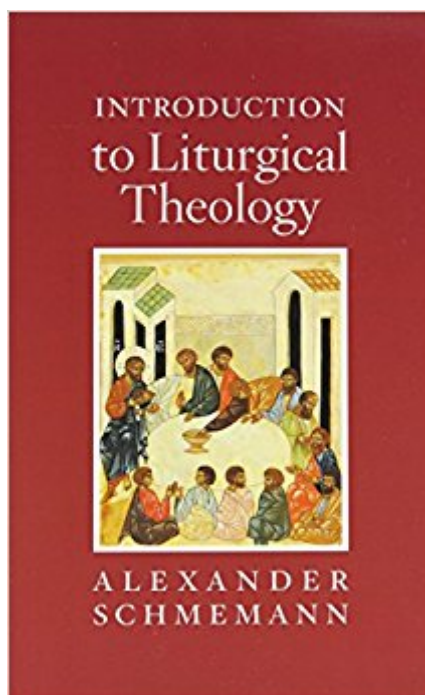


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# Introduction To Liturgical Theology



## Synopsis

Alexander Schmemmann's Introduction to Liturgical Theology is a masterful historical and critical introduction to the study of modern Orthodox liturgics and theology. There is scarcely a student of Christian worship who has not been stirred by the brilliant mind of the late Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann. He was deeply stimulated by modern movements and figures in Western Christian thought. He brings into the Western discussion of Christian unity, the relation of the Church to the world in revolution, the question of papal supremacy, and the effort to commend the gospel to a post-Christian world—a worldview at once Orthodox, patristic, and realistic. His sacramental realism and wholeness is exciting and refreshing for those, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, who have been reared on scholastic categories. The present work was basic to much of Schmemmann's academic research and creativity. In it, he defines liturgical theology, noting that the dynamic realism of the Eucharistic liturgy often has been obscured in popular liturgical piety. This theme is developed in reference to the shape of worship as it evolved in the Orthodox Church, from the earliest years to its crystallization in Byzantium from the ninth through the twelfth centuries.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Text: English, Russian (translation)

Father Alexander Schmemmann (+1983) was a prolific writer, brilliant lecturer, and dedicated pastor. Former dean and professor of liturgical theology at St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, his

insight into contemporary culture and liturgical celebration left an indelible mark on the Christian community worldwide.

A good introduction to the development of Byzantine rite, though the text can be a bit dry at times. Schmemmann emphasizes the eschatological and communal focus of early Christian worship as well as the central place of the Resurrection to Church piety. Schmemmann does an excellent job of emphasizing the importance of the character of the devotion we express rather than the importance of outward forms. Ultimately this is more a book of the history of the liturgy and does not contain the same inspirational impact of "Life of the World", but certainly proves a valuable read.

A must read for students of liturgy.

Great Book, Well Written!! Thank You for sending this in to me!!!

By calling Introduction to Liturgical Theology 'Canon' I mean that it is the fundamental book you must read - its influence on the liturgical theologians of today is profound regardless of their denominational persuasion. After reading this book you will understand the distinction between theology of liturgy, liturgical studies and liturgical theology. Liturgical theology is the theology embedded in the rituals and words of liturgy ... it is the theology embodied in our liturgy.

Understanding Schmemmann's view of liturgy provides a framework for understanding the liturgical practices of any denomination including those claiming to be nonliturgical. It also provides the non-Orthodox a real insight into the Orthodox faith and makes concrete some of the differences between the Eastern and Western Church. If you have any interest in liturgy please put this on a must read list.

This is an introduction to liturgical theology. Which is not a "theology of liturgy," as important as that is. No, Fr. Schmemmann here tries to introduce us to theology as we learn it from the liturgy, how the church's liturgies have taught us about our Savior, and how the Liturgy brings us into God's Kingdom. Schmemmann was Russian Orthodox, and this book reflects that background, and most of the book deals with the liturgies of Eastern Christianity. There are occasional references to Western liturgies and Western theology, but that's not the focus of the book. But this book is a fine introduction for anyone, western or eastern. But if you're Western (like me) here's a warning: the book can be hard to understand, just because he's dealing with topics and aspects that were

unfamiliar to me. But it bears careful reading, and a thoughtful reading rewards the reader. I've just completed my third reading of the book, and found treasures here that eluded me the first 2 readings. Future readings will probably bear similar fruit. An earlier reviewer mentioned the author's use of Greek. I don't read Greek either, but the few instances here aren't difficult to parse out for anyone who has a passing acquaintance with the Greek alphabet. I, too, would have appreciated a bibliography, but I suspect Schmemmann expected to write more, and perhaps left this book's references in a somewhat unfinished state. But almost anything that Schmemmann wrote is worth reading, and this book is no exception.

The late Father Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983) distills his principal reflections on liturgical theology in 'Introduction to Liturgical Theology.' Initially released as a 1966 translation from Russian by Asheleigh E. Moorehouse, the book entered its fourth reprint by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press in 2003. The origin for the book was the author's 1962 doctoral dissertation approved by the faculty of St. Sergius Theological Institute in Paris. The book brings precision to discourse as characterizes everything that the author penned. However, it also carries a scholarly tone, which can explore topics and level of inquiry better suited to it. This tone does not sacrifice the author's vigor and enthusiasm for his subject, as many academic books sacrifice. Instead, the scholarly tone helps to leave an indelible imprint on liturgical theology for generations to come. Immense credit is due the book for several reasons. First, Schmemmann engaged in an active dialogue with contemporary French theologians, who influenced liturgical reforms of the (Roman Catholic) Second Vatican Council. For example, his multiple references to prominent French theologians included Yves Congar [cf. 13, 18, 101, et al.], Jean Danielou [cf. 77-9, 83, et al.], and many others. These textual references illustrate Schmemmann's exercise of Orthodox theology, without ignoring important sources of information and inquiry about the 'lex orandi' of a global Communion that characterized the first Christian millennium. Moreover, the author concluded that comparative liturgics produced salient results for appreciating monastic and non-monastic historical sources of prayer [83-5]. Second, while the schema for the book follows a common chronological approach to liturgical theology, its method is novel. An equally common mistake would assign preference to older variants in the 'ordo'. However, Schmemmann's method set a course toward studying the theory of the Church's worship [21 passim]. Historical comparison of the ordo's provided data for analysis, but antiquity alone should not determine the proper focus of "the theological interpretation of the rule of prayer" [21], which theory should maintain as central to liturgical theology. In summary, Schmemmann concluded: "Historical liturgics establishes the structures and their development, liturgical theology

discovers their meaning: such is the great methodological principle of the task" [22].

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