

DAVID W. FAGERBERG. *Liturgy Outside Liturgy: The Liturgical Theology of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann* (Hong Kong: Chorabooks, 2018). 220 pp. ISBN 9789887851547; Kindle ISBN 9789887851509; epub ISBN 9789887851585.

The Reverend Alexander Schmemmann (1921–1983) was a leading theologian in the Orthodox Church in America and one of the foremost thinkers in liturgical theology. David W. Fagerberg (Professor of Liturgical Studies at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA) has seen this book as an opportunity to tease out Schmemmann's insistent idea that liturgical theology is 'the slow and patient bringing together of that which was for too long a time broken and isolated – liturgy, theology, and piety, their reintegration within one fundamental vision' (11).

*Liturgy Outside Liturgy* is a book made up of five lectures delivered in Sweden during January 2017. They represent a fresh survey and summary of Schmemmann for a community of theological students from Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, and evangelical traditions. In this way their broad attractiveness is apparent.

Fagerberg's central proposition about Schmemmann's liturgical theology is that, in addition to looking *at* liturgy (a responsible scholarly exercise), it is also important to look *through* liturgy, at the world and at life in all its aspects. The liturgy must therefore have an impact on the world and our everyday lives. Liturgy, he suggests, puts a light into our eyes by which we can see; a light like that of Mount Tabor, illuminating creation so that its truth, beauty, and goodness glorify God. Having a theological eye means seeing by this light: a liturgical theologian has this charismatic sight by which to see the world, its history, its people, and their hearts.

This image of the liturgy emitting the light of Mount Tabor is key to Fagerberg's interpretation of Schmemmann. The author's central idea is that liturgy gives birth to something beyond itself. One of the most important questions Schmemmann asked, therefore, was whether liturgy is an object of theology, or the source of theological thinking. His advice was to watch the liturgy in motion, for as it moves it will throw off theology, like a grinding wheel throws off sparks. For the Church Fathers, Schmemmann pointed out, liturgy as the life, 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' (55). Schmemmann sought to show how the fruit of our new life in Christ is grounded in the Church's liturgical action.

Schmemmann noted too that people are often uninterested in understanding liturgy, much less theology, because they desire of some kind of 'spiritual experience, spiritual food' provided to those in a 'cultic society'. The liturgy, for Schmemmann, is the Paschal mystery coming to meet us in our lives. Schmemmann wrote, 'I realize how spiritually tired I am of all this 'Orthodoxism', of all the fuss with Byzantium, Russia, way of life, spirituality, church affairs, piety, of all these rattles. I do not like any one

of them, and the more I think about the meaning of Christianity, the more it all seems alien to me. It all literally obscures Christ, pushes Him into the background' (92).

Fagerberg uses Pavel Florensky's concept of antinomy to explain how Christians are all the time leaving the world, but all the time remaining in it. This idea derives from Schmemmann's complex understanding of 'world'. On the one hand, world means rebellion, death, communion with a dying world; 'food itself is dead,' wrote Schmemmann, 'it is life that has died and it must be kept in refrigerators like a corpse' (120–21). But on the other hand, world is simply that 'in which and by which we live,' and if we could re-establish the world and its proper relationship to God then, says Fagerberg, we could be said to consecrate the world. And here the author draws on his previous works, *Consecrating the World* (2016) and *On Liturgical Asceticism* (2013). Consecrating the world means the overcoming of the passions so that we no longer misuse the world: liturgy and asceticism are connected. Money, sex, or alcohol is not wrong in itself; it is in avarice, lust, and gluttony that the problem lies.

Fagerberg suggests, in the end, that human sanctification occurs when God is glorified. When we are given new life, then God is glorified, and the new life is to be found in the Church and in the liturgy. This means that liturgical piety is the antithesis of worldliness – taking the world without reference to God. We do not need liturgy in our life, says Fagerberg, in order to have a place where we can go to escape the world, we need liturgy in our life in order to receive the world again as it was given: 'Liturgy will change the world' (116). Fagerberg and Schmemmann's world-transforming view of liturgy, then, is a corrective to the view which thinks that the world can be understood and transformed by human action alone. Against those who have said religion is abnormal – an escape from the world – they have said liturgy is the only way to be normal. 'To the naked, secular eye,' writes Fagerberg, 'nothing looks different, but to the sanctified, consecrated eye every object and moment has a new potentiality. Once we have seen God invite himself into the house of Zacchaeus for supper [...] there is no meal which is purely secular [...] Once we have seen God on the cross there is no corner of suffering or darkness where our spiritual eyes do not see him moving' (203–4).

Finally, in order to understand liturgical theology, we must understand the origin of liturgy, for it 'is a divine decision to summon a people, enter into covenant with them, [...] illuminate them in the light of Mount Tabor [...] [and] make all the baptized concelebrants of the Church's mystical sacrifice [...]' (204–5).

God has made us liturgical creatures, and we are most truly ourselves when we glorify God; and when we glorify God, we find our perfection and our fulfilment.

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