* which is the very gift and expression of the Church's experience and which alone therefore transcends the past, the present and the future, which alone actualises Tradition into life, fullness and power. This doesn't mean, as some may think that I advocate a liturgical reduction of theology. Just as they do not theologise about the Church, the Fathers do not theologise about liturgy. Liturgy as the life, as the 'sacrament' of the Church is not the 'object' but the source of their theology because it is the epiphany of the Truth, of that fullness from which the 'mouth speaks'." idem., p. 22.

<sup>382</sup> Schmemmann, "Freedom in the Church" in *Church, World, Mission*, op. cit., pp. 179-191, p.185.

<sup>383</sup> He states: "the Church is *not* authority, and therefore there is no freedom *in* the Church, but the Church herself *is* freedom, and only the Church is freedom." idem., p. 184.

connection that Schmemmann establishes between ecclesiology, freedom, and experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>384</sup>

The freedom of the Church – or the Church as freedom – involves the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in and through liturgical celebrations of the sacraments. Theology itself is also based on the Church's experience of the Holy Spirit.<sup>385</sup> Here, Schmemmann shows that a hermeneutic of experience is necessary in order for that experience to be a coherent foundation for Christian epistemology. Through communion with the Holy Spirit, people of faith become the organ of Truth – which is transformed from a theological object into a mystical subject.

### **Schmemmann's Call for a Synthesis of Theological and Liturgical Experiences**

It is now time to close the analysis of the liturgical perspective we found in Schmemmann's ecclesiology. Schmemmann's conclusion regarding the crisis of the Orthodox Church flows from his combination of theology as the epiphany of the Church's faith and experience, and liturgy as the expression of the Church's life: "the liturgy ceased to be viewed and experienced as the epiphany of the Church's faith, as the reality of her experience as Church and,

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<sup>384</sup> He says: "If ecclesiology, as a theological discipline, as a systematic treatise, has failed so far to reveal the life of the Church as the mystery and gift of freedom, it has been due to one of its greatest deficiencies: the neglect of the Holy Spirit in His relation to the Church." *idem.*, p. 185.

<sup>385</sup> He states: "But in the Eastern Tradition all genuine theology is, of necessity and by definition, *mystical*. This means not that theology is at the mercy of individual and irrational "visions" and "experiences", but that it is rooted in, made indeed *possible*, by the Church's experience of herself as *communion of the Holy Spirit*. (...) Is the truth of theology a rational deduction from the "data" and "propositions" of the sources? Is it, in other terms, based on an external "authority" *a priori* proclaimed as such, made an "authority"? Or is it, primarily, the description of an experience, of *the* experience of the Church without which all these "data" and "propositions" although they may be "objectively" true and consistent, are not yet the Truth." Schmemmann, "Freedom in the Church", *op. cit.*, p. 188.



therefore, as the source of her theology."<sup>386</sup> After this remark, Schmemmann introduces the first element of his solution to the crisis of the Orthodox Church: the cosmic and eschatological connotations of Orthodox ecclesiology. For him theology has such connotations because theology always places to the fore the idea of the Kingdom of God as the fulfillment of the aim of the world's creation. Liturgy also has the same undertones because in the Orthodox liturgy one has the experience of the Kingdom of God.<sup>387</sup>

We have seen that Schmemmann, using Florovsky's idea of "Western captivity" and "pseudomorphosis"<sup>388</sup>, explains the divorce between theology and liturgy. To counter objective and scientific Western theology, Schmemmann brings forth the opposing Eastern "dependence" of faith upon experience. Not defining the Church's reality in a scholastic manner but expressing it in words and concepts adequate to God's immanence and to human understanding, Eastern theology is experience: the Church's faith "is not only not detachable from her experience, but is indeed that experience itself"<sup>389</sup>. Beginning with the Church's faith, passing through the experience of that faith expressed in her theology, Schmemmann comes back to the same faith in terms of the teaching

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<sup>386</sup> Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", op. cit., p. 135.

<sup>387</sup> idem., p. 136-137. One could ask if reading the Bible for example does not imply also a kind of fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. Schmemmann does not take into account such a fulfillment, nor is he aware of the importance of such a method. A similar thing could be said about accomplishing social ecclesial work, like visiting prisoners, sick people, or other similar pastoral activities. The biblical narrative offers us the perspective of such a fulfillment. Such issues are today acknowledged as belonging to the actual crisis within the Orthodox Church.

<sup>388</sup> Here is Schmemmann's own explanation: "'Western captivity' consisted primarily in what Fr. Florovsky so aptly termed the 'pseudomorphosis' of the Eastern theological mind – the adoption by it of Western thought forms and categories, of the Western understanding of the very nature, structure and method of theology. And the first and indeed the most fateful result of that "pseudomorphosis" was precisely a mutual alienation from one another of the *lex credendi* and the *lex orandi*." idem., p. 133. My chapter's concern is not to explain these terms, nor to consider the validity of Florovsky's and Schmemmann's employment of these categories.

<sup>389</sup> Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", p. 134.

revealed in the life of the Church. This teaching is her *lex credendi*, an epiphany of her experience.<sup>390</sup>

The short-term conclusion I require when discussing Schmemmann's ecclesiology in the light of his call for a synthesis is that he links the crisis of the Orthodox Church to her experience. "Experiencing" the Kingdom of God generates theology and liturgy, and they help the Church to process her antinomic experience of the world. In this way, Schmemmann confronts Theology with Liturgy.

Liturgy and theology meet, and this encounter can serve to make theology and liturgy work together for the sake of the Church. But theology meets liturgy as a theological mind<sup>391</sup> and liturgy encounters theology as liturgical piety<sup>392</sup>. There should be an interaction between theology and liturgy, with a synthesis in both directions. Theology should be liturgical by referring to the faith of the Church as manifested and communicated in the liturgy. Liturgy should be theologically established through revealing in its celebration the faith transmitted in Tradition with intellectual integrity, historical accuracy, and faithfulness to content and openness to forms.<sup>393</sup> Finally, the subject of this confrontation between structures and methods is the theologian who should become a liturgical person, witnessing to the faith of the Church in the liturgical experience of celebration. Every theologian is called to participate eschatologically in the experience of the Church and to share the taste of the Kingdom of God whilst in the world:

"It is finally in the "liturgy of time", in the cycles aimed at the sanctification of life, that one first *experiences* the true content of the Christian doctrine of

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<sup>390</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>391</sup> Schmemmann, "Renewal" in *Church, World, Mission*, pp. 147-157, p. 152, 154.

<sup>392</sup> Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", p. 131, 138, 139.

<sup>393</sup> *idem.*, p. 144.

the world and the true meaning of Christian eschatology, before one begins to explain and to elaborate them."<sup>394</sup>

The rule of *lex orandi est lex credendi* implies in Schmemmann's hermeneutic a circular methodology, the Church functioning through personal theological thinking expressed through one's personal piety.<sup>395</sup> For Schmemmann, personhood and experience are the subject of the Church's faith; and piety, liturgically expressed, is the object of the Church's theology and liturgical celebration.<sup>396</sup>

### **The Eucharistic Key for Considering the Synthesis**

In 1961, Schmemmann also published an article entitled "Theology and Eucharist" in which he continues to seek unity within Orthodox theology and in its relation to the Church's liturgical expression of life. Although at the beginning of this article, he proposes a synthesis of different elements of theology, what is critical for my argument is his rationale for developing such a synthesis in the first place. The double-sided nature of the Church's experience returns to the forefront, helping us understand the tragedy that has plagued the Christian community over the centuries.<sup>397</sup> Schmemmann does not call for a

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<sup>394</sup> *idem.*, p. 143.

<sup>395</sup> The ambiguity of Schmemmann's discourse concerning "the person" in his rhetoric should be pointed out: sometimes it is the theologian (p. 143); at other times is "the Christian individual" (p. 131). I think that this could be a subject for further studies.

<sup>396</sup> He states: "Ultimately, the liturgical problem of our time is thus a problem of restoring to liturgy its theological meaning, and to theology its liturgical dimension. Just as theology cannot recover its central place and function within the Church without being rooted again in the very experience of the Church, liturgy cannot be rescued from its present decay by hasty, superficial and purely external reforms aimed at meeting vague and doubtful 'needs' of a mythological 'modern man'." Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", p. 146.

<sup>397</sup> He declares: "it is indeed our first duty to acknowledge that for centuries, theology was alienated from the Church and that this alienation had tragic consequences for both theology and the Church. ... Theologians avoid discussing the trivial reality of the Church's life, and do not even dream about influencing it in any way. In turn, the Church, i.e. the bishops, priests and laity, [is] supremely indifferent to the writings of the theologians, even when they do not regard them with open suspicion. No wonder, therefore, that deprived of interest on the part of the Church, squeezed into the narrow limits of a professional clerical school, theology is guided in its inner life not by the experience, needs or problems of the Church but by

critique of the capabilities of the Church's theologians; rather, he advocates the integration of their liturgical piety into the symphony of the Church's liturgical life.<sup>398</sup> This integration receives practical contours when the theologians comprehend their mediating role in the life of the Church.<sup>399</sup> There appears to be a conflict when Schmemmann makes theology depend on theologians: on whom then does the *leitourgia* of the Church depend? Is it the faithful or only, again the theologians, the liturgists? Schmemmann does not seem to show the necessity to inquire into this matter, leaving his statement about the rule of *lex orandi est lex credendi* in an unfinished tone.

A synthesis is required when the issues of institution and sacrament are being considered at the congregational level. The Church is an institution that exists to fulfil the "religious needs" of her members, and worship is the most noticeable and urgent of those needs. Thus, "the understanding and experience of the Church as existing primarily for liturgy seems quite natural".<sup>400</sup> Nevertheless, the church community has ceased to be the "subject" of a

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individual interests of individual theologians." Schmemmann, "Theology and Eucharist" in *Liturgy and Tradition*, pp. 69-88, p. 71.

<sup>398</sup> Regarding the reunification of the Church with her theology, Schmemmann says that this summons "will sound like a pious invitation to theologians to become more liturgical, more 'Eucharistic' ... In the present state of theology, such misinterpretations would be almost natural. What is meant here, however, is not a reduction of theology to piety, be it theological piety or a piety of theologians." *idem.*, p. 72.

<sup>399</sup> He says: "As to the liturgy as the common goal of the various theological disciplines, the affirmation *lex orandi est lex credendi* means that it is again in the mystery of the Church that theology finds its inner fulfilment both as theological synthesis and as experience which ... not only makes them 'credible' but indeed *essential* and *authentic*. ... All this, however, requires not only a 'conversion' of theology itself, of its structure and methods, but, first of all, of the *theologian*. He has mastered to perfection the necessary asceticism of intellectual discipline and integrity, the humility proper to all genuine rational effort. He now has to learn how to immerse himself in the joy of the Church, ... He has to rediscover the oldest of all languages of the Church: that of her rites, the rhythm and the *ordo* of her *leitourgia* ... He has to become again not only the student of the Church's faith but, above all, its witness." Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", *op. cit.*, pp. 143-144. There is a problem with his statement about "the oldest of all languages of the Church: that of her rites". I would say that the oldest of all languages of the Church is the Word Himself in all his forms of manifestation, not only liturgical ones.

<sup>400</sup> Schmemmann, "Theology and Eucharist", p. 73.

corporate liturgical act; instead, it has become "an aggregation" of churchgoers individually attending worship in order to satisfy their own distinctive needs separately.<sup>401</sup> The solution for the resulting alienation may be sought in the biblical concepts of the Body of Christ and the People of God, but only to the extent that theology rediscovers the genuine social, organic, and sacramental dimension of the Church. Thus, these biblical terms need systematic explanation.<sup>402</sup>

If the Church is a living, organic society, its life and communion must come from somewhere. "It is the Eucharist which, in a very real sense, 'generates' the Church, makes her to be what she is."<sup>403</sup> After introducing the Eucharist, Schmemmann develops an entire system in which this liturgical celebration becomes the sacrament par excellence, transforming a gathering of different people with different needs into a coherent whole.<sup>404</sup> The wholeness

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<sup>401</sup> idem., p. 74.

<sup>402</sup> He says: "And just as the Church has no 'hypostasis' or 'personality' of her own, other than the hypostasis of Christ and those of the people who constitute her, she has no 'nature' of her own, for she is the new life of the "old" nature, redeemed and transfigured by Christ. ... Therefore, the concepts of 'organism' or 'body' can be utterly misleading if, in a definition of the Church, they precede and give foundation to, that of 'life.' It is not because she is an "organism" that the Church gives us the "new life", but the new life given in her, or rather, the Church as a new life, makes us an organism, transforms us into the Body of Christ, reveals us as 'new being'. idem., p. 76. One could link Schmemmann's attempt to look for expressing a hypostasis of the Church with the Slavophil's attempt to express philosophically the idea of personhood. Schmemmann also links life with experience in the historical context by considering the meaning of tradition. He writes: 'without the restoration of a common and truly "catholic" memory, without a common understanding of our common past, we shall not recover that catholicity, that universality of Orthodox life and experience which we confess and proclaim to be the very essence of our Tradition.' Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 2003, p. V. For a similar idea concerning the catholicity of the liturgical life of the Church see Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", op. cit., p. 135.

<sup>403</sup> Schmemmann, "Theology and Eucharist", op. cit., p. 79. See also *The Eucharist*, Schmemmann's *chef d'œuvre*.

<sup>404</sup> He says: "there is between the Eucharist and each of the other sacraments an organic link. For all the sacraments, except the Eucharist, deal with the individual – his life, his particular *leitourgia* or calling – [in] the Church. But the Church is fulfilled in the Eucharist, and each sacrament, therefore, finds its natural end, its fulfilment in the Eucharist." Schmemmann, "Theology and Eucharist", op. cit., p. 80. Concerning the centrality of the Eucharist in perceiving its ecclesiological odds see Schmemmann "Theology and Liturgy", op. cit., p. 142: "It

of the Eucharistic celebration transcends time and space. The experience of the communicants is the same as the experience of the forbearers of the faith because the reality of their lives becomes one with ours in the reality of the Eucharist. Their theology is our theology because of the common source that is the Eucharist.<sup>405</sup>

We have just seen how Schmemmann tried to propose a synthesis in order to define the subject of liturgical experience and to solve the crisis within the Orthodox Church. An academic solution is required for the theological problem such a synthesis constitutes. It is curious however that Schmemmann wanted to reflect on his personal experience and on the liturgical experience theologically for an issue he founded on his life experience, emerging from the liturgical reality of the Orthodox Church and her living contemporary encounter with Western society.

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is the Eucharist, in its *ordo* and movement, in its connection with all other sacraments and cycles of worship, that one discovers the only true and catholic source of ecclesiology in its cosmic as well as eschatological, institutional as well as sacramental dimensions." The sadness of such an awesome statement is Schmemmann's use of the term "only true and catholic".

<sup>405</sup> Reflecting on the notion of neo-patristic synthesis that is implicit in Florovsky's expression "return to the Fathers", Schmemmann asserts: "we return to the Fathers, and not only to their 'texts', when we recover and make ours the experience of the Church not as mere 'institution, doctrine, or system' to quote A S Khomiakov, but as the all-embracing, all-assuming and all-transforming life, the passage into the reality of redemption and transfiguration. This experience, as we tried to show, is centred in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Church, the very manifestation and self-revelation of the Church. Eucharist, whether it is expressly referred to or not, is the organic source and the necessary 'term of reference' of theology, for if theology is bearing witness to the faith and the life of the Church, to the Church as salvation and the new life in Christ, it bears witness primarily to the experience of the Church manifested, communicated and actualised in the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist that the Church ceased to be 'institution, doctrine, system' and becomes Life, Vision, Salvation; it is in the Eucharist that the Word of God is fulfilled and the human mind made capable of expressing the mind of Christ. Here then is the source of theology, of words about God, the 'event' which transforms our human speculation into a message of Divine Truth." Schmemmann, "Theology and Eucharist", *op. cit.*, p. 85.

## **"Reforming" the Liturgical Experience by Returning to the Fathers**

Another form of resolving the liturgical crisis of the Orthodox Church is Schmemmann's call for a return to the Fathers of the Church. The connection between experience, hermeneutics, and ecclesiology is most visible in a written debate that Schmemmann carries on with Dom Bernard Botte and W. Jardine Grisbrooke. In a reply to Grisbrooke, in 1969, Schmemmann responds to a call for liturgical reform. First, he defends his understanding of the relationship between faith as the "essence" of the liturgy and its manifestation, transmission, and fulfilment in worship through a healthy cultic piety.<sup>406</sup> Then, he develops this idea by identifying experience as the meeting place of theology and liturgy.<sup>407</sup>

Next, he uses a historical perspective to examine the "understanding" of liturgy that has generated the "divorce between liturgy, theology and piety".<sup>408</sup> In his explication of this crisis, Schmemmann stresses the link between the Lord's Day, the Eucharist, and the Ecclesia – which is a bond that

was both the expression and the fulfilment of something equally central and essential in the

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<sup>406</sup> Schmemmann, "Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy, and Liturgical Reform" in *Liturgy and Tradition*, p. 39. Regarding Schmemmann's view on liturgical reform, Andrew Louth explained: "The purpose of this analysis [done by Schmemmann in *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*] is manifold: there is a genuinely scholarly element, concerned to clarify the development of liturgical structure in the life of the Church. Like his Western colleagues, there is a concern to show how the later *strata* [of the monastic influence] overlay and obscured the earlier experience: Schmemmann is concerned to recover, or rediscover, aspects of liturgical experience that have become obscured by the later developments. For Schmemmann this is not so much to guide liturgical reform, as happened in the West, as to inform liturgical practice by recovering important themes that have become obscured, though still present (the Orthodox Liturgy is a bit like a house where nothing is ever thrown away). This difference has something to do with the different liturgical histories of the Church in the East and the West: the reforms of Vatican II were not unprecedented; the council of Trent had sought, too, to reform the liturgy, replacing older forms with what was then deemed to be more acceptable." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, op. cit., p. 202.

<sup>407</sup> He says: "it is because liturgy is that living totality and that catholic experience by the Church of her own faith that it is the very source of theology, the condition that makes it possible." Schmemmann, "Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy, and Liturgical Reform", p. 40.

<sup>408</sup> *idem.*, p. 41.

Church's faith: the unity and interdependence in that faith of the cosmological, eschatological, and ecclesiological "experiences". It was born out of the Christian vision and experience of the World, the Church, and the Kingdom, of their fundamental relationship to one another.<sup>409</sup>

Schmemmann concludes by analysing the origins of two different forms of piety that have influenced – and may even change – the hermeneutics of experience.<sup>410</sup> He proposes "reconciliation" and "mutual reintegration", rather than liturgical reform.<sup>411</sup> The historical and theological witness of the Church Fathers, accompanied by an honest consideration of the patristic revival, provides the requisite foundation for restoring a robust understanding and acceptance of the Church's liturgical experience.<sup>412</sup> The Fathers' "catholic experience" of the Church through the liturgy brings patristic texts close to real life, provides a sound interpretation of biblical writings, and generates a faithful approach to Christian doctrine.<sup>413</sup> The more compelling the necessity

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<sup>409</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>410</sup> Schmemmann, "Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy, and Liturgical Reform", p. 41.

<sup>411</sup> Peter Galadza expresses the same idea when he says: "where Schmemmann was absolutely correct in his reservation about liturgical change was in his insistence that such reform will have little significance without 'a reintegration of liturgy, theology and piety'." Nevertheless, Galadza continues: "as I have stressed elsewhere, liturgical renewal should not be delayed until such reintegration has occurred." Galadza, P., 'Schmemmann between Fagerberg and Reality: towards an agenda for byzantine Christian pastoral liturgy', *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 4(2007), pp. 21-34, p. 25. Galadza's major contribution while criticising Schmemmann's liturgical mystagogy in his article lies in his proposal of practical issues concerning a meaningful reform of the Orthodox *liturgics*. Schmemmann considers superficial the solution of reform regarding the liturgical crisis of the church; speaking ironically of the liturgy in terms of "the main – one almost should say the exclusive – occupation of the Church", he states that "a deeper analysis would reveal here also a very serious crisis which cannot be resolved by hasty and superficial liturgical reforms advocated by many today." Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgy", p. 131.

<sup>412</sup> As we have noted, Schmemmann also mentions the Church Father's role in shaping theology in a previous article.

<sup>413</sup> He says: "To put it in today's fashionable terms, the theological enterprise depends on "hermeneutics", the latter being precisely the fundamental question of context and semantics. My contention is that for Orthodox theology, essentially different in this from western theology, the *sui generis* hermeneutical foundation is to be found in the *lex orandi*: the epiphany and the experience by the Church of herself and of her faith. This is what we mean when we state, in accordance with our Tradition, that the scripture is interpreted "by the Church", and that the Fathers are witnesses of the catholic faith of the Church. And as long,



of the hermeneutics of experience becomes for Schmemmann, the deeper his reliance on the patristic witness to and participation in liturgical piety grows. The hermeneutics of experience seems to require not only liturgical foundations, but also a historical and patristic continuity.

### Summary

In this chapter we have seen the prominent role that the notion of experience plays in Schmemmann's ecclesiology. We have examined the way in which the subject of the experience being analysed – that is, the Church community – is called to transform individual experiences into an all-embracing reality having Christ in its centre. We have noted the manner in which this reality bridges the world and the Church – and thereby fulfils the eschatological aim of the Christian liturgical community. We have observed that theology needs the Church's liturgical experience to express Christian doctrine and that liturgy needs the patristic doctrinal experience to preserve the continuity and relevance of the rule *lex orandi est lex credendi*. We have witnessed the manner in which the experience that was mediated to Schmemmann by the Church became a direct religious experience of the Church.

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therefore, as this Orthodox "hermeneutics" is not acknowledged, rediscovered and practiced, the scrutiny of the most traditional "texts" will, alas, remain as irrelevant for our liturgical situation as in the past." Schmemmann, "Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy, and Liturgical Reform", op. cit., pp. 31-47, pp. 43-44. Ivana Noble pays attention to Schmemmann's search for unity among theology, liturgy, tradition and sacramental interpretation of the life of the world, uttering the discontinuity that comes out of Schmemmann's understanding of the role of tradition: "The world is created as sacramental, the Church is instituted as sacramental. ... Yet this cosmic openness is in Schmemmann restrained by his conditions for sacramentality of the church – the preservation of the full and unaltered faith and tradition 'once delivered unto the saints.' Here also there is a massively expressed need of continuity, however hermeneutically unsustainable is the concept of unaltered tradition. Schmemmann's conditioning of the sacramentality, and thus also the reality of the Church, by the continuity with the faith and traditions of the early Church, cut deeper than the problematic assignment of preferences to different denominations. It is to prevent division and alienation between what patristic spirituality and theology managed to hold together: the church, the world and the kingdom. This holistic horizon has to remain if the eucharist is not to be reduced to an otherworldly 'thing,' and if all our existence is, in the eucharist, to be included into the 'all embracing vision of life.'" I. Noble, "Ecumenical Worship: An Invitation and a Challenge", pp. 74-75.

The Church played a supportive role in this process, allowing Schmemmann to maintain and develop his identity as a teacher, priest, and man of the Church.

The multiple subjects of the experience Schmemmann wrote about challenged my argument. If the first two chapters dealt with the "subject" Schmemmann and his life crossroads that shaped his perception of the crisis within the Orthodox Church, the third chapter began to focus on discerning the communal subject of the Church and the crisis Schmemmann detected within it. Liturgists, churchgoers and him-self, Fathers of the Church and Western theologians formed within my argument the correlative object of my inquiry that led me to bring forth the Eucharist as the vantage point of his ecclesiology.

In conclusion, I would note that Schmemmann's experience of the Church, and in the Church, was rich and varied; thus, it provides a complex picture of institutionalised aspects of Christian religious experience without discussing it thoroughly.<sup>414</sup> We have identified much of his experience as direct experience; that is, experience which Schmemmann confirmed that he had lived out as a member of a particular Orthodox community. Yet, we have also observed a type of interpreted experience; that is, experience mediated symbolically by the Orthodox tradition to which he belonged, by the Orthodox rites that he celebrated, and by the theological and liturgical language that he used. Schmemmann relied on all three of these points of reference to interpret his

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<sup>414</sup> Andrew Louth mentions pertinently some aspects of what could demand further discussion on Schmemmann's liturgical theology: "There are, however, criticisms that must be mentioned [regarding changes in the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church under Schmemmann's influence]. It is evident from the papers given at symposia at St Vladimir's and St-Serge honouring the twenty-fifth anniversary of Fr Alexander Schmemmann's death, and published in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, that his influence among Western liturgical scholars has been great, though at the same time, it is felt that concentration on the Byzantine Rite is constricting in a way that is unnecessary and unhelpful. It is not just that Schmemmann spoke of what he knew – the Byzantine Rite of the Orthodox Church – but that, looking from this perspective, he ignored elements of liturgical history that are not irrelevant, but not obvious: an example would be the stationar liturgies, which get no consideration. Another way of putting this would be to say that Schmemmann makes little of the *variety* of liturgical traditions that seems to have characterised Christian liturgical practice from the beginning." A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, p. 206.

own religious experience. This was a crucial undertaking because it was from this interpretation that he elaborated his own vision and developed his experiential Eucharistic ecclesiology.

By virtue of its ecclesiological implications and communal understanding of liturgical experience, Schmemmann's hermeneutics of experience became the main source of the theology of experience that was so central to his theological perspective. From being an object to be interpreted in a theological framework, experience – as the outcome of the Church's liturgical life – became the source of theology itself. Schmemmann believed that the experience of the Church is the essential factor when it comes to understanding the nature of the Church. The subject of that experience, which is the Church itself, provides the theological content of Christian experience. The object of that experience, which is the Kingdom of God, gives theological shape to the Christian experience. The time and the place of that experience, which is the liturgy, provide the hermeneutics of Christian experience.

A definitive answer to the question of what experience is for Schmemmann may be suggested by the following points: (a) we have made note of the connection that Schmemmann identifies between the Church, the world, and the Kingdom of God; (b) we have understood the phenomenology of his liturgical piety in reference to the Church's way of expressing her doctrine; and (c) we have mentioned different layers of the Church community – such as the Church Fathers, theologians, celebrants, actual churchgoers, and individual seekers with their religious needs – and have touched upon their distinctive contributions to the discussion. The experience that Schmemmann affirms in his articles and books represents his way of relating to God and God's Church; his way of connecting with the world through the mediation of the Church; and his way of being involved in the Church's activities at different levels in the areas of worship, teaching, and mission. He views experience as a transformational

process whose course defines the Church. Therefore, religious experience is both the source and the subject of Schmemmann's theology and – to be more precise – his ecclesiology. Seen from this standpoint, Schmemmann's ecclesiology shows itself to be an engaged ecclesiology that presents the current state of the Orthodox Church in a way never before 'experienced' by Orthodox theology.

The evolution that can be seen in the methodology that Schmemmann uses to develop his hermeneutics of experience is especially visible in his assessment of the sacramental and missionary dimensions of the Church's liturgical experience. The community continually serves as the primary ecclesiological focus of Schmemmann's work, and he grounds his hermeneutics of the experience of that worshipping body in the liturgical manifestation of the Body of Christ. The Church's experience has two sides: one which constitutes the inner life that emanates from her liturgical existence and one which shapes her relation to the world in accordance with her divine call to save and transform the world.

It is time now to move on the next level of discerning the crisis within the Orthodox Church in the fourth chapter. The necessary process to be undertaken will be to distinguish the tension between two ecclesiological subjects: the Church and the world. Christ will keep on being the central mediating point of these two elements, but this time the battle field will be somewhere outside the churchly theological system. This time Schmemmann's theology will guide us to explore the outcomes of the meeting between the Church as a cosmical body and the world as the cosmical fulfilment of the Church.

#### 4. Schmemmann's Ecclesiological Cosmology

The crisis within the Orthodox Church is manifested largely according to Schmemmann in the relation between the Church and the world. Dealing with the Church *versus* the world relationship implies introducing the next two subjects of the crisis within the Orthodox Church. This time the subjects belong to the outer part of the crisis.

This is a relationship of tension and has profound mutual implications.<sup>415</sup> Schmemmann considers the world in relation to the Church and develops consequently an ecclesiological cosmology.<sup>416</sup> The positive feature of the relationship between the world and the Church is developed in Schmemmann's theology under the form of the sacramentality of the world.<sup>417</sup> The negative side is that secularism attacks and oppresses the Church.<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> He explains: "If in the past the world was evaluated by Christians in terms of the Church, today the opposite is true: to many Christians, it is the world that must validate the Church." Schmemmann, "Renewal" in *Church, World, Mission*, op. cit., pp. 147-157, p.147. Analysing Schmemmann's theology of the world, Ivana Noble points out the including character of Schmemmann's sacramental ecclesiology. See I. Noble, "From the Sacramentality of the Church to the Sacramentality of the World: An Exploration of the Theology of Alexander Schmemmann and Louis-Marie Chauvet" in *Charting Churches in a Changing Europe: Charta Œcumenica and the Process of Ecumenical Encounter*, ed. Tim and Ivana Noble, Martien E. Brinkman, Jochen Hilberath, Amsterdam – New York, NY 2006, pp. 165-200, p. 199.

<sup>416</sup> He says: "ecclesiology, unless it is given its true cosmic perspective ('for the life of the world'), unless it is understood as the Christian form of 'cosmology,' is always ecclesiolatry, the Church considered as a 'being in itself' and not the new relation of God, man and the world." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1982, p. 68.

<sup>417</sup> He claims: "Sacrament is movement, transition, passage, Pascha: Christ knows the way and guides us, going before. The world, condemned in its old nature, revealed as life eternal in its new nature, is still the same world, God's good work." A. Schmemmann, "The World as Sacrament", in *Church, World, Mission*, op. cit., pp. 217-227, p. 226.

<sup>418</sup> There is no sharp distinction in Schmemmann's theology between secularism and secularization, partly due to his lack of systematization of his own theology. Nevertheless such a distinction is required because enables the reader to perceive Schmemmann's sacramentality of the world. Secularization deals with the process of the world becoming alienated from God's creational aim of becoming the place of His dwelling. Nevertheless, during this process the world remains potentially able to welcome God's presence through liturgical celebrations. Secularism has a rather political sense and it is the state of the world as being a place different from the Church in their historical relationship.

The aim of this chapter is to understand the relation between the world and the Church and to raise the question concerning who Schmemmann speaks about as being the world.<sup>419</sup> I will identify the subject of Schmemmann's cosmic sacramentality and not the object of classic Christian cosmology. For Schmemmann the world is far more important in depicting the icon of the Church than for any other theologian from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His enterprise is spontaneously anchored in the reality of his life experience and within contemporary culture.<sup>420</sup> How is it possible that the world is a subject to be engaged in a conversation and not an object to be anatomically cut in pieces and physically analysed?<sup>421</sup> The answer to this question will be worked out by

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<sup>419</sup> I recover this question from Schmemmann's own purpose "to answer, if possible, the question: of what life do we speak, what life do we preach, proclaim and announce when, as Christians, we confess that Christ died for the life of the world?" Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 12. Elsewhere he asks: "What is the *world* which is spoken of so much today?" Schmemmann, "Renewal", op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>420</sup> He says: "whether we want it or not, the entire Orthodox Church is going through a deep crisis. Its causes are many. On the one hand, the world which for centuries framed and shaped her historical existence is crumbling and has all but vanished. The ancient and traditional centres of authority are threatened in their very existence and most of them are deprived of even elementary freedom of action. An overwhelming majority of Orthodox people live under the pressures and persecution of openly and militantly atheistic regimes, in situations where mere survival and not progress is the only preoccupation. A minority living surrounded by an alien sea seems to have become the rule rather than the exception for Orthodoxy almost everywhere. Everywhere, and not only in the West, it is challenged by a secularistic, technological, and spiritually antagonistic culture. On the other hand, a large Orthodox diaspora has appeared, putting an end to the multi-secular isolation of Orthodoxy in the East, challenging Orthodoxy with problems of ecclesiastical organization and spiritual 'adjustments' unprecedented in the whole history of the Church. Only the blind would deny the existence of the crisis, yet not too many seem to realise its depth and scope, least of all – let us face it – the bishops who continue in their routine work as 'if nothing happened.' At no time in the past has there existed such an abyss between the hierarchy and the 'real' Church, never before has the power structure so little corresponded to the crying spiritual needs of the faithful. And here the American Orthodox 'microcosm' seems an excellent example. How long are we to live in a multiplicity of jurisdictions either quarrelling with each other or simply ignoring each other? How long shall we leave unnoticed the rapid decay of liturgy, spirituality and monasticism – the traditional sources of Orthodox piety and continuity? How long, in short, shall we accept and respectfully endorse as normal and almost traditional a situation which, if we are honest, must be described as a scandal and a tragedy?" A. Schmemmann, "The Task of Orthodox Theology Today" in *Church, World, Mission*, op. cit., pp. 117-128, pp. 126-127.

<sup>421</sup> He asks: "What is the relationship between these two concepts, these two realities, world and sacrament? If we gain some new insights into the sacramental nature of Christian life, will

analysing Schmemmann's "theology of the world", a theology based on the view of experiencing the world.<sup>422</sup> Explaining who constitutes the world and the Church will help us to understand what the crisis is between these two entities and how it works positively and negatively.

Positively the world is the origin of the substance of the Church i.e. the faithful who are all human beings before becoming Christians, that is heavenly citizens in perspective. Also positively the world is the subject of the divine love brought in sacramentally through the ecclesial community. But this relationship is more complex in reality because the Church has often become the judge of the world which changed the nature of the salvific partnership inaugurated by Jesus Christ. From a relation of complementarity and transformation, the world and the Church became enemies with many battlefields.

When the relation between the world and the Church becomes unilateral, Schmemmann questions the validity of the complementarity between them. The danger of secularism appears under two forms: on one hand the world imposes its values on the Church, and on the other hand, the Church enforces her moral judgments on the world. In both cases, the Church is transformed into a worldly realm failing to lead the world to its eschatological destination. Being mutual the impact between the world and the Church is a crossroad. If the world is to be transformed into a world that praises God, i.e. a liturgical realm, the same world can become a reality turned away from God

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that help us to understand the world? If we develop a greater degree of concern for the world, will that deepen our experience and understanding of the sacraments?" Schmemmann, "The World as Sacrament", op. cit., p. 219. An answer to this question is to be found in the major study *On Liturgical Theology*, where Aidan Kavanagh, influenced among others by Schmemmann, provides us with a coherent and functional understanding of the dialectic, world – sacrament.

<sup>422</sup> He says: "Our own past, our own Tradition bears witness not only to the possibility of a 'theology of the world' but indeed makes such theology an organic dimension of ecclesiology." Schmemmann, "The World in Orthodox Thought and Experience" in *Church, World, Mission*, op. cit., pp. 67-84, p. 82.

because of its fallen condition. In Schmemmann's perception, the meeting point of the fallen world and the possibility of it being transformed into a renewed reality is the liturgy. Here the conclusions of the third chapter will be useful. The ecclesiological cosmology Schmemmann presents in his theology is the world transformed liturgically into a new reality. This very reality brought in its wholeness could enable Schmemmann to speak also about a cosmic ecclesiology, a topic he never properly developed.

This chapter will be constructed having two main structures: one built around the relational tension between the world and the Church and the other around the triad historical time, eschatological time and liturgical time. The centre of these structures will always be the dialogue, humankind – Christ. Hence I shall look for understanding mainly how Schmemmann reads history: through the lens of the Church's transformation of the world, or through the lens of the world shaping the structure of the Church. At that point Florovsky's impact on Schmemmann will become of paramount importance. The subsequent question will concern the way Schmemmann reads the "historical" Christ: focusing on the "liturgical" Christ dwelling in the Church for the sake of the world, or attempting to perceive the "cosmical" Christ dying for the life of the world celebrated in the Eucharist of the Church. Finally I shall look for how to grasp Schmemmann's comprehension of the Christ already present yet still to be waited for: is it worth waiting for Christ in the name of the Church or for the life of the world?

Focusing on the mutual interaction between the world and the Church will help us to perceive the mechanics of the transformation of the world into an eschatological reality, but also the fall of the Church into a one-sided organism unable to relate to the world. The questions I ask will concern the theological matter of the communal subject of the world and the Church, i.e. the human being, and how Schmemmann perceives the human person as an



entity capable of transforming the world or of letting himself be transformed. The epistemological and meaningful centre of the world is humankind. For Schmemmann humanity has two major relevancies determined by his argument concerning the sacramentality of the world: the individual and the community. Around these two concepts the relationship between the Church and the world is considered as a tensioned, dynamic partnership in the realisation and manifestation of the eschatological presence of the Kingdom of God. Consequently, this chapter focuses on "the three inseparable realities of the Christian faith: the world, the Church, the Kingdom."<sup>423</sup>

### **"The Underlying Question"**

Schmemmann provides us with an article, "The Underlying Question" published in 1979 at the beginning of his book *Church, World, Mission*, an article that allows us to uncover some of the crossroads of Schmemmann's life which we discussed in the first chapter but are expressed this time in a theological manner. This book is a collection of articles from a period of more than 20 years.

Schmemmann gives us the background for republishing his own articles: it is the emergence of the new contextual shape of the fate of the Orthodox Church in the world of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are two major backgrounds to this context: the collapse of the ancient Orthodox territories or "worlds", and the growth of the Orthodox presence in the West. Old Orthodox realms are becoming old-fashioned and unsuitable for Orthodoxy while old non-Orthodox countries are welcoming the newly arrived Orthodox faithful. The classic Eastern social matrix no longer sustains the old Eastern mentality, while

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<sup>423</sup> Schmemmann, "Renewal", p. 153.

Western civilization has become home for the new Orthodox diaspora mediating a new framework for its development.<sup>424</sup>

Declaring the ultimate incompatibility between the Western world and Orthodox mentality, Schmemmann stipulates the state of crisis within the Orthodox Church, a crisis that surpasses any other clash in the history of Orthodoxy.<sup>425</sup> Schmemmann perceives the positive aspect of the crisis of Orthodoxy "as judgment, as a situation calling for choice and decision, for discerning the will of God and for the courage to obey it."<sup>426</sup> The negative and disastrous facet consists in the lack of the consciousness of that crisis among the faithful.<sup>427</sup> Instead of trying to face the problems of the tension between the Church and the world, Orthodox people adopted the shallow attitude "best expressed and illustrated by the rhetoric which has become virtually the only 'official' language of the Orthodox establishment, a rhetoric made up of a mixture of unshakeable optimism, obligatory triumphalism and amazing self-righteousness."<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Schmemmann, "The Underlying Question" in *Church, World, Mission*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1979, pp. 7-24, p. 8.

<sup>425</sup> He explains: "Thus the ultimate meaning of our present crisis is that the world in which the Orthodox Church must live today, be it in the East or in the West, is not her world, not even a 'neutral' one, but a world challenging her in her very essence and being, a world trying consciously or unconsciously to reduce her to values, philosophies of life and world-views profoundly differently from, if not totally opposed to, her vision and experience of God, man and life." *idem.*, p. 9.

<sup>426</sup> Schmemmann, "The Underlying Question", *op. cit.*, p. 9. Michael Plekon awesomely remarked the liturgical and sacramental centrality of Schmemmann's ecclesiological enterprise of "churching" contemporary society. See M. Plekon, *Living Icons*, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>427</sup> He states: "What worries me is the *absence* of such a tension from today's Orthodox consciousness, our seeming inability to understand the real meaning of the crisis, to face it and to seek ways of dealing with it." Schmemmann, "The Underlying Question", *op. cit.*, p. 10. Schmemmann's awareness of the deplorable state of the Orthodox Church was magnificently scrutinised and criticised by Vigen Guroian, a scholar of Loyola College, in an article which comes to terms with Schmemmann's critique of Western theological thought and Schmemmann's self-criticism. Guroian, "An Orthodox View of Orthodoxy and Heresy: An Appreciation of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann" in *Pro Ecclesia*, 1(1997), pp. 79-91, pp. 85-86.

<sup>428</sup> Schmemmann, "The Underlying Question", *op. cit.*, p. 11.

Schmemmann's progressive evaluation of the crisis within the Orthodox Church begins with the challenge of facing the past and most precisely with the confrontation of those elements in the history of Orthodoxy that show us that the crisis was already at stake in that past.<sup>429</sup> The presence of the Orthodox diaspora in the West engendered in Schmemmann's view a "surrender of the Orthodox 'consciousness' to the secularistic world-view and way of life."<sup>430</sup> He stipulates that Orthodoxy arrived in the West with a certain heritage and with a special consciousness of that heritage. This heritage, through its belonging ultimately to the past, was acknowledged as precious and untouchable. This heritage was identified with "the Fathers." The clash between this heritage and the real life of that diaspora in the West generated "the great, and indeed 'Western' heresy of our age: secularism."<sup>431</sup> Schmemmann's positive analysis of the historical evolution of the meeting between Orthodoxy and the West lies in his understanding of "the inability of today's Orthodox consciousness to come to terms with the *past*, a fundamental confusion about the true content and meaning of our 'heritage' and thus of Tradition itself."<sup>432</sup> His problematic investigation concerns the identification of the West with the source (even if indirect) of the secular transformation of the Church into a worldly entity.

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<sup>429</sup> He criticises: "the acknowledgment, for example, that the survival of the Church is paid for by her unprecedented surrender to the state, the ugly servility of her leadership, and the almost total control of her life by the KGB and its many equivalents; the explanation, at least a partial one, of the overcrowded churches by their radical decrease in number (e.g. in Moscow there are some fifty 'operating' churches for a population of nearly five million); the recognition that the religious awakening among the young and the intelligentsia leads them not only to Orthodoxy but, in even greater numbers, to sects, to Zen, to astrology and to virtually every form of the dubious and confused 'religiosity' typical nowadays of the West." *idem.*, p. 12. It is very sad to remark how confused Schmemmann could sometimes be regarding the Western world in relation to the religious tendencies of its postmodern society.

<sup>430</sup> *idem.*, p. 13. Writing about the pastoral dimension of Orthodox theology, Schmemmann underlines the difficulty of Orthodox pastoral care provided in the West, difficulty based on the discrepancy between an Orthodox "world-view" and Western cultural dimensions of life. See Schmemmann, "The Task of Orthodox Theology Today" in *Church, World, Mission*, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-128, p. 119.

<sup>431</sup> Schmemmann, "The Underlying Question", *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>432</sup> *idem.*, p. 14.

It is worth noting the dependence on the past of the Orthodox tradition that one can find in Schmemmann's consideration of the relationship between Church and world. The past as history is evidently a worldly category. Schmemmann connects this worldly notion with Tradition forgetting the presence and the action of any other transcendental element:

[f]or Orthodoxy the past is the essential channel and carrier of Tradition, of that continuity and identity of the Church in time and space which establishes her catholicity, reveals her always as the same church, the same faith, the same life. ... [t]he true knowledge, i.e. understanding, of Tradition is impossible without the knowledge, i.e. understanding, of the past; just as the true knowledge, i.e. understanding, of the past is impossible without obedience to Tradition. But here two dangers always threaten the Church. The first consists in a simple reduction of Tradition to the past, in such an identification of one with the other that the past as such becomes the content as well as the criterion of Tradition. As for the second danger, it consists in an artificial separation of Tradition from the past by means of their common evaluation in terms of the "present."<sup>433</sup>

At first sight one could be glad for Schmemmann's acknowledge of the danger vis-à-vis the relation between past and Tradition. The problem is that his solution does not escape these dangers because he stays in the framework and the boundaries of human categories with a definite geographic reduction that is the "Western captivity."<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> *idem.*, p. 15.

<sup>434</sup> He says: "The present state of Orthodox theology seems to me to be ambiguous. On the one hand it is impossible to deny that a real theological renaissance has been taking place in the Orthodox Church, which is expressed primarily in the return of our theology to its essential source: the patristic tradition. This 'return to the Fathers' has greatly contributed to the progressive liberation of Orthodox theology from the 'Western captivity' which for centuries imposed on it intellectual categories and thought forms alien to the Orthodox Tradition. ... On the other hand, I have the strange impression that seldom in the past has our theology been more isolated from the Church. Seldom has it had less impact on her life, has it been so exclusively a 'theology for theologians' as today in the Orthodox Church." *idem.*, pp. 15-16. If we have here the patristic tradition as primary source for theology, elsewhere we shall have, always in Schmemmann's view the liturgical experience as chief source and inspiration for theology. Schmemmann does not engage his argument in a coherent manner. Regarding the

### **Schmemann's Perception of the Orthodox Historical Road**

In another article published earlier in his life, Schmemann engages the history of the Church in a very curious way, a very narrow way improper for a theologian of his class. He considers that a certain difficult period in the history of Orthodoxy, i.e. the Turkish-yoke period can be situated as being out of history, a statement that contradicts any elementary historical interpretation.<sup>435</sup> He links the history of Orthodoxy to Byzantium and to Russia in an almost exclusive manner, forgetting the case of the Rumanian medieval states of Walachia and Moldavia, or the case of the far Eastern Christendom of India. But his main inaccuracy comes when he overemphasises the role of Russia in

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"Western captivity", he states elsewhere similar severe yet unfounded conclusions about "a mere deficiency of our theology, a deficiency which, however serious it may be, ought to be corrected by another massive injection into Orthodox of Western theological categories, by our acceptance of the current Western fixation on, if not a real obsession with, "the Church-versus-the-world dichotomy and problematics." Schmemann, "The World in Orthodox Thought and Experience" in *Church, World, Mission*, op. cit., pp. 67-84, p. 68. Criticizing Schmemann's narrow approach to tradition and speaking of the dangers implied in failing to interpret the tradition according to its dynamic and pluralistic nature, Ivana Noble stated: "Schmemann conditions the sacramentality of the church – and also the overcoming of her divisions – on the preservation of the full and unaltered faith and tradition ... In 1963 when he wrote his 'Ecclesiological Notes' he was convinced that the Orthodox Church managed this best of all Christian churches. This position was step by step complemented by a critique of, especially, the Russian Orthodox Church. His last work, *The Eucharist*, finished a month before his death in 1983, in which he returns to the theme of the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox crisis, affirms that a way forward has to be sought in dialogue with others, because we have many problems in common. Yet even here, in spite of all his criticism, Schmemann repeats that the Orthodox Church has carried the tradition more faithfully and continuously than any other church. John Meyendorff points out that, however much Schmemann's work may be relevant for the ecumenical discussion, he himself moved, after a period of cooperation, out of the ecumenical movement and participated in more conservative Christian circles." Noble, "From the Sacramentality of the Church to the Sacramentality of the World", op. cit., pp. 173-174. Another aspect of Schmemann's understanding of tradition criticised by Ivana Noble is the lack of discussion in his theology about the relation between Tradition and Scriptures. See I. Noble, "Možnostech a povaze teologického poznání u Alexandra Schmemanna", op. cit., p. 182.

<sup>435</sup> Schmemann, "The 'Orthodox World,' Past and Present", op. cit., p. 52. A similar idea can be found in Schmemann, "The World in Orthodox Thought and Experience", op. cit., pp. 71-73.

the legacy of Byzantium, leading us to read his assertions like a political ideological manifest.<sup>436</sup>

The history of Orthodoxy is often the source of disappointment for Schmemmann. He reads history as Florovsky did, through the theological prejudgments of its Greek patristic outcomes. He cannot accept the way in which the Church has dealt with the world during her earthly existence. He considers that the Church did not have the capacity for self-criticism. This feature implies looking in perspective, repent errors, accepting change and conversation. The way Orthodoxy managed to survive in history was only by defining its existence through negative reactions against heresies, against the West, the East, and the Turks. Its triumph consisted in fighting such outside evils as persecutions, the Turkish yoke, Communism. For Orthodoxy the world was the enemy in almost all its affirmations and manifestations. The entry from his journal, from Wednesday, September 25, 1974 enumerates four reasons why Orthodoxy could not enter in dialogue with the world:

First – a kind of piety, full of superstitions and sweetness and absolutely impenetrable to any culture. A piety that has a pagan dimension, and dissolves Orthodoxy into a sentimental religiosity. Second – a Gnostic tendency in faith itself, which started as Hellenic influence and became a Western Cartesian intellectualism. Third – the dualism of piety and intellectual theology that replaced in the Christian vision of the world its primordial eschatology. Fourth – the surrender of Orthodoxy to nationalism in its worst pagan, authoritarian and negative aspects. This combination is offered as 'pure Orthodoxy,' and any attempt to look into it is immediately condemned as heresy. Nothing is as dangerous as the fanatical defence of Orthodoxy.<sup>437</sup>

Some of his assertions are exaggerated, as would be the second reason about the Gnostic tendency and the Western Cartesian intellectualism. Christianity in

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<sup>436</sup> *idem.*, pp. 54-56.

<sup>437</sup> Schmemmann, *Journals*, p. 48.

the age of Hellenism was not under the "monopoly" of the Greek culture, but had already spread into Latin and Syriac cultural regions. The Western development of Christian theology cannot be reduced to its medieval period. Nevertheless, the other three points testify to the narrowness of the Orthodox encounter with history. They constitute a synthesis of his theology, yet leaving room for this "system" of newness and wholeness.

Some kind of conclusion to those affirmations from September 25, can be found in the entry from the next day. He understands the relation between world, history and Christ as being one of exceeding what is natural and temporal by what is new. The newness of Christ's life comes from within us when we live beyond the flesh and in opportunities.<sup>438</sup> This commentary on that biblical verse shows his tendency to emphasise Christ's centrality and the role of the eschatological meaning of life. He liked paradoxes very much and looked at things throughout this lens of different and apparently opposite items that form wholeness when they refer to the same reality.

### **The Issue of Secularization**

The issue of secularization shows many faces in Schmemmann's theology: the secularism regarding the historical dwelling of the Church in the world and their final split, the secularization of Orthodox theology, and the secularization of the behaviour of the members of the Church. Let us examine the first one of them that comes in his vision of the Russian role in the history of Orthodoxy, an issue he inherited from the Slavophile movement.

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<sup>438</sup> He states: "'Unless it dies, it will not live.' This applies to the past. In Christianity we deal not with the meaning of history, nor with the meaning of nature, but with death and resurrection as a continuous victory of Christ over history and over nature. In order to be our life, the past must die in us only as the past, nature only as nature, history only as history. This is the uniqueness of Christ and Christianity. The Kingdom of God transcends and conquers both nature and history, but it opens itself to us through nature and through history. The beginning and the end of everything: 'Christ is the same today, yesterday and always.' Everything is resolved only when the question of death is resolved." *idem.*, p. 48.

Starting with the technical distinction between the juridical experience of the Church-state relationship characteristic to the West and the eschatological experience proper to the East, Schmemmann criticises sharply the "rejection by the West of the mysterion – the holding-together, in a mystical and existential, rather than rational, synthesis of both the total transcendence of God and His genuine presence."<sup>439</sup> His criticism continues to the point when he states that the Church in her Western historical existence engendered the secularization of medieval society by failing to experience this world as passage.<sup>440</sup> In his view this kind of attitude caused, the acceptance by Western Christianity of "the *secular eschatology*" a term that defines for him the replacement of the classical eschatological view with "immovable and absolute norms", which made "this world a well-defined universe with a fixed and closed horizon."<sup>441</sup> Schmemmann ends his "peroration" with a general criticism of the post-modern situation of Western Christianity that may be quoted in full

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<sup>439</sup> Schmemmann, "The 'Orthodox World,' Past and Present", op. cit., p. 60. His criticism is totally unfounded even if one would take into account the mystical theology of the Catholic (and later Protestant) Church. Besides, he gives no example in sustaining his argument.

<sup>440</sup> The idea of passage is of paramount importance for Schmemmann. He would extremely often use it to express the idea of organic transformation. He says: "even before the formal 'liberation' of the world from the Church's control and dominion, before its 'secularization' in the narrow meaning of that term, the 'world' in the West was secularised by Christian thought itself. In the early Christian world-view the notion of 'this world' is by no means identical with that of a 'secular' world. ... The term 'this world' depicts a state, but not the nature, of creation, and for this reason 'this world' is the scene of the eschatological tension between the 'old' and the 'new' and is capable of being experienced, in Christ, as the transfigured 'new creation.' Eschatology is thus the very 'mode' of the Church's relationship with the world, of her presence and action in it. By abandoning this eschatological perspective, the West rejected in fact the possibility of any real 'interpenetration' of the Church and the world, or, in theological terms, of the world's real sanctification." idem., p. 61. It is very difficult to follow Schmemmann's argument when he gives no examples in order to illustrate his point of view.

<sup>441</sup> idem., p. 62. He keeps on going with his criticism: "From the medieval sects and 'revivals' through the Renaissance, Enlightenment, Rationalism, Romanticism, and the social and political utopias of the nineteenth century, the idea of the Kingdom stood at the centre of the secular mind, but a Kingdom, and here lies the tragedy, progressively deprived of its King, more and more identified with 'this world' as such.", p. 63. What then should one say about the Old Believers from medieval Russia? Or about the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia? Is not Russia an exemplar Orthodox country from the East part of Christianity that did not undergo such influences for him? !



for its miserably hypocritical attitude that sadly leaves him in an obscure light and is unworthy of his brilliant understanding of the sacramentality of the world:

Before it can be put to any "use," the notion of the Kingdom of God is to be purified of all "utilitarianism." It is when, in the words of an Orthodox eucharistic hymn, we "lay aside all earthly cares" that the world and all its problems may be discovered again as the object of all Christian love, as the stage for Christian mission and action. One thing, however, can and must be said. Only a recovery by Christians of their eschatology can, in the last analysis, be a response to the "secularized eschatology" of the modern world. One wonders indeed whether the Christian West in its enthusiastic endorsement of that "secularized eschatology" is not in reality misreading and misinterpreting its true significance. 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 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.<sup>442</sup>

Thus, historically speaking, there is a double failure of the process of secularization of the world in the West and in the East. Each has its characteristics and experiences, but for Schmemmann the main feature is the fact that now they meet and they are supposed to work together in order to overcome secularism.<sup>443</sup> This is a very constructive positive attitude from

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<sup>442</sup> *idem.*, p. 65. It is worth noting however Schmemmann's attempt to critically read the history of the Christian West. Unfortunately he does not use similar methods when critically reading Orthodox East history. The only exception to this unfortunate attitude will be discussed in a little while.

<sup>443</sup> He says: "In spite of the ecumenical encounter between the Christian East and the Christian West, an encounter that has lasted now more than half a century, in spite of an officially acknowledged state of 'dialogue,' in my opinion it is still very difficult for a Western Christian fully to understand Orthodoxy, and not so much the officially formulated dogmas and doctrines of the Orthodox Church as the fundamental world view, the experience that lies beneath these

Schmemmann, especially because he brings ecumenism to the forefront of his perspective.

Schmemmann's criticism of other people's theology, particularly Western, are often unfair and sometimes illogical; but on the whole his theology is positive and his criticism of the nationalistic tendencies one finds in Orthodox mentality is entirely justified. He is critical of all the unecclesiological "adjectives which, although formally they belong to the categories of the 'world,' are inseparable from an Orthodox Christian's experience of the 'Church,' and in fact truly expressive of it Greek, Russian, and Serbian ..."<sup>444</sup> What is worth noting for my argument is that he brings this problematic to the concrete situation of the Orthodox diaspora.<sup>445</sup> He brings into critical discussion the idea of the attractive and somehow safe side of the Orthodox faith and Church, i.e. the national identity of one's religious experience.<sup>446</sup> This patriotic self-identification of the Church falls always into nationalistic ecclesiology.

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formulations and constitutes their living and 'existential' context. ... The difficulty is further increased by what to a Western Christian may appear as a rather poor record of Eastern Orthodoxy in the area under consideration. He may ask, and not without justification: It is a mere 'accident' that today some ninety per cent of Orthodox people live in totalitarian, atheistic and militantly anti-Christian states? Does this not indicate a failure of the Eastern approach to the problems of the world? And, given that failure, what can the Orthodox contribute to the present passionate search for new or renewed guidelines of Christian action and involvement in and for the world?" *idem.*, pp. 25-66, p. 25-26. Guroian comments on Schmemmann's discernment regarding the historical "way" of secularization, bringing his arguments concerning Schmemmann into a face-to-face confrontation with counterargument historical self-evidences. Guroian, "An Orthodox View of Orthodoxy and Heresy", *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>444</sup> Schmemmann, "The World in Orthodox Thought and Experience", *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>445</sup> He states: "If the Orthodox diaspora has eloquently proven anything, it is precisely this: the Orthodox, even when they willingly leave their 'Orthodox' country, even when they forget their original language and fully identify themselves with the life and the culture of another nation, find it both natural and desirable that their 'Orthodoxy' remain Greek, Russian, Serbian, etc." *ibid.*

<sup>446</sup> He argues: "This is not because they cannot imagine any other expression or form of Orthodoxy, but because it is precisely the quintessential 'Hellenism' (and not Greek Orthodoxy) or 'Russianism' (and not Russian Orthodoxy), of which the Church is the only 'presence,' the only symbol in the 'modern world,' that they love in Orthodoxy, that constitutes the treasure of their heart's desire. And this is true not only of the 'diaspora,' which merely reflects and

Secularization touches both the world and theology he states. The world is determined by secularization in its separation from the eschatological values of the Church. In fact the Church is guilty of causing the secularization of the world.<sup>447</sup> Theology is infected by secularization in its divorce from the life of the Church.<sup>448</sup> The meeting and healing point is supposed to be the experience of the Church in its connection to the patristic and ancestral dimension, and to actual and contemporary reality.<sup>449</sup> This experience is identified by Schmemmann with the Church herself, and is the liturgical coefficient of the

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intensifies – sometimes to the point of a *reductio ad absurdum* – the Orthodox mentality, but of Orthodoxy as a whole. Everywhere Orthodoxy is experienced primarily as representing – as 'making present' – *another world*, the one of the past which, although it can also be projected into the future as a dream or as a hope, remains fundamentally alienated from the present." idem., pp. 70-71.

<sup>447</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., pp. 111-112.

<sup>448</sup> Schmemmann, "The Underlying Question", op. cit., pp. 16-22.

<sup>449</sup> He states: "This situation will last as long as our theology does not overcome its own historical and intellectual 'reduction' and recover its pastoral and *soteriological* dimension and motivation. ... When I speak of the *soteriological* motivation of theology I have in mind that unique quality proper to patristic theology which makes it an eternal 'model' of all true theology: its constant preoccupation with Truth as *saving* and *transforming* Truth, with Truth as a matter truly of life and death, and therefore its awareness of error as a truly demonic lie which distorts and mutilates life itself, leading man to spiritual suicide, literally to hell. This 'existentialism' of the Fathers, which is not to be confused or identified with modern philosophical existentialism, stems from the fact that Christianity for them was not primarily an idea or a doctrine, as it would seem from some patrological studies dealing with the 'patristic idea' of this and the 'patristic doctrine' of that. For the Fathers, Christianity was above all an *experience*, the totally unique and *sui generis* experience of the Church, or even more precisely: *the Church as experience*." idem., p. 20. Somewhere else he remarks: "The great theological controversies of the patristic age are never 'abstract,' never merely 'intellectual.' They are always *soteriological* and *existential* in their ultimate significance, for they deal with the nature of man, with the meaning of his life, with the goals of his *praxis*. This existential character of patristic theology, the certitude permeating it that Truth is always Life, the absence from it of any separation of the 'theoretical' from the 'practical' – all this it may be good to remember today when in the mind of so many Christians the 'practical' alone is exalted as if it had no need to be rooted in the *theôria*, the all-embracing vision of God, man and the world. When contemporary Orthodox theologians insist on a 'return to the Fathers' (and it seems so often that theirs is a *vox clamans in deserto*) they call precisely to that vision and not to the contingent expressions of a past age." Schmemmann, "The 'Orthodox World,' Past and Present", op. cit., pp. 47-48.

sacramental presence of the Church in the world.<sup>450</sup> This coming together generates a special kind of existentialism free from nominalism.<sup>451</sup>

Being poisoned with secularism the Church and the world need a new start. This start, in Schmemmann's comprehension implies a symbolical participation of the world in the liturgical life of the Church.<sup>452</sup> This participation should be mediated by the Church's capacity to reveal the ultimate goal of humankind, of the world grasped in its eschatological fulfilment and expressed in the "experience of the Church as truly an epiphany: the revelation of, the participation in, a reality which because it is not 'of this world', is given to us – in 'this world' – in symbols."<sup>453</sup>

This brief introductory analysis of the relation between the world and the Church gives us a glimpse of what I will explore below. After having considered the world in its theological dimensions, in its first relationship to the reality that defines it in its ultimate consistency and meaning i.e. the Church, let us see how Schmemmann locates the human being in this world. If God transcended both human beings and the world when humankind was created, then for Schmemmann it is important to understand the way humankind passed from being called to become like God to its current degenerative worldliness.

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<sup>450</sup> Schmemmann, "The Underlying Question", op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>451</sup> He explains: "By nominalism I mean here the peculiar divorce of the *forms* of the Church' 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." idem., p. 23.

<sup>452</sup> He remarks: "What the world needs, therefore, is above all a new *experience* of the world itself, of life in its personal and social, cosmical and eschatological dimensions. Of this experience the Church, in her Orthodox understanding and 'experience,' is the revelation, the gift and the source." idem., p. 22.

<sup>453</sup> idem., p. 24.

## "Eating" and "Drinking" the World

The 1960s were for Alexander Schmemmann a period of numerous publications, starting with his doctoral dissertation and continuing with his most published and translated book, *For the Life of the World*.<sup>454</sup> This book is widely considered as the main expression of Schmemmann's vision of the world as sacrament. The world as a crucial element in his assertion of the crisis within the Orthodox Church is the realm where several opposing theological elements meet, forming the particular structure of his ecclesiology. With this book we engage a new constituent in his sacramental equation i.e. the Kingdom of God.

Schmemmann's basic support for his explanation of the role of the world in defining humankind, the Church and the Kingdom of God is the banquet. There is a kind of "animal" point of departure in his vision of the human being, showing his general tendency to bring things to the foundation of their structure and functionality. There is also a strong emphasis on the materiality of the world in the character of its knowledge.<sup>455</sup> Eating and drinking suggests life and life is for Schmemmann something to be processed in the flesh by man in his way to becoming like God. Humankind "eats" the world and the world becomes a realm to be mediated in a person's food and drink. Humankind was created as a being called to convey the world through eating and drinking into an existential dimension proper for growing. With the story of Adam and Eve

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<sup>454</sup> A. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1982. The first edition of this book was published in 1963. For an outstanding book-review and book-history of *For the Life of the World* see William C. Mills, "Alexander Schmemmann's *For the Life of the World*: A Retrospective" in *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 54(2013), pp. 199-228. Andrew Louth's concessive and outstanding characterisation of this book is of great value for my argument positioning this book in its philosophical and theological context. See A. Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, op. cit., pp. 204-205.

<sup>455</sup> He says: "God orders a kind of materialism, not as a concession to our weakness, but in order to teach us something about the world given to us, and therefore about His own love for us." Schmemmann, "The World as Sacrament" in *Church, World, Mission*, op. cit., pp. 217-227, p. 225.

the world was transformed into a realm proper for conversion and for a mediating encounter. The world should mediate God's presence for them and the people after them. Adam and Eve and everyone else should mediate God's presence for the world (nature). Instead they mediated only themselves.

Schmemmann requires from Christians that they lead a genuine relationship with the world by experiencing it as a mediator between God and themselves. God reveals himself in and through the world and mankind receives the world as God's gift in and through the life of the world. According to Schmemmann, the world is a realm created to become for man a convertible dimension of his relationship with God in order to facilitate the communion between them.<sup>456</sup>

A human must have initiative while living in this world. His ingenuity should come from God's calling when he asked Adam to name things, which in Schmemmann's opinion means to bless God, "to manifest the meaning and value God gave it, to know it as coming from God and to know its place and function within the cosmos created by God."<sup>457</sup> God requires naturalness from each human living in the world and that is, according to Schmemmann, fulfilling his priestly call, rendering thanks through his living in the world as a sanctifying entity. The world is lucid for man when he dwells in communion with God, when his stance in the middle of the world becomes filled with a thanksgiving attitude.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> He says: "In the Bible the food that man eats, the world of which he must partake in order to live, is given to him by God, and it is given as *communion with God*. The world as man's food is not something "material" and limited to material functions, thus different from, and opposed to, the specifically "spiritual" functions by which man is related to God. All that exists is God's gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man's life communion with God. It is divine love made food, made life for man." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>457</sup> *idem.*, p. 15.

<sup>458</sup> He states: "[I]n the Bible to bless God is not a "religious" or a "cultic" act, but the very *way of life*. God blessed the world, blessed the seventh day (that is, time), and this means that He filled all that exists with His love and goodness, made all this "very good". So the only *natural* (and not "supernatural") reaction of man, to whom God gave this blessed and sanctified world,

It is worth noting Schmemmann's understanding of the "duality" of the source of life for humankind: God and the world. This twofold cradle of the life-spring of human persons is of significant importance in perceiving Schmemmann's sacramentality of the world and his ecclesiology. God is the source of life for all humans and He gave the world to be the source of the maintenance of that life, granting the world with the "divine" power of life-giving materiality.<sup>459</sup>

Schmemmann's call for a practical usefulness of his discussion on the sacramentality of the world is worth noting due to its relevance to the concrete, world-grounded foundation of his theology and the desire for pragmatic fulfilment of his religious introspection. He brings his theology to the matter of life and Christ and he grants to the Church the ability to encompass all his logical statements regarding the life of her faithful in the world.<sup>460</sup>

For the time being it is necessary to conclude with the idea that for Schmemmann humankind was created to become Christian humanity, not in an

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is to bless God in return, to thank Him, to *see* the world as God sees it and – in this act of gratitude and adoration – to know, name and possess the world. ... The first, the basic definition of man is that he is *the priest*. He stands in the centre of the world and unifies it in his act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God – and by filling the world with this eucharist, he transforms his life, the one that he receives from the world, into life in God, into communion with Him. The world was created as the "matter," the material of one all-embracing eucharist, and man was created as the priest of this cosmic sacrament." *ibid.*

<sup>459</sup> *idem.*, pp. 15-16. The sacramentality of the world as the source of knowledge and possibility of communion with God throughout the continuity between God's creative act and Christ's dwelling in the sacraments of the Church is pointed out by Ivana Noble. See I. Noble, "From the Sacramentality of the Church to the Sacramentality of the World", *op. cit.*, p. 171.

<sup>460</sup> He says: "it all depends primarily on our being real witnesses to the joy and peace of the Holy Spirit, to that new life of which we are made partakers in the Church. The Church is the sacrament of the Kingdom – not because she possesses divinely instituted acts called 'sacraments', but because first of all she is the possibility given to man to see in and through this world the 'world to come,' to see and to 'live' it in Christ. It is only when in the darkness of *this world* we discern that Christ has *already* 'filled all things with Himself' that these *things*, whatever they may be, are revealed and given to us full of meaning and beauty. A Christian is the one who, wherever he looks, finds Christ and rejoices in Him. And this joy *transforms* all his human plans and programs, decisions and actions, making all his mission the sacrament of the world's return to Him who is the life of the world." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

ideological way as it sometimes happened but to fulfil a priestly function towards the world that was given to them as food and drink in a large existential measure.

### **Christ, the World and Redeemed Humanity**

Humankind was instinctively inclined to perceive the world as God's gift, to relate sacramentally to it by celebrating the life received from it through eating and drinking.<sup>461</sup> Nonetheless the human person broke the sacramental circle where it was given to him to live. In spite of perceiving God in all that surrounded him, human person decided to enter the trapped circle of his own sufficiency and of the deadly addiction to the world.<sup>462</sup> The complementarity of the dual source of life for mankind became divided and dualistic. God's presence in the world is no longer visible because a person's life is filled with the meaninglessness of its mortal end. Life's value is no longer communion with God in the world; it is no longer mediated by God's presence in the world.<sup>463</sup>

Christ came into the world in order to restore humankind's communion with God by becoming our food. According to Schmemmann, this re-establishment of the true human natural call implies conversion at both a cosmic and a personal level leading a person to *theosis*.<sup>464</sup> Christ is the true

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<sup>461</sup> He states: "Men understand all this instinctively if not rationally. Centuries of secularism have failed to transform eating into something strictly utilitarian. Food is still treated with reverence. A meal is still a rite – the last 'natural sacrament' of family and friendship, of life that is more than 'eating' and 'drinking.' To eat is still something more than to maintain bodily functions. People may not understand what that 'something more' is, but they nonetheless desire to celebrate it. They are still hungry and thirsty for sacramental life." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>462</sup> *idem.*, p. 17.

<sup>463</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>464</sup> *idem.*, p. 140. Ivana Noble commented on that issue emphasizing the relational character of the Church-world tension in order to become mutually knowable: knowing and being united with God means knowing and being in communion with our fellow human beings. Noble, "From the Sacramentality of the Church to the Sacramentality of the World" op. cit., p. 195.



source of life, and the world within the Christian realm becomes again the mediator between humanity and God through the Eucharistic bread and wine. In the Eucharistic banquet the worldly bread and wine become sacramentally the life-giving source for Christians, and through their community the meaningful fulfilment of the world's aim.

There are two ways of restoring communion with the transcendent origin of the created world: religion and Christianity. If religion is, in Schmemmann's view, the world trying to recover its divine possibilities by escaping its own profane and sinful boundaries, Christianity is seen as the new life of the world trying to fill its profane realm with God's communion in the forgiveness of His Son:

In our perspective, however, the "original" sin is not primarily that man has "disobeyed" God; the sin is that he ceased to be hungry for Him and for Him alone, ceased to see his whole life depending on the whole world as a sacrament of communion with God. ... The only real fall of man is his noneucharistic life in a noneucharistic world. The fall is not that he preferred world to God, distorted the balance between the spiritual and material, but that he made the world *material*, whereas he was to have transformed it into "life in God" filled with meaning and spirit. ... Christianity, however, is in a profound sense the *end of all religion*. ... Religion is needed where there is a wall of separation between God and man. But Christ who is God and man has broken down the wall between man and God. He has inaugurated a new life, not a new religion.<sup>465</sup>

This quotation introduces us to Schmemmann's generalised perception of the world in a twofold reality with the two parts living together in a rather contradictory way. The world is good because it is God's creation. The world is also badly oriented because Adam and Eve failed to fulfil their primordial task in paradise. Nonetheless Schmemmann sees a working way between the two

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<sup>465</sup> idem., pp. 20-21.

concepts stating that "the true Christian experience involves some kind of synthesis between these two visions of 'the world'."<sup>466</sup>

Elsewhere Schmemmann forges a threefold vision of the world in its relation to the Church in the light of an undeveloped human experience. Starting with the basic acknowledgement that "the world is good," he states that the world is first of all the creation of a God willing to relate to His creation due to the blessing and the beauty He placed within it.<sup>467</sup> Then he assumes the fallen state of the world, the ugliness that entered in the world in order to undermine God's creation. This dimension of the reality where the Church dwells permanently is in a directly opposite dynamic to the fulfilment of the Church's aim.<sup>468</sup> This perception of the world ends with the experience of the redemption brought within God's creation by Christ and His salvific presence in its midst.<sup>469</sup> At this point the sacramental relationship between God and the world becomes dominant.

Let us try now to describe his solution for the conflicting position of the fallen world "against" the created world.

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<sup>466</sup> Schmemmann, "The World as Sacrament", op. cit., p. 219.

<sup>467</sup> Schmemmann, "The World in Orthodox Thought and Experience", op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>468</sup> *ibid.* Analysing Schmemmann's perception of the world *per se*, Ivana Noble remarked: "Although Schmemmann does not use the fall as an interpretative key for understanding the world, he does not minimize its presence." I. Noble, "From the Sacramentality of the Church to the Sacramentality of the World", op. cit., p. 171.

<sup>469</sup> He remarks: "as the world rejects, in and through man, its self-sufficiency, as it ceases to be an end in itself and thus truly *dies* as 'this world,' it becomes that which it was created to be and has truly become in Christ: the object and means of sanctification, of man's communion with and passage to God's eternal Kingdom." Schmemmann, "The World in Orthodox Thought and Experience", op. cit., p. 77.

## World, Church and Kingdom of God<sup>470</sup>

As we have already seen, Schmemmann perceives the meaningfulness of the world in relation to Christ and then to the Church. Now it is time to see more closely how it works and to pass from the relation between Christ and the world to the relation between the Church and the world.

Another intuition that makes Schmemmann's sacramentality of the world a major block within his ecclesiology is constituted by the dynamic view he conceives regarding the meaning of the created world. This dynamic consistency of the world is given by the Christian fundamental eschatological vision of the potentiality of redeeming the world through its relation to the Church.<sup>471</sup> Schmemmann says clearly that the Kingdom of God is the ultimate reality of the Gospel that is experienced by Christians as the meaningful source and content of their lives.<sup>472</sup> The same Kingdom of God makes the ecclesial identity of Christians an eschatological realm within their lives. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, the idea of experiencing is crucial for

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<sup>470</sup> For an outstanding study of the relation between these three elements in Schmemmann's theology from a pastoral point of view see William C. Mills, *Church, World and Kingdom: the Eucharistic Foundation of Alexander Schmemmann's Pastoral Theology*, Hillenbrand Books, Chicago, IL, 2012. For an analysis of these three elements from a systematic point of view in the light of sacramental theology see Ivana Noble, "Politika, společnost a kultura v kontextu sakramentální teologie Alexandra Schmemmanna" in *Sborník Prací Filosofické Brněnské Univerzity*, 53(2006), pp. 25-36.

<sup>471</sup> Schmemmann, "The 'Orthodox World,' Past and Present", op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>472</sup> He says: "This reality is the *Kingdom of God*, whose announcement precisely as reality, and not merely idea or doctrine, stands at the very centre of the Gospel or, better to say, *is* the Gospel and also the eternal horizon: the source and the content of Christian experience. As long as we do not relate all other realities to that ultimate reality, as long as we try to understand and define the Church's presence in the world in terms of a hopelessly 'worldly' perspective and experience, i.e. without seeing both the Church and the world in the light of the Kingdom of God, we are bound to reach a dead end, to find ourselves, consciously or unconsciously, in a vicious circle. For there is – there can be – no true ecclesiology, i.e. no true understanding of the Church, of the world and of their interrelationship, without eschatology, i.e. the Orthodox faith in and experience of the Kingdom of God." Schmemmann, "The World in Orthodox Thought and Experience", op. cit., p. 74. While stating such beautiful theological remarks, Schmemmann still does not enter into detail concerning how one should perceive and read the centrality of the Kingdom of God found in the Bible. At least some basic points were expected...

Schmemmann, especially when he explains the delicate and disturbing inevitability of accepting the crisis within the Orthodox Church. A major difficulty in accepting Schmemmann's position is the fact that in the biblical narrative the Kingdom of God is identified fully with the person of Jesus Christ, and experiencing that kingdom means, always in biblical terms, being in communion with a living person. From Schmemmann's explanations one can perceive the Kingdom of God as a common and heavenly (almost geographic) place both for the Church and for the world. There is no clear and total identification between experiencing the Kingdom of God and "feeling" the presence of the person of Jesus Christ.

If the sacramentality of the world lies in the possibility of its eucharistic transparency of God's presence, this sacramentality must somehow be fulfilled. According to Schmemmann, the world becomes fully sacramental when the Church enters into the world and dwells in it in order to bring Christ's presence fully through the Sacrament of the Eucharist. But, before entering into the world, the Church must accomplish her journey to the Kingdom of God from which she receives her fullness and her life-giving power. Schmemmann states the twofold meanings of the Church's journey to the Kingdom and her return back into the world.<sup>473</sup> The first procession is understood vertically as her ontological fulfilment of her *raison d'être* and the second is perceived horizontally as her phenomenological fulfilment of her mission. He emphatically speaks of the ministerial relationship between the Church and the world.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> He states: "the Eucharist is the entrance of the Church into the joy of its Lord. And to enter into that joy, so as to be a witness to it in the world, is indeed the very calling of the Church, its essential *leitourgia*, the sacrament by which it 'becomes what it is'." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 26. Elsewhere he says: "in the life of the Church, the Eucharist is the *moment of truth* which makes it possible to see the real 'objects' of theology: God, man and the world." Schmemmann, "Eucharist and Theology", op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>474</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 28.

While presenting the relation of the Church to the world and to the Kingdom in the light of the sacramentality of the world, Schmemmann is aware of the abstractness of the notion of Church and he rushes into explaining her consistency. For the time being the Church is the Christians who "are on their way to *constitute the Church*."<sup>475</sup> In order to "*fulfil the Church*" Christians are supposed to leave the world to come together "to make present the One in whom all things are at their *end*, and all things are at their *beginning*."<sup>476</sup>

In the previous chapter we noted Schmemmann's critical and somehow adversarial approach to monasticism. It seems that when it comes to sacramental cosmology, to the relation between the Church and the world, his position changes. In an article published in 1968 he eulogises the monastic movement of Christians leaving the world for eschatological reasons stating that "the monasticism was the main expression of the Byzantine world as Christian."<sup>477</sup> It is worth noting Schmemmann's acceptance of "continuity between the early monastic ideal and the spirituality of the primitive Church."<sup>478</sup> His argument is based on the idea of experiencing in this world the reality of the Kingdom of God that the monks and the nuns accomplished in their expectation and anticipation in this life. The value of the monastic

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<sup>475</sup> *idem.*, p. 27.

<sup>476</sup> *idem.*, p. 27.

<sup>477</sup> Schmemmann, "The 'Orthodox World,' Past and Present", *op. cit.*, p. 46. He continues to explain: "This 'acceptance' of monasticism meant [in the Byzantine world], in fact, the recognition of the ultimate *freedom* of man, not of course in our modern and formal definition of that term, but as recognition of man's transcendent destiny and vocation, of his belonging to God and to His Kingdom, and not to anything 'in this world'." Vassa Larin comments on Schmemmann's understanding of the relationship between monasticism and its "Byzantine" manifestation: "What remained a source of frustration for Schmemmann, however, was not only the spiritual shortcomings of monasticism, but its outer, 'Byzantine' form and culture, and, most of all, its relation *to this world*." V. Larin, "Fr Alexander Schmemmann and Monasticism", *op. cit.*, p. 315.

<sup>478</sup> Schmemmann, "The 'Orthodox World,' Past and Present", *op. cit.*, p. 43.

position is given by the hardness of their decision, a choice that had and still has the power to overcome the divorce between the Church and the world.<sup>479</sup>

The Church is related primarily to the world in a liturgical way according to Schmemmann. Even if we saw in the previous chapter what the liturgical experience meant for him and the importance of that experience in perceiving the crisis within the Orthodox Church, nevertheless it is necessary to re-evaluate his liturgiological point and this time inside the dialectic, Church – world.

### **The Liturgical Structures of the Sacramentality of the World**

Besides his desire to find out who the world is that is the concern of the Church in her liturgical relevance, Schmemmann asks also what is the Kingdom of God? He does not answer the question but gives us his opinion about the Church experiencing the Kingdom of God. His answer is founded on his idea of the liturgy being the structure of the sacramentality of the world.<sup>480</sup> Once

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<sup>479</sup> He says: "As to the monastic 'exodus' and 'anachorisis' of the fourth-fifth centuries, it was motivated by the reaction of the same Christian maximalism to the spiritual dangers created by the 'reconciliation' of the Church with the world and, first of all, to the very real danger of a nominal and 'easy going' Christian life." *idem.*, p. 44. Elsewhere he praises monasticism for its eschatological foundation in a total different way than what we have seen in the previous chapter: "If monasticism, for example, is for that society its ideal pole, the 'exceedingly good' way to perfection which shapes its worship, its piety and indeed its whole mentality, it is because the monk personifies the eschatological nature of the Christian life, the impossibility of reducing Christianity to anything in 'this world' whose 'fashion fades away'." Schmemmann, "The World in Orthodox Thought and Experience", *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>480</sup> He states: "To this question the early Church, at least, had an answer: to her the Kingdom of God was revealed and made known every time she gathered on the eighth day – the day of the *Kyrios* ... to proclaim His death and confess His resurrection, to immerse herself in the new aeon of the Spirit. One can say that the uniqueness, the radical novelty of the new Christian *leitourgia* was here, in this entrance into the Kingdom which for this world is still to come, but of which the Church is truly the sacrament: the beginning, the anticipation and the *parousia*." Schmemmann, "Renewal", *op. cit.*, p. 151. Concluding his article on Schmemmann's critical view on Orthodoxy, Guroian puts his assumption in relevant liturgical terms pointing out the dialogical character of the Orthodox understanding of the world. Guroian, "An Orthodox View of Orthodoxy and Heresy", *op. cit.*, p. 91.

again we perceive Schmemmann's call for structuralism, a kind of theological method he uses for systematising his presentation.

Schmemmann begins to present the vertical movement between the Church and the Kingdom by introducing the liturgical morphology of the Eucharist.<sup>481</sup> He gives several basic explanations on the Divine Liturgy allowing us to comprehend the two-fold movement of the liturgical action: from above and from below. These two directions are considered complementary and are analysed in their theological order. Because I shall come back to these liturgical movements in a more detailed examination, I present here only those aspects that help us to perceive Schmemmann's underpinning of the sacramentality of the world.

The liturgical structures of the Christian cult are composed in the context of the world according to Schmemmann. For him the liturgical act has the property to engage the wholeness of the world in its material contingency and in its spiritual potentiality of experiencing the world in new, higher dimensions.<sup>482</sup> Schmemmann considers that the liturgy "assumes the whole of creation – matter, sound, colour – and transfigures all of it in its sacramental passage and ascension into the glory of God's presence."<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> He explains: "the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, was precisely the *passage* of the Church from this world into heaven, the act which and in which she fulfilled herself, becoming that which she is: entrance, ascension, communion. But – and this is the most important point – it was precisely this eschatological, that is, this Kingdom-centred and Kingdom-oriented character of the liturgy that make it (in the experience and the understanding of the early Church) the source of the Church's evaluation of the world, the root and the motivation of her mission to the world. It is because Christians – in their passage and ascension to heaven – knew the Kingdom and partook of its 'joy and peace in the Holy Spirit' that they could truly be its witness in and to the world." Schmemmann, "Renewal", op. cit., pp. 151-152.

<sup>482</sup> Schmemmann, "The 'Orthodox World,' Past and Present", op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>483</sup> He writes: "It is because in the liturgical mystery we are first given to see the *new* creation and to partake of it that we can then be its servants in 'this world.' ... it is again in the unique liturgical experience of the Kingdom – its light, truth, beauty and power – that the world could be rediscovered as a 'relevant' place for Christian action." idem., p. 49. It is highly remarkable from Schmemmann to speak about "Christian action", but it is superficial just to mention it without other "expectable" details. Otherwise he criticises the liberation theology that engages practically and socially the tension of Church-world.

The first sacramental "meeting" between the human world and God's presence is in the announcement of the Word in the reading from the Bible.<sup>484</sup> Schmemmann's acceptance of the transforming capacity of the Word through the Spirit is worth remarking because it enables theology to provide space for development within the human life. One can observe again that Schmemmann perceives the presence of the Word in the Church in two ways: on the one hand the Church is the theological place where the Word comes and abides and, on the other hand, she is the source of the spread of the Word into the world. The Church, in Schmemmann's understanding is the transforming and meeting place between the Word and the world and also between human beings and themselves as Christians. The Church is a converting realm and a convertible community.

Liturgical acts imply the idea of sacrifice. For Christians, the liturgical sacrifice consists in offering the world in the form of bread and wine in order to fulfil Christ's requirement of doing so in remembrance of Him, of His own sacrifice for the life of the world. We offer and we sacrifice our life in the form of the time we spend in the liturgical act in order to partake of the sacramentality of the time transformed by the historical life of our Saviour in the world.<sup>485</sup> We celebrate Christ's life in the Church bringing with us the world in order to fulfil the world with Christ's presence.<sup>486</sup> We share the

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<sup>484</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>485</sup> He remarks: "We offer the world and ourselves to God. But we do it *in Christ* and *in remembrance of Him*. We do it in Christ because He has already offered all that is to be offered to God. He has performed once and for all this Eucharist and nothing has been left unoffered. In him was *Life* – and this Life of all of us, He gave to God. The Church is all those who have been accepted into the eucharistic life of Christ. And we do it *in remembrance of Him* because, as we offer again and again our life and our world to God, we discover each time that there is nothing else to be offered but Christ Himself – the Life of the world, the fullness of all that exists. It is His Eucharist, and He is the Eucharist." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>486</sup> He says: "We know that we were created as celebrants of the sacrament of life, of its transformation into life in God, communion with God." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 34.



Eucharist, i.e. Christ's life-giving Body and Blood in the form of bread and wine in order to fulfil the life-meaning materiality of the world. We do all this by remembering. Remembrance is an essential vantage point in Schmemmann's liturgical ecclesiology because it enables the Church to allow the world to enter the realm of the Kingdom of God in a holistic paradoxical way.<sup>487</sup>

Schmemmann states a definitive structure of the eucharistic mediation of the world by the Church. Using the inaugurated eschatology forged by Florovsky, Schmemmann urges the essential liturgical role of Christ's presence in the world and in history for the life of the world:

[W]e must understand that what "happens" to bread and wine happens because something has, first of all, happened to us, to the Church. It is because we have "constituted" the Church, and this means we have followed Christ in His ascension; because He has accepted us at His table in His Kingdom; because, in terms of theology, we have entered the Eschaton, and are now standing beyond time and space; it is because all this has first happened to us that something will happen to bread and wine.<sup>488</sup>

This vantage point of the liturgical mediation of the Kingdom of God in the Eucharistic Bread and Wine is the teleological consequence of Christ's redemptive acts on behalf of the divine love for the whole world through His Church.<sup>489</sup> Christ's initiative in the liturgy is important in the framework of the liturgical structure of the sacramentality of the world because it gives full credit

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<sup>487</sup> idem., p. 36.

<sup>488</sup> idem., p. 37.

<sup>489</sup> He emphasises: "Eucharist (thanksgiving) is the state of perfect man. Eucharist is the life of paradise. Eucharist is the only and real response of man to God's creation, redemption and gift of heaven. But this perfect man who stands before God is *Christ*. In Him alone all that God has given man was fulfilled and brought back to heaven. He alone is the perfect Eucharist Being. He is the Eucharist of the world. In and through this Eucharist the whole creation becomes what is always was to be and yet failed to be." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

to the divine presence in the world in the same way it happened in the beginning, when the world was created according to God's ascendancy.<sup>490</sup>

### **The Liturgical Wholeness of the Sacramentality of the World**

The ascending movement of the congregation to the dimension of the new life in Christ is marked further in the lifting up of the paten and the cup. According to Schmemmann this is the peak of a whole that is the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Intuiting the wholeness of this sacrament is important because only in it one can perceive the twofold presence of the world and of the Kingdom, of Christ's life-history and of the new aeon of the new life in Christ. Witnessing this liturgical moment theologically, Schmemmann insists on the presence of the world through the bread and the wine and the eschatological fulfilment in that bread and wine of the Kingdom of God.<sup>491</sup>

Schmemmann succeeds in preserving the paradoxical presence of the natural world in the realm of the Kingdom of God by underlining the Christocentricity of the Church's liturgical celebration.<sup>492</sup> As we have already observed, Schmemmann's Christology attempts to underline the historical realism of Jesus' life, especially by way of mentioning Jesus Christ's relation to the material world. It is in this sense that he mentions also human physical

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<sup>490</sup> Ivana Noble strongly points out Schmemmann's distinction between the sacramentality of the Church in her institutional liturgical relevance and the sacramentality of the world in its primordial existence: "The world is created as sacramental, the church is instituted as sacramental." Noble, "From the Sacramentality of the Church to the Sacramentality of the World", op. cit., p. 172. A similar idea is to be found in Noble, "Politika, společnost a kultura v kontextu sakramentální teologie Alexandra Schmemanna", op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>491</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>492</sup> He states: "But this is not an "other" world, different from the one God has created and given to us. It is our same world, *already* perfected in Christ, but *not yet* in us. It is our same world, redeemed and restored, in which Christ 'fills all things with Himself.' And since God has created the world as food for us and has given us food as a means of communion with Him, of life in Him, the new food of the new life which we receive from God in His Kingdom *is Christ Himself*. He is our bread – because from the very beginning all our hunger was a hunger for Him and all our bread was but a symbol of Him, a symbol that had to become reality." idem., pp. 42-43.

necessities like hunger or thirst and he even speaks about death. Jesus Christ assumed not only, in Schmemmann's view, the human body, the flesh but also the whole world by dwelling in it and by raising it with Him to heaven.<sup>493</sup>

### **The World Enters the Kingdom of God by Praying**

One of the major ways the Church relates to the world is by prayer.<sup>494</sup> In the context of remembering the world in the liturgy Schmemmann affirms that the prayer of intercession enables us to enter into a more profound communion with the world in Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit. He supports the idea of communion between the world and the Church in the liturgy. There is a gradual communion between the world and the Kingdom of God, a movement that penetrates the Church with its material dimension and its spiritual upraising. When Christians enter the liturgy, they come in marked by the mundane aspects of their life; this arrival signifies the first communion between the world and the Church. Leaving the world in order to enter the praying dimension of the liturgical life does not mean abandoning the world but rather overcoming the sinful separation between them, a separation that generated a gap between the thought and the experience of the Church.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>493</sup> He says: "He [Jesus] became man and lived in this world. He ate and drank, and this means that the world of which he partook, the very food of our world became His body, His life. But His life was totally, absolutely *eucharistic* – all of it was transformed into communion with God and all of it ascended into heaven. And now He shares this glorified life with us." *idem.*, p. 43.

<sup>494</sup> "What needs to be stressed, however, is that Christian prayer, just like the Christian *leitourgia*, and for the same reasons, is in its essence eschatological; it is an effort towards and an experience of the Kingdom of God. If by 'prayer' we mean here not only an external rule and practice, but, above all, a total inner orientation of man toward God – and such is, of course, the content of the entire world of Christian spirituality – there can be no doubt that its object and experience is precisely the 'peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' which according to St. Paul is the very essence of the Kingdom of God." Schmemmann, "Renewal", *op. cit.*, pp. 155-156.

<sup>495</sup> He calls for the renewal of the praying attitude of the Church: "There can be no renewal in any area of Church life or, simply, of the Church herself, without first a *spiritual renewal*. But this emphatically is *not* a mere pietistic statement, a call for more prayer. It means, above everything else, the overcoming of the tragic divorce between the *thought* of the Church and

Christians then ascend into the inaugurated realm of the Kingdom of God, empowering the members of the assembly to renew their life by partaking of Christ's life:

To be in Christ means to be like Him, to make ours the very movement of His life. ... The Church is not a society for escape – corporately or individually – from this world to taste of the mystical bliss of eternity. Communion is not a "mystical experience": we drink of the chalice of Christ, and He gave Himself for the life of the world. The bread on the paten and the wine in the chalice are to remind us of the incarnation of the Son of God, of the cross and death. And thus is the very joy of the Kingdom that makes us *remember* the world and pray for it. It is the very communion with the Holy Spirit that enables us to love the world with the love of Christ. The Eucharist is the sacrament of unity and the moment of *truth*: here we see the world in Christ, as it really is, and not from our particular and therefore limited and partial points of view. Intercession begins here, in the glory of the messianic banquet, and this is the only true beginning for the Church's mission. It is when, "having put aside all earthly care," we seem to have left *this world*, that we, in fact, recover it in all its reality.<sup>496</sup>

The Eucharist, according to Schmemmann, is not only communion with Christ, but also communion with the world. It is not at all the same level and way of partaking, but nevertheless it is communion, it is knowledge, it is the retrieval of meaning(s), it is essential and it is ecclesiastical. Christians come to the liturgy as bearers of two main particularities: they are human persons i.e. they are from this world, and they are already but not yet members of the new world in Christ. The world is fully present in the liturgy through the members of the liturgical community not as static elements, nor as decorative parts, but as ontological constituents of their belonging to the heavenly realm. The world

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the *experience* of the Kingdom of God which is the only source, guide and fulfilment of that thought, and the only ultimate motivation of all Christian action." *idem.*, p. 156.

<sup>496</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45. It is sad to see how Schmemmann holds to his criticism of mystical theology breaking the meaningfulness of the relationship between, prayer, mysticism, communal liturgical prayer and ecclesiological theosis. Happily Lossky had a much more coherent attitude towards this issue.

is fully reinstated at the end of this process, "for in and through communion not only do we become one body and one spirit, but we are restored to that solidarity and love which the world has lost."<sup>497</sup>

### **Schmemann's Theology of Time**

Schmemann's next step in depicting his consideration of the place and role of the world in Orthodox theology is linked to the perception of time in the Christian life. If he described the liturgy as the public acting of the faithful community, implying a spatial and material perspective of this description, he is also aware of the temporal dimension of this Christian act. We have already seen the relevance of the theology of time in the framework of the liturgical experience discussed in the previous chapter. Now it is time to comprehend this liturgy of time in its meaning to the fourth dimension of the worldly existence that is the kind of time which measures the passage of the human being in this world.

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<sup>497</sup> idem., p. 45. See also Schmemann, "The 'Orthodox World,' Past and Present", op. cit., p. 29. Similar ideas are to be found in Schmemann, "Renewal", op. cit., pp. 153-155. There are theologians who sharply criticise Schmemann for his lack of unity between his call for a stronger liturgical experience of the Kingdom of God and any involvement of the faithful in the difficult social experience of the everyday life of poor, suffering or marginalised people. Ivana Noble states: "Our cooperation with God's grace is seen by Schmemann more in terms of living out what has been revealed to us in liturgy. So to speak about striving for church unity, or doing something about it, linking conversion more to human reality, may seem alien to Schmemann's theology. Unity is here since the beginning of the world, according to Schmemann. 'How things are with God' and 'how they are celebrated in liturgy' is such a strong precedent that it at times overshadows the sensitivity to how our fellow brothers and sisters experience them here and now, how they are affected by them here and now. And in this I agree with Morrill's criticism that Schmemann's *theologia gloriae*, however good it is, needs to be complemented by *theologia crucis*, that his 'theology from above' needs to be complemented by a 'theology from below,' which would help it to become truly incarnational, which is what Schmemann wants." Noble, "From the Sacramentality of the Church to the Sacramentality of the World" op. cit., p. 198. A similar critic is to be found in Noble, "Politika, společnost a kultura v kontextu sakramentální teologie Alexandra Schmemanna", op. cit., pp. 31-32. Although Noble questions Schmemann's intent to engage the world openly in its social and cultural framework, she agrees that his theology is not completely apolitical. She explains that in Schmemann's case, the liturgical praxis influences the political and not the opposite way.

Once again, when dealing with a liturgical issue, Schmemmann presents his reading of the structure of that act. In this case it is about the time structure present in the liturgy. He expounds the temporal liturgical structure through the awareness of its meaning and its perception in the "real" mundane world. He speaks about time in terms of ecclesial experience of one of the most fundamental human characteristics. This experience should be understood as a gift within the Christian community.<sup>498</sup>

He ascribes the contemporary "normal sensitivity" of time to the religious perception of the world and its components, one of which is time. In a "classic" Christian society, time is divided into sacred time and profane time. The consequence of this perversion of the relation between Christians and the world, including time, is that they run away and out of time.<sup>499</sup>

### **The Compression of Liturgical Time in One Specific Day**

The temporal element that challenges our natural existential experience with a new, eschatologically fulfilled one is the day, "the most direct and immediate unit of time."<sup>500</sup> Schmemmann requires a liturgical analysis of daily time because "it is here, in the reality of daily life, that the theology of time, expressed in the experience of Sunday and Easter, must find its application."<sup>501</sup>

The day as a liturgical measure could be compared with the individual in the Church. If the Church means community, the liturgical act expressed

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<sup>498</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

<sup>499</sup> He says: [W]e must understand that the real tragedy of Christianity is not its "compromise" with the world and progressive "materialism," but on the contrary, its "spiritualization" and transformation into "religion." And religion – as we know already – has thus come to mean a world of pure spirituality, a concentration of attention on matters pertaining to the "soul." Christians were tempted to reject time altogether and replace it with mysticism and "spiritual" pursuits, to live as Christians out of time and thereby escape its frustrations, to insist that time has no real meaning from the point of view of the Kingdom which is "beyond time." Schmemmann, *idem.*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>500</sup> *idem.*, p. 59.

<sup>501</sup> *ibid.*

basically in the Eucharistic celebration means a "community" of the seven individual days, requiring the gathering of all the daily individual prayers of the faithful.<sup>502</sup>

The first thing to be noted about the fact that the daily liturgical experience is contrary yet not opposed to the daily "natural" social experience, is the liturgical act that begins with Vespers, that is in the evening. The tension between the last part of the day and the beginning of the celebration a new day is for Schmemmann a meeting point between earthly life and the eschatological fulfilment of that same life. The call of Vespers is to convey the beauty and the novelty of the eschatological day into the hardness of the "natural" day. Vespers mediates the transfer of the eschatological fulfilment of a normal day into the life of the faithful. The liturgical experience of Vespers is entirely based on its anchorage in the "normality" of a day.<sup>503</sup>

Schmemmann's sacramental cosmology is fashioned by the Christocentric anthropology he offers. The original moment of creation is seen by Schmemmann in its meaningful complementarity to the daily moment of one's prayer and to the eschatological moment of one's belonging to the Church.<sup>504</sup> Like Christ who brought light into the darkness without being overwhelmed by darkness, Vespers at the end of the day brings eschatological meaning into our lives. Schmemmann uses the image of pregnancy in order to reveal the rooting of our life in time where the new life in Christ is to be born.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>502</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>503</sup> *idem.*, p. 60.

<sup>504</sup> He says: "There must be someone in this world – which rejected God and in this rejection, in this blasphemy, became a chaos of darkness – there must be someone to stand in the centre, and to discern, to see it again as full of divine riches, as the cup full of life and joy, as beauty and wisdom, and to thank God for it. This 'someone' is Christ, the new Adam who restores that 'eucharistic life' which I, the old Adam, have rejected and lost; who makes me again what I am, and restores the world to me. And if the Church *is in Christ*, its initial act is always this act of thanksgiving, of returning the world to God." *idem.*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>505</sup> *idem.*, p. 61.

Christianity's failure to deal with the challenge of time must be recovered through a return to a genuine Christ-centred perception of time. Christ, in Schmemmann's view, chose a certain day to rise from the dead, and the Church as entering the new dimension of her eschatological existence should consider that day.<sup>506</sup> That day is granted a paradoxical power of bringing together two apparently contradictory realms: this world and the world to come. Schmemmann's eschatological view about the eighth day is again marked by the cross-morphology of Christ's dwelling in the world: He belongs horizontally to history and vertically to His Kingdom.<sup>507</sup>

The meeting point of these two crucial dimensions of the Day of the Lord is settled in the process of remembrance and expectation, a course which, in Schmemmann's perspective, is "a movement from Mount Tabor into the world, from the world into the 'day without evening' of the world to come."<sup>508</sup>

Matins constitutes the liturgical morning act when we are called to fight the weakness of our life. The hardness of our daily life is about to begin and the knowledge and awareness of it brings darkness right into the morning.<sup>509</sup>

The negativity of daily life along with its superficiality are of great importance for Schmemmann's sacramental cosmology because they constitute the morphology of the realm into which Christ came and the human reality He redeemed. Schmemmann, as we have already noted, sees everywhere structures of time ready to be filled with the eschatological meaning of God's beautiful creation. Christ came to the borders of His contemporary society and this is also an ultimate constituent of His redemptive act which is celebrated in the liturgy. But Christ became the convergent point between the fallen world and

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<sup>506</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>507</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

<sup>508</sup> *idem.*, p. 52.

<sup>509</sup> *idem.*, p. 63.



His Kingdom. This contact is always enclosed in time not in a manner of surrender but rather in a germinal eschatological way:

These two complementary, yet absolutely essential, *dimensions* of time shape our life in time and, by giving time a new meaning, transform it into *Christian time*. This double experience is, indeed, to be applied to everything we do. We are always *between* morning and evening, *between* Sunday and Sunday, *between* Easter and Easter, *between* the two comings of Christ. The experience of time as *end* gives an absolute importance to whatever we do *now*, makes it final, decisive. The experience of time as *beginning* fills all our time with joy, for it adds to it the "coefficient" of eternity: "I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord." We are at work in the world, and this world in itself, becomes meaningless, futile, irrelevant.<sup>510</sup>

Christ abides in the middle of the Christian existence and through His dwelling among us He remains in the world He created and redeemed. The core of the world is filled with pointlessness and shallowness and yet one can find Christ's residence there. Christ keeps on being in His world but in a hidden way and the Church mediates His epiphany through her liturgy. But, according to Schmemmann, the Church must not run away from the ugliness of the world, from its darkness, but she has to transform it into beauty, fill it with joy and meaning and accomplish her creaturely goal.<sup>511</sup>

The idea of crossroad is central to Schmemmann's theology, and that not only in someone's life, but also in the functioning of theology. Once again it is to be said that for him the meeting point between old and new, past day and

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<sup>510</sup> idem., p. 64. It is worth noting Schmemmann's use of the notion of between, a notion that led Andrew Louth to forge a "theology of in-between" in order to positively criticise Bulgakov's sophiology.

<sup>511</sup> He says: "[W]e Christians have too often forgotten that God has redeemed the world. For centuries we have preached to the hurrying people: your daily rush has no meaning, yet accept it – and you will be rewarded in *another* world by an eternal rest. But God revealed and offers us eternal Life and not eternal rest. And God revealed this eternal Life in the midst of time – and of its *rush* – as its secret meaning and goal. And thus he made time, and our work in it, into the *sacrament of the world to come*, the liturgy of fulfilment and ascension. It is when we have reached the very end of the world's self-sufficiency that it *begins* again for us as the material of the sacrament that we are to fulfil in Christ." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 65.

coming day, leaving a time lapse and entering an opening period signifies dealing with complementarity and transformation and not with antithesis or opposition.

### **Living Liturgically Throughout the Week and the Year**

Schmemmann extends the timely sacramentality of the Day of the Lord to that of the year and of the week. We have already seen this in the analysis of his liturgical theology. What is worth noting for us now is to expose his understanding of the shape the sacramentality of these periods of time. Schmemmann again brings things to their origins: while speaking of the feasts throughout the course of the year, he relates these celebrations with the basic meaning of human life, with the "carnal" perception of their existential connotation.<sup>512</sup>

As one can see, Schmemmann states that Christianity takes into account the primary status of man's life not to negate it, but to elevate basic human needs, desires and so, the whole human existence. This is possible by "putting" Christ in His place, by emphasizing His human and historic experience and His divine power of overcoming death by the resurrection.<sup>513</sup> Christ came to bring joy into the world and, as Schmemmann rightly and emphatically states, He did this by dying on the cross. The Christian feast relates the idea of joy to the cross, making the cross the true and meaningful gift of Christ's death and resurrection. The ecclesial point is once more decisive for Schmemmann when dealing with the relation between the cross and the world. Christ can become

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<sup>512</sup> *idem.*, p. 54. Without freely repeating myself, I would just like to note that the liberation theology Schmemmann criticised openly looked for joy and freedom among South American Christians too...

<sup>513</sup> *ibid*

central only in a Church opened to the world, yet without being "trapped" by the human boundaries of the ecclesial community.<sup>514</sup>

Schmemmann repeatedly uses the idea of transformation in order to make his point about the renewing role of the liturgy in the Christian experience and with regard to the physical, natural life of Christians. For him, the most fundamental Christian liturgical experience is related to the annual feasts of Easter and Pentecost, feasts which "were, even before Christ, the announcement, the anticipation of that experience of time and of life in time, of which the Church was the manifestation and the fulfilment. They were – to use another image – the 'material' of a *sacrament of time* to be performed by the Church."<sup>515</sup> Being the fulfilment of the natural and historical time, these two feasts became more real for Christian existence than the time of the world in which they live.

Regarding the matter of joy, Schmemmann's vantage point is relevant due to the "normal" experience of fake spirituality one could find in the Church in Schmemmann's time. He claims the necessity of the experience of joy in order to reveal the meaning of the liturgical texts, their manner of pointing to the life of the faithful and their ceremonial way of bringing back the initial joy of Adam's communion with God.<sup>516</sup>

Even if Schmemmann relates these two feasts with the experience of joy, he does not reduce the liturgical experience of joy to them, nor does he forge any sentimentality in the Orthodox understanding of these feasts.<sup>517</sup> What it is really imperative for Schmemmann is to relate liturgical joy to the reality of life itself, to find the proper mode of appropriating the ultimate reason for the

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<sup>514</sup> idem., p. 55.

<sup>515</sup> idem., p. 56.

<sup>516</sup> idem., p. 57.

<sup>517</sup> "For fifty days after Easter it is granted to us to live in the paschal joy, to experience time as the *feast*. And then comes the 'last and great' day of Pentecost, and with it our return into the real time of this world. ... The night is approaching, the night of time and history, of the daily effort, of the fatigue and temptations, of the whole inescapable burden of life." idem., p. 58.

liturgical celebration in the framework of life. The feasts are always beginnings and ends; they are meant to express life liturgically in its inexpressible fullness.<sup>518</sup>

### **Schmemmann's Baptismal Ecclesiology**

After providing us with the general structure of his ecclesiological cosmology and with its Christological meaning, Schmemmann presents the cosmic (time and space) moment of the entrance into the new redeemed world.<sup>519</sup> This moment constitutes the beginning of the presentation of his ecclesiological anthropology. This ecclesial moment has a major importance because it represents a crossroad in the evolution of the human being from the old created entity towards the new person granted with the possibility to enter eternal life in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Schmemmann's first step in opening a theological discussion about Baptism is to acknowledge the discrepancy between the original cosmic celebration of this rite and the contemporary individual perception and acceptance of this liturgical necessity.<sup>520</sup> After acknowledging the necessary

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<sup>518</sup> He states: "Time itself is now measured by the rhythm of the end and the beginning, of the end transformed into beginning, of the beginning announcing the fulfilment. The Church is *in time* and its life in this world is *fasting*, that is, a life of effort, sacrifice, self-denial and dying. The Church's very mission is to become all things to all men." *idem.*, p. 59.

<sup>519</sup> "All that we have said about time and its transformation and renewal has simply no meaning if there is no new man to perform the sacrament of time. It is of him that we must speak now and of the act in which the newness of life and the power to live by it are given him. We began, however, not at baptism, which is the beginning of Christian life, but with the Eucharist and time, because it was essential to establish the cosmic dimensions of the life given in baptism." *idem.*, p. 67.

<sup>520</sup> He says: "For a long time the theological and spiritual interest in baptism was virtually disconnected from its cosmic significance, from the totality of man's relation to the world. It was explained as man's liberation from 'original sin.' But both original sin and the liberation from it were given an extremely narrow and individual meaning. Baptism was understood as the means to assure the individual salvation of man's soul. No wonder that such an understanding of baptism led to a similar narrowing of the baptismal liturgy. From an act of the whole Church, involving the whole cosmos, it became a private ceremony, performed in a corner of the church by 'private appointment,' and in which the Church was reduced to the

theological yearning for the cosmic perception of Baptism, and having described the theological impetus of this urge that is the crisis of the individualistic liturgical celebration of this rite, Schmemmann gives us the foundation of his baptismal cosmology: matter and time:

Baptism, by its very form and elements – the water of the baptismal font, the oil of chrismation – refers us inescapably to "matter," to the world, to the cosmos. In the early Church the celebration of baptism took place during the solemn Easter vigil, and in fact, the Easter liturgy grew out of the "Paschal mystery" of baptism. This means that baptism was understood as having a direct meaning for the "new time," of which Easter is the celebration and manifestation. And finally, baptism and chrismation were always fulfilled in the Eucharist – which is the sacrament of the Church's ascension to the Kingdom, the sacrament of the "world to come."<sup>521</sup>

These two essential parts of Schmemmann's attempt to recover the cosmic value of Baptism are put in direct and unmediated relation to the liturgical and eschatological movement of ascent and entrance into the Kingdom of God. As we have already seen, the idea of moving, of process and progress, of growing is essential for Schmemmann because it allows the Church to become something she is supposed to be but yet she is not because she is paradoxically enclosed with worldly boundaries. Schmemmann considers that the Church can become the mediator between the Kingdom of God and world only if she is "material" and if she is eschatologically engaged with history.

The first cosmic presence that accompanies the human person both in leaving the world and in entering the new reality of the Kingdom is water. In Schmemmann's theological perception water is a very complex element because it is a theological and scientific symbol in itself. Both the Bible and science see water as the foundation of life and a mediation of life. Water paradoxically also

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'minister of sacraments' and the cosmos to the three symbolic drops of water, considered as 'necessary and sufficient' for the 'validity' of the sacrament." *ibid.*

<sup>521</sup> *idem.*, p. 68.

represents death. Therefore water constitutes the most elementary sacramental connection between life and death, between cosmos and the Kingdom, between the Church and individuals.<sup>522</sup>

In spite of the mechanistic explanation of sacrament, Schmemmann continues to use his favourite understanding of sacrament as process. The world as God's creation is transformed into life by means of water, the latter becoming therefore the vehicle for life as God's gift and God's ultimate goal entrusted in His creation. But it was Christ and His baptism that gave the decisive significance as its being essential both to earthly and to eternal life.<sup>523</sup>

The cosmic sacramental understanding of water as the gift of God to humankind and as the means of humanity's communion with God requires faith. For Schmemmann, "the faith in Christ that led this man to baptism is precisely the certitude that Christ is the only true 'content' – meaning beginning and end – of all that exists, the fullness of Him who fills all things."<sup>524</sup> Faith is in this case the longing for meaning and the return to the foundation of one's existence in order to perceive the otherness. In Schmemmann's theological view, faith implies communion and communication of meaning. It is once again a process of becoming initiated from above and grown from below. Without otherness there is no togetherness.

Christ is the originator of the faith required for someone to be baptised because He was the first to have understood the cosmic and redemptive meaning of water and the first to have opened Himself to the life-giving

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<sup>522</sup> *idem.*, p. 72.

<sup>523</sup> He urges: "God created the world and blessed it and gave it to man as his food and life, as the means of communion with Him. The blessing of water signifies the return or redemption of matter to this initial and essential meaning. By accepting the baptism of John, Christ sanctified the water – made it the water of purification and reconciliation with God. It was then, as Christ was coming out of the water, that the Epiphany – the new and redemptive manifestation of God – took place, and the Spirit of God, who at the beginning of creation 'moved upon the face of the waters,' made water – that is the world – again into what He made it at the beginning." *idem.*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>524</sup> *idem.*, pp. 73-74.

presence of the divine grace mediated by water. Therefore "in faith the whole world becomes the sacrament of His presence, the means of life in Him. And water, the image and presence of the world, is truly the image and presence of Christ."<sup>525</sup> In Schmemmann's ecclesiological cosmology the original image and likeness to God of the human person accumulated a new cosmic dimension, which is the sacramental and iconic cosmic Christology. Schmemmann's Christology is founded in the theology of "the likeness of death" celebrated in baptism (Rom. 6:3).<sup>526</sup> Faith therefore has, in Schmemmann's view an apophatic character regarding existential knowledge. With this kind of apophatic experience comes the realization of true Christology in its cosmic ecclesiological meaning.<sup>527</sup>

### **The Holy Spirit as Mediator Between the World and the Church**

When it comes to speaking about the life of the Church *per se*, Schmemmann returns his argument to the issue of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church.<sup>528</sup> This presence is initially manifested in the Sacrament of Chrismation (Confirmation), which is organically related to the Sacrament of Baptism in the Orthodox liturgical practice. The presence of the Holy Spirit in

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<sup>525</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>526</sup> He says: "the new life which Christ gives to those who believe in Him shone forth from the grave. This world rejected Christ, refused to see in Him its own life and fulfilment. And since it has no other life but Christ, by rejecting and killing Christ the world condemned itself to death. Its only ultimate reality is death, and none of the secular eschatologies in which men still put their hope can have any force against the simple statement of Tolstoy: 'And after a stupid life there shall come a stupid death.' But the Christian is precisely the one who knows that the true reality of the world – of *this* world, of *this* life of ours – not of some mysterious 'other world – is in Christ; the Christian knows, rather, that Christ *is* this reality." *ibid.*

<sup>527</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>528</sup> For a short account on Schmemmann's presence, role and contribution in rediscovering Pneumatology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century see Ivana Noble, "The Holy Spirit Blowing Across the Eastern-Western Borders", in *Communio Viatorum*, 3(2011), pp. 1-6, p. 2. The importance of this editorial for my argument lies in the presentation of that rediscovery in the form of a theological ecumenical crossroad mutually shaping Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant thought.

the liturgical experience of the faithful enables Schmemmann to better make his point about the mediating relevance of the Church in the world:

The Holy Spirit *confirms* the whole life of the Church because He is that life, the manifestation of the Church as the "world to come," as the joy and peace of the Kingdom. As institution, teaching, ritual, the Church is indeed not only *in* this world, but also *of* this world, a "part" of it. It is the Holy Spirit whose *coming* is the inauguration, the manifestation of the ultimate, of the "last things," who transforms the Church into the "sacrament" of the Kingdom, makes her life the presence, in this world, of the world to come.<sup>529</sup>

If one's baptism reminds us of the transposition of the significance of Easter in one's life, chrismation is to be recalled as one's Pentecost. Schmemmann emphasises also in the case of chrismation the "materiality" of the sacrament manifested in the sacred oil and in the "bodily" wholeness of the one who receives this sacrament.<sup>530</sup> If Schmemmann's sacramental cosmology concerns the tension between the fallen world and the realm of the Kingdom of God, then his cosmic Christology concerns the tension between the "social", "natural" human person and the Christian, i.e. the member of the Church community.<sup>531</sup> These two labels of Schmemmann's Eucharistic ecclesiology are brought into dialogue and complementarity through his understanding of the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit, which could be designed as an ecclesial Pneumatology.<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>530</sup> *idem.*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>531</sup> He explains: "To be truly man means to be fully *oneself*. The confirmation is the confirmation of man in his own, unique 'personality.' It is, to use again the same image, his ordination to be *himself*, to become what God wants him to be, what He has loved in me from all eternity. It is the gift of vocation. If the Church is truly the 'newness of life' – the world and nature as restored in Christ – it is not, or rather ought not be, a purely religious institution in which to be 'pious,' to be a member in 'good standing,' means leaving one's own personality at the entrance – in the 'check room' – and replacing it with a worn-out, impersonal, neutral 'good Christian' type personality. Piety in fact may be a very dangerous thing, a real opposition to the Holy Spirit who is the Giver of *Life* – of joy, movement and creativity – and not of the 'good conscience' which looks at everything with suspicion, fear and moral indignation." *idem.*, p. 76.

<sup>532</sup> *idem.*, p. 76.



The ecclesial pneumatological complement is for Schmemmann the reaction to the rediscovery of the place and the role of the Holy Spirit in 20<sup>th</sup> century theology.<sup>533</sup> It is for him a corrective to the long legalistic understanding of the liturgical experience of the Church and this corrective allows his eucharistic ecclesiology to rediscover also the role and the place of the Holy Spirit in Christian cosmology.<sup>534</sup>

Another reaction towards the legalistic comprehension of the liturgical experience of the Church is to be found in Schmemmann's explanation of Baptism in its relation to the meaning of penance and forgiveness of sins. The central point of these issues in his cosmic sacramentology consists in the Christo-centric consequence of these human spiritual processes. If humans have brought ugliness into the world through their non-mediating usage of the world, Christ restores the intermediacy of the world by revealing its true goal which is communion with God. Christ turns manhood's existential way around by accepting to be a "material" and historical person of this world, and he thus turns the whole world around, returning it to God.

Repentance implies, in Schmemmann's view, the return of the old to the new, of the fallen to the ascendant, of the hidden darkness to the brightly uncovered joy of life.<sup>535</sup> Experiencing repentance and forgiveness provides Christians with the genuine experience of a joyful life and allows them to be

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<sup>533</sup> For an Orthodox apprehension of Pneumatology in its main biblical perspective see John Breck, *Spirit of Truth: the Holy Spirit in Johannine Tradition*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1991.

<sup>534</sup> He urges: "We have already mentioned that in the past baptism took place on Easter – as part of the great Paschal celebration. Its natural fulfilment was thus, of course, the entrance of the newly baptised into the Eucharist of the Church, the sacrament of our participation in the *Pascha* of the Kingdom. For baptism opens the doors of the Kingdom and the Holy Spirit leads us into the joy and peace, and this means into the eucharistic fulfilment." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>535</sup> idem., p. 78.

open to on-going communion with God. Schmemmann's statement about the fake spiritual attitude of some of his contemporary Christian fellows is relevant:

The one true sadness is "that of not being a saint," and how often the "moral" Christians are precisely those who never feel, never experience this sadness, because their own "experience of salvation," the feeling of "being saved" fills them with self-satisfaction; and whoever has been "satisfied" has received already his reward and cannot thirst and hunger for that total transformation and transfiguration of life which alone makes "saints."<sup>536</sup>

Repentance and forgiveness convey man to the Church and facilitate the entrance of the fallen world into the new life with Christ in the Holy Spirit. There, in the Church, the Christian becomes fully aware of his fallen yet redeemed nature and personhood. The meeting with the other in the communal

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<sup>536</sup> *idem.*, pp. 78-79. At the end of this subchapter dedicated to the blowing of the Holy Spirit in the Church in Schmemmann's perception, it is worth quoting in full one of his genius critics of monasticism where he emphasises the importance of normal, worldly yet churchly experiencing of life: "More and more often it seems to me that reviving the monasticism that everybody so ecstatically talks about – or at least trying to revive it – can be done only by liquidating first of all the monastic institution itself, i.e., the whole vaudeville of *klobuks*, cowls, stylisation, etc. If I were a *starets* – an elder – I would tell a candidate for monasticism roughly the following: get a job, if possible the simplest one, without creativity (for example as a cashier in a bank); while working, pray and seek inner peace; do not get angry; do not think of yourself (rights, fairness, etc.). Accept everyone (co-workers, clients) as someone sent to you; pray for them; after paying for a modest apartment and groceries, give your money to the poor, to individuals rather than foundations; always go to the same church and there try to be a real helper, not by lecturing about spiritual life or icons, not by teaching but with a 'dust rag' (cf. St Seraphim of Sarov). Keep at that kind of service and be – in church matters – totally obedient to the parish priest; do not thrust yourself and your service on anyone; do not be sad that your talents are not being used; be helpful; serve where needed and not where *you* think you are needed; read and learn as much as you can; do not read only monastic literature, but broadly (this point needs more precise definition); if friends and acquaintances invite you because they are close to you – go; but not too often, and within reason. Never stay more than one and a half or two hours. After that the friendliest atmosphere becomes harmful; dress like everybody else, but modestly, and without visible signs of a special spiritual life; be always simple, light, joyous. *Do not teach*. Avoid like the plague any 'spiritual' conversations and any religious or churchly idle talk. If you act that way, everything will be to your benefit; do not seek a spiritual elder or guide. If he is needed, God will send him, and will send him when needed; having worked and served this way for the years – no less – ask God whether you should continue to live this way, or whether change is needed. And wait for an answer: it will come; the signs will be 'joy and peace in the Holy Spirit'." Schmemmann, *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann*, op. cit., pp. 284-285.

process of repentance heals the individualism brought by sin.<sup>537</sup> Schmemmann ends the discussion about repentance by presenting his ecclesial understanding of the Sacrament of Penance. This distinct liturgical sacrament is the continuation of baptism and it is the regeneration of a broken communion with God in the Church.<sup>538</sup>

### **Schmemmann's Theology of Womanhood<sup>539</sup>**

Schmemmann looks for an all-embracing conceptualization of the sacramental life of the Church. Sacraments have real theological value in so far as they are rooted in the foundations of the daily life of the faithful. But this rootedness means a dynamic makeover rather than static relatedness. This

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<sup>537</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 79. Ironic as it may be, Schmemmann misses abundantly the point of repentance while speaking of monasticism in his *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*. This issue was relevantly criticised by Vassa Larin: "This accentuation of the 'outer' mission of the Church, to which Fr Alexander had a true vocation as a powerful and even brilliant speaker, seems to neglect the existence of an 'inner' mission of the Church and of the sacrament closely related to that inner mission, *repentance*. That is to say, Schmemmann's inspiring vision of a Church illuminating the world with its eschatological fullness does not make clear that *her own members* are often in need of illumination and restoration; that they lead a life of struggle in a world that 'lies in evil.' In other words, there is little if any place in this picture for a *repenting or struggling* Church." V. Larin, "Fr Alexander Schmemmann and Monasticism", op. cit., pp. 306-307.

<sup>538</sup> He says: "The *sacrament of penance* is not, therefore, a sacred and juridical 'power' given by God to men. It is the power of baptism as it lives in the Church. From baptism it receives its sacramental character." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>539</sup> Commenting on the place and the role of Mary, mother of Jesus and, according to the Orthodox Tradition, *Theotokos*, Schmemmann says: "'in her love and obedience, in her faith and humility, she accepted to be what from all eternity all creation was meant and created to be: the temple of the Holy Spirit, the *humanity* of God. She accepted to give her body and blood – that is, her whole life – to be the body and blood of the Son of God, to be *mother* in the fullest and deepest sense of this word, giving her life to the Other and fulfilling her life in Him. She accepted the only true nature of each creature and all creation: to place the meaning and, therefore, the fulfilment of her life in God. In accepting this nature she fulfilled the *womanhood* of creation." idem., p. 83. His use of terms is problematic: when he speaks of humanity he uses the word man; when he speaks of the female part of humanity he uses the term womanhood. Regarding Schmemmann's more developed apprehension of the place and role of Mary in the Orthodox theology, see Schmemmann, *The Virgin Mary*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1995.

transformation, in his view, is granted already, naturally in God's act of creation. The sacraments just direct this transformation on the right way.<sup>540</sup>

The first social image of love is family life. Schmemmann thinks that the institution of the family in itself cannot be considered among those matters that are in the spectrum of the Church's sacramental interest. The Church's sacrament of marriage should be related to love rather than to family. Therefore he tends to speak about the sacrament of love. Schmemmann takes as granted Mary's example in the Church's life as "the purest expression of human love and response to God."<sup>541</sup> Mary's example is important for Schmemmann because it is paradoxical and related to the theological concepts of divine word, grace, freedom and birth. Yet the point of departure is, as always, the contemporary modern trend toward equality of the sexes and the place of woman in society.<sup>542</sup>

Mary's answer to God's call to be the mother of His Son is perceived in Schmemmann's view as the restoration of the biblical alliance between God and Israel. As Israel was biblically the mediator between God and the world, a similar thing happens with the Church, the new Israel. Mary is a descendant of the people of Israel and the beginning of the Church.<sup>543</sup> Schmemmann continues to "descend" on this scale Church – Mary – Israel – world reaching its lower point: God's creation. Mary fulfils the goal of the whole creation to obey God's call not-to-eat, Mary heals Eve's disobedience and she transforms the ancient legalistic understanding of obedience into loving achievement of one's existential aim. Schmemmann emphatically presents Mary's response as an

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<sup>540</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>541</sup> idem., p. 83.

<sup>542</sup> idem., p. 84. Schmemmann's apprehension of the place and role of Mary in theology should be complemented with Elizabeth Behr-Siegel's theology of womanhood and with Paul Evdokimov's perception of the ministerial meaningfulness of woman and family in the Orthodox Church.

<sup>543</sup> He says: "it is in Mary – the Woman, the Virgin, the Mother – in her response to God, that the Church has its living and personal beginning." *ibid.*

active and long lasting process including the whole of creation, as a progressive and developing course while the world allows itself to be sacramentally and painfully transformed, healed and redeemed. Let us see how it works through the following quotation which is worth giving in its full:

True obedience is thus true love for God, the true response of Creation to its Creator. Humanity is fully humanity when it is this response to God, when it becomes the movement of total self-giving and obedience to Him. But in the "natural" world the bearer of this obedient love, of this love as response is the woman. The man proposes, the woman accepts. This acceptance is not passivity, blind submission, because it is love, and love is always active. It gives life to the proposal of man, fulfils it as life, yet it becomes fully love and fully life only when it is fully *acceptance* and *response*. This is why the whole creation, the whole Church – and not only women – find the expression of their response and obedience to God in Mary the Woman, and rejoice in her. She stands for all of us, because only when we accept, respond in love and obedience – only when we accept the essential womanhood of creation – do we become ourselves true men and women; only then can we indeed *transcend* our limitations as "males" and "females." For man can be truly man – that is, the king of creation, the priest and minister of God's creativity and initiative – only when he does not posit himself as the "owner" of creation and submits himself – in obedience and love – to its nature as the bride of God, in *response* and *acceptance*. And woman ceases to be just a "female" when, totally and unconditionally accepting the life of the Other as *her own life*, giving herself totally to the Other, she becomes the very expression, the very fruit, the very joy, the very beauty, the very gift of our response to God, the one whom, in the words of the Song, the king will bring into the chambers, saying: "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee" (Ct. 4:7).<sup>544</sup>

Schmemmann's commentaries on the womanhood of creation, his theology of the priesthood of human person and his understanding of love as response and acceptance are challenging and remarkably relevant for a post-

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<sup>544</sup> *idem.*, p. 84-85.

modern theological context. But they also open discussions about the priesthood of woman in the Church. Speaking about man's tendency to grasp, to own possessively the woman (generally speaking the whole creation) is applicable also for the man's "monopoly" of the priestly ministry in the Church. Schmemmann's feminine perception of creation could be seen as a proper theological answer to the feminist movement in contemporary society and it can also widen the ecumenical dialogue about the place and role of woman in the Eucharistic celebration.

Schmemmann, in discussing theological matters always continues writing about the matter of life. Regarding his understanding of the womanhood of creation, the relationship between woman and life is brought to the level of superposition. Woman is life. This etymological and biblical way of regarding women brings Schmemmann to identify Mary, the new Eve with the fulfilment of the living purpose of the whole creation. Mary manifests the life-meaning and loving power of women to obey and accept God's call to give birth to new human persons.<sup>545</sup>

Mary is not only the representation of the whole creation but also the illustration of the gift of the creation brought to God in an honouring relationship. The symbol of this gift is her virginity, her active purity in response to God's call to fulfil the procreative goal of human existence.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> idem p. 86.

<sup>546</sup> He states: "Mary is the *Virgin*. But this virginity is not a negation, not a mere *absence*; it is the fullness and the wholeness of love itself. It is the totality of her self-giving to God, and thus the very expression, the very quality of her love. For love is the thirst and hunger for wholeness, totality, fulfilment – for virginity, in the ultimate meaning of this word. At the end the Church will be presented to Christ as a "chaste virgin" (Cor. 11:2). For virginity is the goal of all genuine love – not as absence of "sex," but as its complete fulfilment in love; of this fulfilment in "this world" sex is the paradoxical, the tragic affirmation and denial. The Orthodox Church, by celebrating the seemingly "nonscriptural" feasts of Mary's nativity and of her presentation in the temple reveals, in fact, a real faithfulness to the Bible, for the meaning of these feasts lies precisely in their recognition of the Virgin Mary as the *goal* and the *fulfilment* of the whole history of salvation, of that history of love and obedience, of response

Schmemmann's love of paradox is best revealed when he continues to present Mary's personality. He "discovers" Mary's womanhood throughout her motherhood.<sup>547</sup> As far as Mary is Jesus' mother, she enters into a living relationship with the whole creation and becomes the icon of the response of the world to God's call to existence and love, Mary is revealed as the Mother of Christ. Thus the circle creation – world – Israel – Mary – Church comes to its redemptive completeness and fulfilment.<sup>548</sup>

### **The Family: Place and Meaning for the Sacramentality of the World**

Schmemmann's discourse about the womanhood of the creation fulfilled in Mary brings him back to the issue of family at which point he started to question the sacramentality of marriage. His answer is depicted in revealing the role of the Church in marriage, which is to transform the social and anthropological institution of a couple into the realm of communion with God and the world through mutual and loving sacrifice and engagement. It is in this light that the womanhood of creation finds its ecclesial meaning and development:

It is worth mentioning that the early Church apparently did not know of any separate marriage service. The "fulfilment" of marriage by two Christians

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and expectation. She is the true daughter of the Old Testament, its last and most beautiful flower. ... She is the gift of the world to God." *ibid.*

<sup>547</sup> He points out: "Mary is the *Mother*. Motherhood is the fulfilment of womanhood because it is the fulfilment of love as obedience and response. It is by giving herself that love gives life, becomes the source of life. One does not love *in order* to have children. Love needs no justification; it is not because it gives life that love is good; it is because it is good that it gives life. The joyful mystery of Mary's motherhood is thus not opposed to the mystery of her virginity. It is the same mystery. She is not mother 'in spite' of her virginity. She reveals the fullness of motherhood because her virginity is the fullness of love." *idem.*, p. 87.

<sup>548</sup> He explains: "She is the *Mother of Christ*. She is the fullness of love accepting the coming of God to us – giving life to Him, who is the Life of the world. And the whole creation rejoices in her, because it recognises through her that the end and fulfilment of all life, of all love *is to accept Christ*, to give Him life in ourselves. And there should be no fear that this joy about Mary takes anything from Christ, diminishes in any way the glory due to Him and Him alone. For what we find in her and what constitutes the joy of the Church is precisely the fullness of our adoration of Christ, of acceptance and love for Him." *ibid.*

was their partaking together of the Eucharist. As every aspect of life was gathered into the Eucharist, so matrimony received its seal by inclusion into this central act of the community. And this means that, since marriage has always has sociological and legal dimensions, these were simply accepted by the Church. Yet, like the whole "natural" life of man, marriage had to be *taken into the Church*, that is, judged, redeemed and transformed in the sacrament of the Kingdom.<sup>549</sup>

The selfishness of the dualistic and carnal relationship between a man and a woman is broken, according to Schmemmann, by the sacramentality of the triadic relationship of Christian matrimony. Christ becomes a full member of the marriage gifting the couple with the real meaning of their relation.<sup>550</sup>

### **Schmemmann's Theology of the Priesthood of the Human Person**

Schmemmann speaks of human person as the priest of God's creation. He is aware of the oversimplification of this theological statement and hence he opens the discussion about the more concrete priesthood within the Church. He does it in order to clarify and deepen the understanding of the crisis within the Orthodox Church in her relation to the world.<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> idem., p. 88. The Slavophile dream of "churching" the society is once again unconsciously present in Schmemmann's statement.

<sup>550</sup> He says: "In a Christian marriage, in fact, three are married; and the united loyalty of the two toward the third, who is God, keeps the two in an active unity with each other, as well as with God. Yet it is the presence of God which is the death of the marriage as something only 'natural.' It is the cross of Christ that brings the self-sufficiency of nature of its end. But 'by the cross joy (and not 'happiness!') entered the whole world. Its presence is thus the real joy of marriage. It is the joyful certitude that the marriage vow, in the perspective of the eternal Kingdom, is not taken 'until death parts,' but until death unites us completely." idem., pp. 90-91.

<sup>551</sup> He explains: "We are in a position now to see the duality in the Christian idea of sacrament, corresponding to the duality – discussed earlier – in the Christian idea of the world. On the one hand, sacrament is rooted in the nature of the world as created by God: it is always a restoration of the original pattern of things. On the other hand, it is rooted in Christ personally. Only through the perfect man can the broken priesthood of humanity be restored." Schmemmann, "The World as Sacrament", op. cit., p. 224.



In the case of Christian priesthood the crisis is manifested in clericalism.<sup>552</sup> Schmemmann starts his critical investigation of clericalism with the seminary life of young boys who are encouraged to forget that "to be priest is from a profound point of view the most natural thing in the world."<sup>553</sup> For Schmemmann the priesthood is linked obviously to the sacramental cosmology and eventually to the womanhood of the creation:

Man was created priest of the world, the one who offers the world to God in a sacrifice of love and praise and who, through this eternal eucharist, bestows the divine love upon the world. Priesthood, in this sense, is the very essence of manhood, man's creative relation to the "womanhood" of the created world. And Christ is the one true Priest because He is the one true and perfect man. He is the new Adam, the restoration of that which Adam failed to be. Adam failed to be the priest of the world, and because of this failure the world ceased to be the sacrament of the divine love and presence, and became "nature." And in this "natural" world religion became an organized transaction with the supernatural, and the priest was set apart as the "transactor," as the mediator between the natural and the supernatural.<sup>554</sup>

If Schmemmann's explanation of the mutual causality between clericalism and secularization is worth noting, his argument about the genderless distinction

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<sup>552</sup> "Centuries of 'clericalism' (and one should not think of clericalism as a monopoly of the 'hierarchical' and 'liturgical' churches) have made the priest or minister *beings apart*, with a unique and specifically 'sacred' vocation in the Church. This vocation is not only different from, it is indeed opposed to all of those that are 'profane'." idem p. 92. An account of Schmemmann's critique of clericalism is to be found in Michael Plekon, *Living Icons: Persons of Faith in the Eastern Church*, University of Notre Dame Press, 2004, p. 185, 197, and William C. Mills, *Church, World, Mission*, op. cit., pp. 77-84. On the source of Schmemmann's critique of clericalism, Nicholas Denysenko said: "Schmemmann's outspoken condemnation of clericalism and consistent call for clergy and laity to work together was grounded by his formation in eucharistic ecclesiology and pastoral ministry he received from his interlocutors Nicholas Afanasiev and Cyprian Kern." Denysenko, "Liturgical Maximalism in Orthodoxy: A Case Study" viewed on: [https://www.academia.edu/4043272/\\_Liturgical\\_Maximalism\\_in\\_Orthodoxy\\_A\\_Case\\_Study\\_](https://www.academia.edu/4043272/_Liturgical_Maximalism_in_Orthodoxy_A_Case_Study_) (17/08/2015), p. 358. Another brilliant study of Schmemmann's critique of clericalism and its solution through conciliar functioning of the Church's life is to be found in William C Mill's article "Cracking the Clerical Caste: Towards a Conciliar Church" in *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 50(2009), pp. 441-457.

<sup>553</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>554</sup> idem., pp. 92-93.

within the priesthood is, in my opinion from a theological point of view, incorrect and not acceptable. Delimitating ontologically the priesthood by the sexual difference between man and woman, he limits it phenomenologically. He introduces "sex" where it does not belong, especially from a biblical point of view. Both Adam and Christ are persons called to transcend theologically and purposely the sexual perimeters of the human person.

Yet Schmemmann does not stay at this level of explanation and deepens his view about the priesthood with the issue of life and love. Pointing out the real and ultimate meaning of the priesthood, he brings, in fact, a correction to his previous statement with the risk of not being coherent. For him, the whole Church is the mediation of the world for the Kingdom of God and this characteristic makes the church members the most available and significant manifestation of the "natural" priesthood of all human persons.<sup>555</sup>

This term vocation allows Schmemmann to better express the Christ-centeredness of the priesthood. Being a priest does not mean, in his view, replacing Christ's ministry with someone else's, but showing that all ministry depends on Christ's.<sup>556</sup> This term of vocation becomes Schmemmann's second corrective to his genderless distinction between being a man and so potentially priest and being a woman and so not eligible to be a priest. If he did not have these two correctives, Schmemmann would run the danger of supporting the clericalism he criticised. He ends his theology of marriage and priesthood in a

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<sup>555</sup> idem., p. 94.

<sup>556</sup> He states: "No one can take it upon himself to become a priest, to decide on the basis of his own qualifications, preparation and predispositions. The vocation always comes from above – from God's ordination and order. The priesthood reveals the humility, not the pride of the Church, for it reveals the complete dependence of the Church on Christ's love – that is, on His unique and perfect priesthood. It is not 'priesthood' that the priest receives in his ordination, but the gift of Christ's love, that love which made Christ the only Priest and which fills with this unique priesthood the ministry of those whom He sends to His people." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 94.

very positive note, bringing the discussion about cosmic sacramentality to its basic, normal yet now higher ecclesial level.<sup>557</sup>

One very underdeveloped aspect of Schmemmann's ecclesiological anthropology is the prophetic call of the Christian. The same is available for the royal character of being a Christian.<sup>558</sup>

### **The Sacramentality of Death**

Schmemmann regards human life as a course leading to the ultimate meeting with Christ. The end of this course is death, which is the complete destruction of a part, which defines the human person, i.e. the body. As usual, he starts his critical analysis of the Christian religious experience of death by a contemporary case in point. The illustrative example concerns funerals.

According to Schmemmann, the general social attitude toward death is to avoid any contact or discussion about the subject, or to attenuate the fact itself and the consequences. He speaks about a tendency of people to explain death in order to avoid it. All explanations lead to missing the experience of death, to neglect the tragedy of death and therefore to overlook the change brought by Christ's death. Let us see how it works in Schmemmann's perspective.

Because he speaks in the context of a certain sacramental cosmology, Schmemmann relates death to the world, to this world. He rejects all attempts to improve "cosmetically" the "face" of death by making it a separate part from the world or by "liberating" people from the hardness of this existential reality

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<sup>557</sup> *ibid.*.

<sup>558</sup> Schmemmann, "The World in Orthodox Thought and Experience", *op. cit.*, p. 80. A similar idea is pointed out in Schmemmann, "The Task of Orthodox Theology Today", *op. cit.*, p. 118. See also Schmemmann, "Renewal", *op. cit.*, p. 149.

through nice discourse.<sup>559</sup> The "explanations" given by Christianity about death makes Christianity just one religion among many others.<sup>560</sup>

If explaining death shows Christianity as a religion, accepting these explanations renders the world secular. Schmemmann speaks of a kind of false hermeneutic circle: the Church explains in spite of experiencing, the world is poisoned with those pseudo-theological interpretations and thus, the Church becomes a religious institution and the world is transformed into a secularised entity.<sup>561</sup> This fact pushed the world to engender a kind of copy of itself granting it life, which was shown to be a 'selfie', an up-down life with an up-down consciousness of death:

For Christianity *help* is not the criterion. Truth is the criterion. The purpose of Christianity is not to help people by reconciling them with death, but to reveal the Truth about life and death in order that people may be saved by this Truth. Salvation, however, is not only not identical with help, but is, in fact, opposed to it. Christianity quarrels with religion and secularism not because they offer "insufficient help," but precisely because they "suffice," because they "satisfy" the needs of men. ... Christianity is not reconciliation with death. It is the revelation of death, and it reveals death because it is the revelation of Life. Christ is this Life. And only if Christ is Life is death what Christianity proclaims it to be, namely the enemy to be destroyed, and not a "mystery" to be explained. Religion and secularism, by explaining death, give it a "status," a rationale, make it "normal." Only Christianity proclaims it to be *abnormal* and therefore, truly horrible.<sup>562</sup>

The central point of Christianity is that it does not want to decipher the issue of death by explaining it and hence by emptying its form its content, but lies in the fact that it fills life with a new content which is able to face death.

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<sup>559</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>560</sup> He states: "For this was, indeed, one of the main functions of religions: to help, and especially to help people to die. For this reason religion has always been an attempt to *explain* death, and by explaining it, to reconcile man with it." *idem.*, p. 97.

<sup>561</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>562</sup> *idem.*, pp. 99-100.

This new content is God's gift of new life in Christ, which fills life with Life and gives life a living continuity over death. Christianity counts on this world and on its morphology in order to uncover Christ's message about the living fulfilment of death by His death and resurrection. Death became the un-ontological reality of the world because of Christ.<sup>563</sup>

### **The Sacramentality of the Healing Ecclesial Process**

A "reduced" form of death is illness. Schmemmann considers that, in the context of the Christian sacramental cosmology illness must be faced like death. The Church looks at pain and disease as ways of encountering God. The Church never explains the suffering of illness (or at least she should not); the community of faithful rather accompanies her members during the difficult periods of sorrow and misery by praying to Christ and bringing Him closer to those in distress. According to Schmemmann, healing is a sacrament, a process of inner (re)discovery and of relocation of one's relation with Christ:

The Church considers *healing* as a sacrament. ... A sacrament – as we have already know – is always a *passage*, a *transformation*. Yet it is not a "passage" into "supernature," but into the Kingdom of God, the world to come, into the very reality of this world and its life as redeemed and restored by Christ. It is the transformation not of "nature" into "supernature," but of the *old* into the *new*. A sacrament therefore is not a "miracle" by which God breaks, so to speak, the "laws of nature," but the manifestation of the ultimate Truth about the world and life, man and nature, the Truth which is Christ.

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<sup>563</sup> He says: "only in Christ is the *fullness of life* revealed to us, and death, therefore, becomes, "awful," the very fall from life, the enemy. It is *this world* (and not any "other world"), it is *this life* (and not some "other life") that were given to man to be a sacrament of the divine presence, given as communion with God, and it is only through this world, this life, by "transforming" them into communion with God that man *was to be*. The horror of death is, therefore, not in its being the "end" and not in physical destruction. By being separation from the world and life, it is *separation from God*. The dead cannot glorify God. It is, in other words, when Christ reveals Life to us that we can hear the Christian message about death as the enemy of God. It is when Life weeps at the grave of the friend, when it contemplates the horror of death, that the victory over death begins." *idem.*, p. 100.

And healing is a sacrament because its purpose or end is not *health* as such, the restoration of physical health, but the *entrance* of man into the life of the Kingdom, into the "joy and peace" of the Holy Spirit. In Christ everything in this world, and this means health and disease, joy and suffering, has become an ascension to, and entrance into this new life, its expectation and anticipation.<sup>564</sup>

Schmemmann is aware of the "impossibility" of transposing the meaning of human death into the category of life only by way of hearing or discussing the issue. He compels the presence of experience, of the foolish faith of Christians who have already lived the presence of their Lord in their life.<sup>565</sup> If one does not have such an experience of life itself through its sacramentality revealed in the community of Christ's disciples, then it is through accepting it as God's gift that one can gain the necessary experience in order to grow in life and to move onto a higher level of living the sacraments. The only place to experience the sacramentality of life is this world. Hence it is so important to live in this world and through it in order to transform it. So it is important to accept the Church and appropriate it as source of life and vehicle of grace.

It is time now to move on with Schmemmann's sacramentality of the world and go towards the dynamic of relationship between the world and the Church. Schmemmann speaks about the phenomenology of mission.

### **The Imperative of Witness**

With this sub-chapter we come to close the circle Schmemmann opened for us in order to present his cosmic ecclesiology. The Church exists for the world because her Lord gave her the task of bringing the world to a level of partaking the divine nature. Everything happening in the Church is sealed with the spiritual purpose of divinisation. If this happens in a liturgical, theological, social,

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<sup>564</sup> *idem.*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>565</sup> *idem.*, pp. 104-105.

cultural or political way, it is the task of the people of God to discern the differences. Schmemmann proposed his understanding of this mediation of the world by the Church ending his view with the imperative of witness.

Schmemmann's sacramental cosmology is based on the urgent necessity of the Church to deal seriously with her own relationship with the world. This relation, according to Schmemmann is broken, damaged and sick, and has turned from the right way. The nature of the relation between the Church and the world lies in her mission. The Church is a missionary organism because it lives in the world and mission is her way to eat, to drink, to survive, to grow and to have meaning. This way of life concerns all the members of the Eucharistic community, i.e. the Church, and this way of life is founded on the presence of the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ and on the work of His life-giving Spirit.

Discussing the difficulties of contemporary mission, Schmemmann admits two failures: "the failure to achieve any substantial 'victory' over the other great world religions and the failure to overcome in any significant way the prevailing and the growing secularism of our culture."<sup>566</sup>

The first failure is due to the missionary shift from preaching Christ to announcing religious values.<sup>567</sup> According to Schmemmann, these values are held in common with those promoted by the secularist movement of society.<sup>568</sup> As we have already seen, Schmemmann's understanding of the damage brought by the religious mentality in the Church is linked with the implementation of the "necessity to help." This mentality is in fact a distortion of the genuine

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<sup>566</sup> *idem.*, p. 107.

<sup>567</sup> *idem.*, p. 108.

<sup>568</sup> He says: "But what are these 'basic religious values'? If one analyses them honestly, one does not find a single one that would be 'basically' different from what secularism at its best also proclaims and offers to men. Ethics? Concern for truth? Human brotherhood and solidarity? Justice? Abnegation? In all honesty, there is more passionate concern for all these 'values' among 'secularists' than within the organised religious bodies which so easily accommodate themselves to ethical minimalism, intellectual indifference, superstitions, dead traditionalism. What remains is the famous 'anxiety' and the numberless 'personal problems' in which religion claims to be supremely competent." *ibid.*

kerygma of the Church, a fake yet bright vision of the life of the Church. It is attractive because it works, but it works only superficially and casually.<sup>569</sup> Spiritual preoccupations are the cause of this twisted Christianity and of the Christians engaged in different forms of spiritual (mystic and esoteric, according to Schmemmann) life which lead directly to the realm of Gnosticism with its ontological differentiation between secular and profane.

One noteworthy aspect of the witnessing presence of Orthodoxy in the world is, according to Schmemmann the transforming role of the meeting between Orthodox theology and culture. This encounter requires a critical attitude from theology in order to make the culture a soteriological aspect of humankind.<sup>570</sup> But Schmemmann fails again in his criticism of the Western

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<sup>569</sup> idem., p. 109.

<sup>570</sup> He explains: "the 'pastoral' revitalization of theology must begin with a deep evaluation and critique of the culture in which the Orthodox man is immersed today and which indeed makes Christianity irrelevant. It is not accidental, of course, that patristic theology is rooted in a healthy apologetical purpose, in the defence of the faith against its external and internal enemies." Schmemmann, "The Task of Orthodox Theology Today", op. cit., p. 122. The question is: What then should we say and think about the formation of the Fathers of the Church in accordance to their own time's culture, which many times was pagan? ! It seems that here Schmemmann did not rightly understand the idea of apologetic theology. For an outstanding yet undeveloped study of Schmemmann's pastoral theology see Thomas Hopko, "The Legacy of Fr Alexander Schmemmann: Theological Education for Pastoral Ministry" in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 2-3/2009, pp. 331-339. There is in this article an account of Schmemmann's view on the crisis within the Orthodox Church in regard to her pastoral ministry and on Schmemmann's call for a hermeneutics of the pastoral/ecclesial experience: "Fr Alexander insisted that the Church's pastors – the bishops – must first understand themselves as members of the Church who work together in unity and harmony for the edification of the Church corporately, and then for each of her members individually. ... Thus we find Fr Alexander calling for a 'more explicit description and interpretation of the pastoral ministry in terms of the Church.' He insisted that the priestly, teaching, and pastoral roles of the ordained 'minister of the Church' can never be divided from each other, just as he would later argue, in 1974, in his book *Of Water and the Spirit*, that the prophetic, priestly and pastoral dimensions of human life generally, for all baptised and sealed members of Christ and the Church, can never be separated – except to the deformation and distortion, and perhaps even the outright destruction, of the Church's communal and personal being and life, which, alas, he lamented on almost every page of his *Journals*." p. 332.



influences on Orthodox theology and urges a kind of fight between Western culture and Orthodox pastoral care.<sup>571</sup>

Speaking of "The Missionary Imperative" of the Orthodox Church in a brief paper published in 1961, Schmemmann answers the following questions: "Can a church whose life is centred almost exclusively on the liturgy and the sacraments, whose spirituality is primarily mystical and ascetical, be truly missionary? And if it is, where in its faith are the deepest motivations of the missionary zeal to be found?"<sup>572</sup>

In this article, Schmemmann elucidates the interface between the Church and history in order to present his vision of mission. A two-sided phenomenon defines the Church: God's gift and the human response to that gift. Both are matters of human experience, and Schmemmann's article expresses his point of view regarding this experience.<sup>573</sup> Although he uses liturgical experience to accentuate God's presence in the Church, he chooses the world and life itself to

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<sup>571</sup> He says: "Our culture, which recently has been described as a 'triumph of therapeutics,' has deeply changed the quest of even a religious man, and this makes it almost impossible for him to hear and to understand the true teaching of the Church. And finally, we do not seem to notice that this metamorphosis of religion takes place not in some mythical Western man, but in our own parishes, in the preaching of our priests. We must begin, therefore, with what patristic theology performed in its own time: an exorcism of culture, a liberating reconstruction of the words, concepts and symbols, of the theological language itself. And we must do it in order not to make our theology more 'acceptable' to the modern man and his culture, but, on the contrary, to make him aware of the ultimately serious, truly soteriological nature and demands of his faith." Schmemmann, "The Task of Orthodox Theology Today", op. cit., p. 122. His statement is in total contradiction to any normal way of enculturation of the Christian faith. A strong and sharp critique of Schmemmann's way of perceiving the enculturation of faith is to be found in Ivana Noble, "Politika, společnost a kultura v kontextu sakramentální teologie Alexandra Schmemanna", op. cit., pp. 34-35. After retaining Florovsky's and Schmemmann's supporting attitude towards the Christian-Hellenic culture and its values for Orthodox theology, Noble asks pertinently whether Schmemmann's claiming the openness and continuity of Tradition is indeed working this way. Her argument against Schmemmann's lack of coherence regarding the relation between tradition and culture is grounded in Justin's idea of *Logos spermatikos*, a theological concept that would have supported Schmemmann's sacramentality of the world. However he did not use Justin's idea in his writing..

<sup>572</sup> Schmemmann, "The Missionary Imperative" in *Church, World, Mission*. St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1979, pp. 209-216, p. 210.

<sup>573</sup> He states: "'heaven on earth': this formula familiar to every Orthodox expresses rather well the fundamental Orthodox experience of the Church." idem., p. 211.

highlight the human response to and gratitude for God's initiative.<sup>574</sup> The world is the reason for the Church's mission. The Church's existence in the world makes her mission urgent because that mission is the only way the Church has to relate to the world. In the course of her mission, the Church and the world come together to form an on-going, unique, new entity: the community of the faithful. The Church also encounters history in her mission to the world, and she gives meaning to humanity's history through the new life that she offers to the world.<sup>575</sup>

Schmemmann envisages a double-faceted sequence of movements issuing from the Church's liturgical life and shaping her mission.<sup>576</sup> The movement of ascension occurs when the world is called to surmount its worldliness, to become a church community, and to enter the Kingdom of God. This is complemented by the movement of return, which takes place when the Church comes back from its immersion in the liturgy and re-enters the culture and society that characterise the world so that it can fulfil its mission to share God's Good News.<sup>577</sup>

There is a shameful point that one can find in Schmemmann's missionary vision of the Church: his understanding of the proselyting role of the Orthodox Church in the ecumenical movement.<sup>578</sup> For him there is no compromise

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<sup>574</sup> He contends: "the Church thus is not a "self-centred" community but precisely a missionary community, whose purpose is salvation not from, but of the world. In the Orthodox experience and faith it is the Church-sacrament that makes possible the Church-mission." *idem.*, p. 214.

<sup>575</sup> He says: "it is the Church as mission that gives to this time its real significance and to history its meaning. And it is mission that gives to the human response in the Church its validity, makes us real co-workers in the work of Christ." *ibid.*

<sup>576</sup> The source of the mission of the Church in its relational and knowable aspect involving the world, the Church and the Kingdom is exposed in Ivana Noble, "From the Sacramentality of the Church to the Sacramentality of the World" *op. cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>577</sup> He explains: "nothing reveals better the relation between the Church as fullness and the Church as mission than the Eucharist, the central act of the Church's *leitourgia*, the sacrament of the Church itself." Schmemmann, "The Missionary Imperative", *op. cit.*, p. 214.

<sup>578</sup> He argues: "I defined the second task of our theology as *missionary*. ... It indicates that Orthodox theology has a *mission* in the West. It has always been the consensus of Orthodox theologians that their participation in the ecumenical movement has as its goal to bring an

concerning faith. This issue is dishonourable because it is contradictory to Schmemmann's openness and understanding towards the universal culture of humankind and towards the general human religious basics, at least according to the witness of his Journals. Also his position is reprehensible because his formative and positive encounter with Catholic and Protestant theology in France and in America did not at all undergo the form of proselytism. His general conclusion sounds awful:

Our 'mission' then remains the same: to make Orthodoxy known, understood and, with God's help, accepted in the West. This mission stems naturally and so to speak, inescapably from our truly awesome claim that we are *Orthodox* and that ours is the *true Church*. This claim is incompatible with any provincialism of thought and vision, ethnic self-consciousness, and self-centredness.<sup>579</sup>

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Orthodox witness to the non-Orthodox, and there is no reason to deny that this implies the idea of conversion to Orthodoxy. I know very well that in current ecumenical thinking the term 'conversion' has a bad reputation. But the Orthodox would simply betray both their Orthodoxy and the ecumenical movement if now, under the impact of a superficial ecumenical euphoria, they concealed the fact that in their approach conversion is one of the basic components of a genuine ecumenical perspective." Schmemmann, "The Task of Orthodox Theology Today", *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>579</sup> *ibid.* In some lines below he tries to redress his attitude, but his attempt makes things contradictory. Explaining "the 'modality' of our approach to the West" he says: "'Mission' has always meant, at least in the Christian connotations of that term, not only the effort to convert someone to true faith, but also the spiritual disposition of the missionary: his active charity and his self-giving to the 'object' of his missionary task. ... This mission is impossible without some degree of love for the West and for the many authentically Christian values of its culture. Yet we often confuse the Universal Truth of the Church with a naive 'superiority complex,' with arrogance and self-righteousness, with a childish certitude that everyone ought to share our own enthusiasm for the 'splendours of Byzantium,' for our 'ancient and colourful rites,' and the forms of our church architecture. It is sad and shocking to hear the West globally condemned and to see a condescending attitude towards the 'poor Westerners' on the part of young people who, more often than not, have not read Shakespeare and Cervantes, have never heard about St. Francis of Assisi or listened to Bach. ... It is time to understand that if the Orthodox mission is to progress, we must not only transcend and overcome this spirit of self-righteousness, but we must, without denying any genuine value of our Eastern cultural and spiritual heritage, open ourselves towards Western culture and make our own whatever in it 'is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious.'" (Phil. 4:8) This missionary task of Orthodox theology must thus be guided by two equally important and interdependent imperatives: the emphasis on Truth as the only genuine ground of all 'ecumenical' concern, and a real openness to Western Christian values." *idem.*, p. 125. The question is: What is the form and the content of the openness Schmemmann speaks of

Schmemmann's vision of Orthodox mission is worthy of high regard, but the reality of the Church's life is different. Today, as well as in Schmemmann's time, the Orthodox Church has lost her "missionary feeling" and tends to focus on surviving in the world which undermines her place in human society.

### **The Role of the Symbol in Schmemmann's Experiential Ecclesiology**

Speaking about Schmemmann's symbolic theology was not a main aim of my thesis. Nevertheless it is a methodological imperative to engage this issue because of the concluding and sacramental role Schmemmann always saw in the idea of symbol. Any presentation of Schmemmann's theology of the world should be crowned with some words about symbol and symbolism in Schmemmann's experiential ecclesiology.

In a chapter in the book *For the Life of the World* that is devoted to "Sacrament and Symbol", Schmemmann speaks of the epistemological value of the liturgical symbol. He brings the Church, the world, and the Kingdom of God together in one experience: the sacramental experience of the presence of Christ in his Church for the sake of life of the world in the light of the Kingdom of God.<sup>580</sup> A symbol is able to function as a bridge because of its capability to mediate participation in both sides of reality: the visible and invisible, material and spiritual, attempted and fulfilled, old and new, and

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while he previously sustained the idea that the Orthodox Church is the true Church (with the meaning of *the only true Church*)? There are theologians calling for a new non-reductionist apprehension of the relationship between tradition and innovation, which would constitute a corrective for Schmemmann's understanding of that relation. For example see Ivana Noble, "Tradition and Innovation: Introduction to the Theme" in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 59/2015, pp. 7-15.

<sup>580</sup> Ivana Noble synthesizes Schmemmann's understanding of symbol stating that "Schmemmann's holistic vision of theological knowledge is sacramental: it is included with the symbolic unity between the world and Christ that we celebrate in the sacraments and that reveals God's plan for creation. It rests on a strong understanding of the symbol and the symbolic." I. Noble, "From the Sacramentality of the Church to the Sacramentality of the World", op. cit., p. 170.

created and redeemed.<sup>581</sup> The sacraments need theological explanations that put the experience of their celebration in the proper liturgical context. In this case, the hermeneutics of experience become a hermeneutics of the sacraments that provide an interpretation of the liturgical experience gained through their celebration.<sup>582</sup>

Sometimes Schmemmann speaks of eschatology instead of symbol, but it is necessary to avoid them as synonymous. Eschatology is for him the way in which the Church mediates the presence of the heavenly reality. In fact, eschatology is the content and the manner of the mediation between the Church and the world. Eschatology has a hermeneutic relevance and function in Schmemmann's ecclesiology.<sup>583</sup> Symbol, on the other side, retains the idea of

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<sup>581</sup> He explains: "If today one so often hears about the need for 'new symbols', if symbol and symbolism are the objects of study and curiosity in circles which otherwise have nothing in common, it is because the basic experience behind all this is that of a complete disruption and breakdown in "communication" of the tragic lack of a 'unitive principle' which would have the power to bring together and to hold together again the broken and atomised facets of human existence and knowledge. And it is this unitive principle, whose absence is felt so strongly and the search for which dominates modern thought, that is given the name *symbol*. Its connotations are both cognitive and participatory, for its function is to reunify knowledge as well as existence by reuniting them one with another." Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 147. Commenting on Schmemmann's theological knowledge, Ivana Noble outlined Schmemmann's coherence and continuity within Orthodox post-modern theology. See I. Noble, "From the Sacramentality of the Church to the Sacramentality of the World" op. cit., p. 168. Similar ideas are to be found in I. Noble, "Možnostech a povaze teologického poznání u Alexandra Schmemmanna" in *Teologická REFLEXE*, X/2004, pp. 170-183.

<sup>582</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, op. cit., p. 137. The science of psychology through one of its major representatives, the Belgian Roman-Catholic theologian and psychologist Antoine Vergote, Schmemmann's contemporary, engages indirectly Schmemmann's comprehension of the role of liturgical symbolism and its sacramental connotations. See A. Vergote, "The Chiasm of Subjective and Objective Functions in the Symbol" in *Exploration de l'espace théologique*, Leuven University Press, 1990, pp. 471-493, p. 473.

<sup>583</sup> He says: "it is eschatology that "posits" the proper understanding of the Church and of the world and, in doing this, reveals the nature of their relation to one another. In the first place it reveals the Church as the epiphany, as the manifestation, the presence and the gift of the Kingdom of God, as its "sacrament" in this world. And again the whole Church, as both "institution" and "life," is eschatological because she has no other foundation, content and purpose but to reveal and to communicate the transcendent reality of the Kingdom of God. There is no separation in her between "institution" and "life": as institution she is the sign of the Kingdom, as life she is the sacrament of the Kingdom, the fulfilment of the sign into reality, experience, communion." Schmemmann, "The World in Orthodox Thought and Experience", op. cit., p. 75.

participation but in a more liturgical way. If Schmemmann perceives the world with its materiality, he uses symbol to open for the Church the way of coping with that materiality within her liturgy.

### **Summary**

The fourth chapter introduced us to the realm of the outer manifestation of the crisis within the Orthodox Church. We have seen in this final chapter how Schmemmann articulates the relationship between world, Church and Kingdom of God, "three" twin subjects of one ecclesiology.

Starting with the world as God's good creation, then analysing the same world in its fallen actual stance, Schmemmann showed us how he considered the world to be in God's providence a possible dimension to be saved and to mediate divine love. We have remarked that Schmemmann's starting point in investigating this possibility was not the initial wrong attitude that Adam and Eve had towards God's call to communicate and to stay in communion with Him, but he begins with God's meaning seeded in the whole cosmos to become a mediating factor between humanity and divinity. In Schmemmann's view this mediation implies the materiality and meaningfulness of the whole creation.

After surveying the problem of secularization along with the issue of Schmemmann's critique of Western influences on the world and on the way Christianity engages the world, we have located the human person in the world attempting to relate the world to Christ. This enterprise allowed me to follow the interaction between Christ and humanity engendering the redeemed humankind, i.e. Christianity. This part showed how Schmemmann spoke about the ancestral issue of Incarnation without even naming it. He positioned himself in a patristic line.

From the personalism implied in the incarnational perception of the world, Schmemmann shifted to the communitarian feature of that old Christian

clause. When Schmemmann spoke about redeemed humanity, we observed that he stipulated the presence of the redeemed community, which is the Church. Examining the relationship between the Church and the world we remarked that Schmemmann required the liturgical experience of the celebrating community to explain how the Church mediates the presence of the Saviour Jesus Christ. This experience was, according to him, the main source for undergoing the divine presence in the world. The conclusion of the third chapter became important at this point. Unfortunately Schmemmann did not leave a place for any personal encounter with the transcendent realm, a place such as mystical experience or socially engagement with the world to make it a better common human dwelling. This has been noted and criticised by many contemporary theologians.

From Jesus' presence in the Church for the life of the world, Schmemmann moved to the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Christian community. We have seen several critical liturgical examples of the interaction between the Church and the world (sin, death, disease) and how the Church proposes mediation between human persons and the source of healing and relief, i.e. Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. One big problem arose at this point with Schmemmann's theology: his failure to overcome the orthodox liturgical boundaries of the Church's dwelling in the world. On the other side one major positive intuition was granted by Schmemmann's theology challenge to the Christian community to engage even deeper in the world: his Christocentric anthropology with its feminine Marian characteristic and the emphasis on the priesthood of the whole of humankind.

Finally the dialectic, Church – world, came to an end with Schmemmann's call for a more organised Christian mission in the world. Being called to mediate God's presence in the world, the Church fulfils this task through her mission. Because the Orthodox Church is passing through a period

of crisis, her mission is directed towards her inner realm, being challenged to work out what would it mean to reveal Christ's presence among her faithful. Schmemmann also pictures the outer mission, but this aspect takes a more sacramental characteristic than the former. In this case the mission of the Church is to manifest, to accomplish and to speak of the already created sacramentality of the world throughout institutional sacramentality.

Everything in Schmemmann's sacramentality finds its meaningfulness throughout the eschatological dimension of the Christian kerygma expressed theologically in patristic sentences and manifested dynamically in the liturgical life of the Christian community. The rule of *lex orandi est lex credendi* discussed in the third chapter was intrinsically examined in the fourth chapter through the challenging problem of the world called to become a prayerful dimension of God's creation. If in the third chapter humankind was Christian by *excellence* being reduced to its churchly existence, in the fourth chapter the whole world was christened by its inner call to priesthood, i.e. a celebrating subject. If in the third chapter the liturgical Christian community was at the centre of the crisis within the Orthodox Church, in the fourth chapter the whole world was at stake along with the Church because of their liturgical and eschatological complementarity. The divorce between theology and liturgy evoked in the third chapter took the form of secularism and clericalism in the fourth. The theologians and the liturgists from the third chapter allowed materiality, women, sin, death and illness to enter the theological scene of the dialectic, Church – world. The abstract form of the crisis within the Orthodox Church examined in the third chapter became tangible issues in the fourth. This was the most positive critical aspect of Schmemmann's analyses of the crisis within the Orthodox Church: he "felt" the world theologically as a crossroad alongside the historical road of the Church and called the Church to fulfil her existential purpose by letting the world become a better sacramental place.



Even if he did not give really concrete solutions for this enterprise, his prophetic vision is still challenging

Bulgakov spoke about the divine Sophia. He needed this theological dimension in order to explain his understanding of the relationship between the immanent world and the transcendent God. Florovsky and Lossky criticised that position, forging other solutions to the same problem: one spoke about the synthetically patristic renewal, the other evocated the mystical dimension of the Christian theosis. Schmemmann came on this scene with his theology of the sacramentality of the world: another attempt to overcome the gap between the divine realms and the material creation. Schmemmann's sacramentality of the world became thus the liturgical correlative and the doctrinal corrective to Bulgakov's sophiology. In recent times, Andrew Louth has spoken pertinently about a theology of in-between. Personally I prefer this latest theological idea because it implies, in my view, an open vista towards other aspects of the communal human dwelling in the world for the glory of God.

## Conclusion

The crisis within the Orthodox Church is a subject that is hard to deal with in contemporary Orthodox theology because we are still undergoing the process of the crisis spelled out by the theologians of the last century. Speaking about the crisis within the Orthodox Church was a not matter of searching for persons guilty of that crisis and blaming them, but a matter of understanding the process and dealing efficiently with it. My thesis has attempted to analyse how the crisis phenomena were analysed by Alexander Schmemmann and to critically evaluate his own theological contribution face to face with the crisis: be it his existential life-crisis as he grew up in an émigré family and then once again changed his location from France to the United States, his reflection of the jurisdictional divided Orthodox Church in the diaspora, of his understanding of the crisis in Orthodox theology that, in his view still needed to come out of its Babylonian captivity.

When we looked more closely at Schmemmann's life-course, we saw not only an emigrant struggling for an everyday life together with his family, but also a Christian longing to understand his place and role in the community gathered in the name of the Saviour. The starting point for telling Schmemmann's life-story was the story of the Russian émigrés in France and America. Social, cultural, political and religious factors constructed together an environment for the settling of Russian emigrants in foreign countries. This process implied losing something in order to receive anything else. It implied also changing old habits, customs, relations, perspectives, and dreams for new encounters, opportunities, relevancies, and fulfilments. Though all these elements worked together in a more or less easy way, nevertheless the wholeness of the initial conglomerate changed radically during the years. This change was painful and radical. One element emerged always in front of others: the experience.

Everyday-life experience, liturgical experience, events within society, practical skills and cultural knowledge all shaped the life of the Russian émigrés and their relationship with the Orthodox Church along with the interaction with the other Christian presence already established in those lands that welcomed the emigrants.

We have remarked how in the beginning of Schmemmann's life-course he rather integrated into the line of other Russians in France concerning education and incorporation within French society. However, he understood quite quickly that life would require from him a much larger assimilation into the cultural French milieu. The decisions he took in order to accomplish more qualified studies in Paris somehow closed the door for him into traditional Russian groups, but opened the way to universal culture and a wider formation. Some religious experiences took place in that period of his life, events which opened for him the door of understanding the life of the Church in an almost exclusive liturgical way.

Schmemmann's entering St Serge Institute was some kind of existential judgement. It was his first real encounter with academic theology, with church politics and more especially with the real state of the Russian Orthodox Church. This encounter took basically institutionalised forms but also it enabled him to meet people who worried about similar things or who longed for the same ideals. No "angelic" presumptions need to be made concerning his time passed in that institute, nor did any dramatic events happen while he studied there. St Serge Institute was, for Schmemmann, the fundamental rock on which he furthered his theology. He laid down the foundation of his ecclesiology and of his understanding of the crisis within the Orthodox Church on what he learned in St Serge Institute, but he also attacked several idols he found there such as the lack of critical biblical studies, teaching on ecclesiology unanchored in reality, nationalistic tendencies concerning

ecclesial behaviour within the liturgical life and regarding relationships between Orthodox people coming from different "classic" Orthodox countries.

His "way" in the Church, his belonging to the Orthodox confession, was a kind of smooth path inside a tormented world. No kind of major conversions took place in his relation to the Church, as happened with some of his teachers and mentors. He was born into an Orthodox family and served as an Orthodox priest. Nevertheless during his life-course he became aware of the twisted way the Orthodox Church had experienced along her historical existence. Understanding the reason of this turmoil made him determined to look for explanations first in Church history and then in her liturgical life. The philosophical idealism of the Slavophiles and their quest for the meaning of Russian national history in its relationship to the Orthodox Church indirectly provisioned Schmemmann's search for coping with the historical evolution of the Church.

Several steps were necessary to be taken in order to see Schmemmann's theological evolution. Conflicts among Russian theologians belonging to the Paris school enabled us to perceive the laboured, tensioned atmosphere that reigned in Orthodox theology at that time. Like Schmemmann but before him, Bulgakov, Florovsky, Lossky, Berdiaev, Afanasiev and Kern had tried to grant a coherent image of the Orthodox Church and her theology in regard to her inner necessities and to her outer manifestation in the world. All the meaningful and dramatic tensions that appeared from such clashes among those personalities and their theologies empowered Schmemmann to find his own way within the stream of 20<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox theology.

The difficult situation at the institute in Paris, along with many jurisdictional quarrels in France pushed Schmemmann and his family to move to America. He took one new step away in order to find his way in life and in the Church, to look for his Orthodox identity and for his Christian belonging.

Leaving Paris meant leaving his own theological and spiritual cradle, but he was very aware that such a decision was more than necessary. Once he had arrived in the new world, he started to work and to celebrate in the Russian Orthodox Church, in St Vladimir's Seminary and to accomplish more or less consciously his dream of belonging to a local, autocephalous established Church. Obviously it was not his only dream. Celebrating the liturgy, enjoying his family, sharing cultural and political impressions, all were desires of his heart. The American milieu enabled him to do so. Once more, he opened new perspectives in his theological insight, in his Church commitment and in his understanding of the relation between the "beautiful" church and the "ugly" world. Once again we saw how Schmemmann's relations with different personalities of his time like Solzhenitsyn, Florovsky and Meyendorff shaped his theological evolution. This time however, Schmemmann was already mature in his theological understanding.

We have seen how the American part of his life formed his understanding of the role and the place of the Church in his own life, in the life-giving structure of the world and in the midst of Christianity. We could understand how colleagues, personalities, institutions and movements empowered Schmemmann to forge an ecclesiology that would fit new exigencies of the American society, but also to keep firmly the millenary theological legacy that the Church inherited from past generations. Working with bishops, meeting people on various occasions at conferences or liturgical celebrations, teaching in the seminaries and faculties, broadcasting to his beloved Russia, and reading all types of literature allowed Schmemmann to acknowledge the imperative call for change in the Church in order to overcome the growing crisis within.

The second chapter opened for us the possibility of getting inside the process of formation of Schmemmann's theology. This time the larger context of

the Russian diaspora took specific and more concrete contours under the shapes of three personalities who influenced Schmemmann: Nicolas Afanasiev, Cyprian Kern and Georges Florovsky.

We have seen throughout their lives the similarities with Schmemmann's life context and the differences they had in experiencing crossroads in life. They expressed their life experience theologically in a more or less similar way to Schmemmann. The fact that they were his professors and some of them even his confessors put them in a position of impact towards his theological formation.

Afanasiev looked for an ecclesiology anchored in the reality of the Russian diaspora and, eventually, in the reality of a modern Orthodoxy witness in the world. His major point of departure was contrasting Catholic ecclesiology with regard to the Orthodox approach and the issue of the Eucharist in its liturgical and systematic apprehension. The canonical consciousness he established in his theology also influenced Schmemmann who took it further into his ecclesiological pattern.

Kern had a rather pastoral and patristic concern regarding the Orthodox Church. His experience in Serbia and Jerusalem showed him the importance of the spiritual formation of the faithful and the meaningfulness of attempting liturgical celebrations. His emphasis on the centrality of the Eucharist within life, within the liturgical celebrations of the Church together with his spiritual care for his pupil Alexander Schmemmann imprinted on the disciple an awareness of the necessity for a Eucharistic ecclesiology. Kern's views on the patristic studies on Palamas, in particular on his theology, gave a special flavour to his theological thought and a certain systematic weight.

Florovsky was more intellectual in his theological approach and looked at the problems of the Church from a historical point of view. He was a historian by formation. Though Florovsky held a very practical position within

the ecumenical movement, where he built up and led the Orthodox presence to a deep participation, his understanding of the tensioned relationship between Orthodox theology and its scholastic burden pushed Schmemmann to take a more or less adversative attitude towards the Western theological approach. This engendered negative outcomes in his theology. We have also seen how Florovsky's call for a neo-patristic synthesis urged Schmemmann to shape his liturgical theology.

These three theologians influenced Schmemmann in direct ways, allowing him to continue and to develop their theological thoughts. There is continuity between them all and Schmemmann, but there is also a breach in the understanding of several issues. The general idea would be that they engaged Orthodox theology and its practical pastoral care in a way that enabled the Orthodox Church to cope with modern times. Even if they did not manage to do it fully and without confessional banners and dichotomies, nevertheless they opened widely the way for a deeper encounter between Orthodoxy and the others. Another general view that dominated this chapter was the tension between continuity and discontinuity regarding the fulfilment of Slavophile idealism and the necessity to go forward towards the Fathers of the Church.

With chapter three we entered Schmemmann's theological main line. We saw the first example of the crisis within the Orthodox Church. Due to the conclusions drawn from the previous chapters, we understood how scrutinizing one's experience can tell us many things about his theology. Schmemmann's life led us to look at his understanding of the Church from a liturgical point of view. Doing this we discovered necessary theological tools for disassembling his theological thought. Liturgical piety and the theology of time were the most precious features of Schmemmann's system of theologizing. These two elements were supposed to fit, according to his opinion, into the ancient formula of *lex orandi est lex credendi*. Since they did not, Schmemmann analysed the problem

within the Orthodox context and vis-à-vis the movement of liturgical renewal. The outcome of his search for a solution was in conformity with the three theologians who influenced him, but also in a discontinued connection with the liturgical movement.

Schmemmann criticised the Byzantine liturgical influence on the Orthodox cult along with the monastic "outfit" of this influence. His critics were constructed in accordance to the outcomes of the liturgical movement, from which Schmemmann had received inspiration. He attempted to go back to the purity of the Christian worship of the first three centuries of its existence. He wished to withdraw all the unnecessary elements that filled the structure of liturgy and called for a reinterpretation of the liturgical experience in the light of the ecclesial meaning of Orthodox worship. This reinterpretation is to be understood only in the framework of the Orthodox teaching of dogmas and its way of celebrating.

We have remarked that his criticisms held together as far as they were perceived in relation with his understanding of the history of the church, to his rapport with patristics and with regard to some aspects of the realm of Russian Orthodox liturgical celebrations. Such parameters are inevitable for any analysis because they belong to the life context of the theologian who uses them. The question is: how can his criticisms go further if they are formed using a non-Orthodox method but do not allow the same non-Orthodox method to offer a solution or, at least, to shape the answer? Schmemmann's desire to stay within the limits of Orthodox theology in order to make the Orthodox cult more functional and more "useful" seems to be jeopardised by the usefulness of the technique he applied. Surpassing and going beyond the confessional boundaries of one's religious belonging implies openness towards the other.

His criticisms of the monastic influence of the Orthodox cult are questionable as well. Technically speaking, the monks did everything possible



to influence the worship and were successful in that attempt. Being men who worked and prayed in the Church in order to get in communion with God led them to develop techniques of prayer and celebration. This process engendered a whole theology, called sanctification, *deification*, a theology that became a central part of all patristics. How could such a presence lead to such negative influences as those Schmemmann wanted to address? Without questioning deviations within the monastic life throughout the history of its existence, nevertheless Schmemmann's criticisms regarding the monastic impact on the Orthodox cult are unsustainable. It came out thus that Schmemmann's liturgical theology spoke the same language as Lossky's patristic discourse about *theosis* but with different accent.

The final view we had on Schmemmann's theology concerned his sacramentology and the way that the crisis within the Orthodox Church took the form of a tension between world and Church. This relation between Church and world was of paramount importance for him. Issuing from the discrepancy between biblical and liturgical care the Church used to have for the world and the practical, concrete commitment of the Church to the world, Schmemmann's sacramental understanding of the world became the jewel in his theological crown.

We have seen how Schmemmann articulated Christ's presence in the Church and in the world in a liturgical way and how he moved from a misrepresentational Christian Humanism to a patristic Christocentric vision. The world for him was, is and ever shall be the place where God reveals himself in the midst of all creation through the mediation of all creation for the beauty of all creation. The priestly role of humankind in this process of divine theophany was strongly emphasised by Schmemmann, granting to his theology an open start for engaging not only the other Christian perspectives, but also the whole of the human creative presence in the world. Within this presence

Schmemmann brought also the womanhood of humankind by means of Mary, the Mother of God, Theotokos according to the Orthodox Tradition. This opened the possibility for Orthodox theology to enter in dialogue with other Christian traditions that call for priesthood among women and for a greater recognition of them in the life of the Church. One point of departure in order to develop this perspective would be to relate Schmemmann's understanding of womanhood with Bulgakov's view on the womanhood of Sofia and of creation and with Paul Evdokimov's theology of the role of the woman in the Church.

But not all of Schmemmann's sacramental theology was without problems. The monastic negation of the world, according to Schmemmann, negatively influenced the Orthodox spiritual perception of the world, leading further generations to engage society in a hostile way.

Another problematic aspect of his vision was the relation between the cosmic ecclesiology one could "read" throughout his lines and the ecclesiological cosmology one would expect in his theology. If for Schmemmann the world is the place for God to make known his presence and the Church is the entity that liturgically mediates this presence to the world, than the other way round should be available too. That means that society, which is the basic human way to engage the world and themselves, should be perceived by the Church as a permanently good thing and as a source of inspiration in order to create new forms through which the Church can serve the world. This suggests the Church should try to understand more deeply the political and economic self-perception of the world in order to find inside her liturgical life the power to heal the suffering of the world and to lead it to a higher level of its existence. Thus the old desire of the Slavophile movement to sanctify the whole life of human society would come to fulfilment.

Schmemmann overreacted to secularism. He showed a radical disagreement with this worldly movement. But it seems that he forgot that

secularism is but the natural process of the world becoming worldlier. Instead of just looking critically at secularism, the Church could dialogue with the profane and a-religious structures of post-modern society in order to grow in her understanding of the world's spiritual necessities. Schmemmann could have seen this, but he did not.

According to Schmemmann's sacramentology, God uses the world in order to reveal himself, to manifest his care for his own creation and to offer to humankind a place for encounter. Schmemmann always noted that, even after the fall, the world is still such a place. Why then should the world follow another path than the one that enables human persons to meet the loving God? Instead of criticizing the direction taken by the world after the fall of Adam, the Church might increase her presence in the world in order to make it a habitation of Christ, the Saviour who gave his life for the life of the world. But the Church preferred to stay above the world, next to the world, away from the world. Schmemmann does seem to understand these factors that are quite obvious for the society that criticises several positions of the Church, but he did not propose anything concrete in order to come to terms with it.

As we have remarked, Schmemmann saw the essential role of eschatology both in a liturgical and cosmological way. Outlining this new theological concept and pulling it into the framework of Orthodox theology in a liturgical light enabled him to deal with the Kingdom of God in a more realistic way. Forging a theology of time with all the rubrical garnishment allowed him to convey the mediating role of worship. Liturgically speaking, Schmemmann's understanding of eschatology is impeccable. However, applying this liturgical concept to the sacramental consideration of the world was more problematic. This happened because on one hand he virulently rejected a monastic presence in the Church (and in her cult) and on the other hand because he failed to engage the social realm of the liturgical community. Even

after admitting that the monastic movement had an eschatological intuition in the beginning, nevertheless Schmemmann took this group of faithful as being oriented against the world and heading individually to the Kingdom. Also, dealing with the commitment of the Church to the world, Schmemmann denies any societal role of eschatology in the life of the liturgical community, impoverishing thus the Church of her social missionary call.

Schmemmann's solution for the crisis within the Orthodox Church was the Eucharist. He analysed this sacrament not only from a liturgical point of view, but also from an ecclesiological perspective. This last aspect took quite a practical form regarding the imperative of more frequent communion for the Orthodox faithful, who were till his time somewhat deprived of this fundamental way of becoming Christians and therefore members of the Church.

Dealing with the issue of the Eucharist assisted Schmemmann to engage the problem of the synergetic salvific work of God and man for the life of the world. Even if this perspective supposed universal consequences, the Russian theologian did not leave the boundaries of Orthodox theology. Theoretically speaking the sacramentality of the world in his view is to be embraced at the humankind scale, concerns all humans and the entire creation because it bears the divine initiative and aims for the goodness of all. But practically situated, this collective possibility of the world living sacramentally through the presence of Christ in the communal Bread and the shared Wine remained an opportunity only for the Orthodox faithful.

One underdeveloped aspect of the sacramentality of the world in Schmemmann's theology was, as we have seen, the prophetic and royal capabilities of Christians. He loudly proclaimed the important role of the priesthood of all Christians, but he said little about the other two qualities. These Christian potentials would enable the liturgical community to enter more

deeply into fruitful dialogue with society and the environment. Schmemmann had his own advantage of being interested in and formed by literature, in poetic narrative and the metaphorical dimension of Christian worship. I suppose that this was the reason he did not pay much attention to the prophetic and royal aspects of the Christian life. But the majority of the faithful lack such skills. Therefore anyone who engages theologically with the sacramentality of the world and tries to bring it close to people should manifest the minimum concern of showing why discerning the spirits is relevant and why governing the world by serving it is the only way to fulfil the process of deification.

At the end of this study, what are our findings?

Based on my research it is possible to affirm that on the question of Schmemmann's pertinent query of the crisis within the Orthodox Church, his view is more optimistic than negative. His understanding of the critical state of the Orthodox Church and its solution is convergent with similar positions adopted by other Christian denominations. Even if he did not rely basically on those similar opinions, he nevertheless opened the way for further generations of theologians to engage more realistically and more fruitfully the solutions available for the crisis within the Orthodox Church.

Speaking about theosis in a liturgical way, engaging indirectly the philosophical problem of the *Sofia* within the Slavophile movement, granted Schmemmann's theology quite a continuity with his professors and mentors in Paris and America. Pushing the Slavophile term of *sobornost* into its liturgical realm and its worldly fulfilment allowed him to give Russian classical theology a more actual perception among theologians of other confessions.

Schmemmann's life and theology were a *podvig*, a spiritual struggle, in the sense developed by Pierre Pascal and Andrew Louth. Labouring within the Christian community meant for him accomplishing an inner call and fulfilling a life-dream. Schmemmann did not produce a systematic ecclesiology. He did not

have an organised view of the nature or structure of the Church. This is due to two factors: when writing about the Church, he did not want to write mainly for scholars, but for the people of the Church in the world, not in academic circles. Secondly, he was never concerned scientifically with issues like nature, subject *versus* object, *res versus* phenomena or any other cold analytical devices. He indeed used theology in its methodical manifestation, but he did not produce pure theological samples. He saw the Church in her lively, missionary context.

Schmemmann's ecclesiology invites us to reconsider the coherence of the structure of Orthodox worship and calls us to engage sacramentally with the world. His approach to the sacramentality of the world is nonetheless subject to several major adjustments provided by secular science, especially post-modern anthropology and sociology. The actual environmental commitment of civilised nations grants the Orthodox ecclesiology new fields of cultivating a dialogue between the classical biblical and patristic approach of cosmology with the modern understanding of the evolution of the planet Earth.

What is particularly interesting is the possibility for humans to find their true place amidst the whole creation of the Christian Triune God. This place enables humanity to cope with the existential problem of illness and death, the situation that characterises all living entities.

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## Appendix: Chronology of Schmemann's Context and Life

**October 1917:** The Bolshevik Revolution begins in Russia.

**September 13, 1921:** Alexander Schmemann was born in Revel, actually Tallinn, Estonia.

**October 1925:** The Orthodox Theological Institute St Serge is established in Paris.

**The 1930s:** The Schmemanns go to Belgrade and then to Paris.

**October 1938:** St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary begins its existence in New York.

**1930-1939:** Alexander Schmemann goes to the Russian Military School and then to Lycée Carnot.

**1940-1945:** Alexander Schmemann continues his studies at St Serge Theological Institute.

**January 31, 1943:** Alexander Schmemann gets married to Juliana Ossorguine in Paris.

**1945-1951:** Alexander Schmemann teaches Church history at St Serge Institute and writes for *Le messager orthodoxe*, becoming also an active member of the Fraternity of St Alban and St Serge.

**November 4, 1946:** Alexander Schmemann is ordained as a deacon.

**November 30, 1946:** Alexander Schmemann is ordained as a priest.

**1946-1951:** Alexander Schmemann celebrates as the second parish priest at the parish church of St Constantine and St Helen, Clamart, with Archimandrite Cyprian Kern. In 1951 he moves to another parish church The Nativity of the Mother of God, always in Clamart.

**June 1951:** The Schmemanns leave Europe for the United States of America.

**1953:** Alexander Schmemann receives the liturgical distinction of Archpriest.

**July 5, 1959:** Alexander Schmemann defends his doctoral thesis, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, at St Serge Theological Institute.

**1962:** Alexander Schmemann becomes the dean of St Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary.

**1962-1965:** Alexander Schmemann participates as an observer at the Second Vatican Council.

**1963:** Alexander Schmemann becomes vice-president of the Christian Action of Russian Students.

**November 8, 1967:** Alexander Schmemann receives the title of Doctor Honoris Cause of the General Theological Seminary in New York. Later he will receive similar distinctions from Butler University, Lafayette College, Iona College (New York) and from the Greek Orthodox Theological School Holy Cross.

**April 10, 1970:** The Russian Patriarch Alexis the 1<sup>st</sup> grants autocephaly to the Russian Greek-Catholic Orthodox Church of North America, which becomes the Orthodox Church in America.

**1970:** Alexander Schmemann receives the liturgical distinction of Protospyter.

**December 13, 1983:** Alexander Schmemann dies.