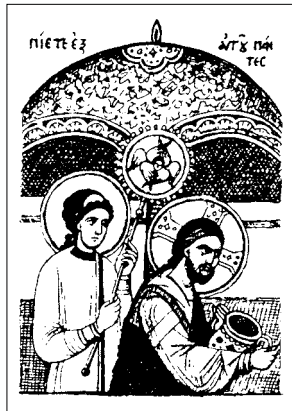


# FOUR ESSAYS ON ORTHODOX LITURGICAL ISSUES

By  
Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna  
Bishop Auxentios of Photiki  
and  
Father James Thornton



CENTER FOR TRADITIONALIST  
ORTHODOX STUDIES

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A Collection of Liturgical Commentaries  
Written from a Traditionalist  
Orthodox Perspective

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## PREFACE

This collection of essays on various liturgical traditions of the Orthodox Church admittedly deals with problems and issues that are of *particular* interest to liturgical experts and to those reasonably well versed in the history of Christian worship. But it does not address an exclusively scholarly audience; indeed, many of the issues discussed in the essays are also of interest to a general audience. While we can study worship in a purely academic and scholarly way, we can never wholly separate it from its living form, from that *leitourgia* that is the “proper activity” of the People of God, the Church’s believers. Nor does any believer, from the simplest to the most learned, fail on at least some occasion to bring to mind questions about the liturgical life, its history, and its significance. If for the pagan sages a life unexamined was a meaningless life, so for Christians, at an intuitive level, ritual carried out without thought is unrewarding. This truth inevitably prompts an almost universal interest in the Church’s worship at one level or another.

The essays presented here, as the subtitle of the collection suggests, approach the liturgical issues in question from a *traditionalist* standpoint. By this, we mean to say that we have followed two guidelines in our research. The first is a principle that underlies the best of Orthodox studies and the *phronema* of the Church Fathers: that in pondering the things of the Church, and especially worship, we are approaching something sacred—a revealed truth. Thus, we assume that worship has developed under Divine guidance: that its origins are the embryo of a liturgical system that has grown into maturity, not by adventitious ruptures with its organic roots, but in such a way as to preserve the natural bond of unity that exists between a child and that child grown to adulthood. We do not seek to discover, in the spirit of some of our contemporary liturgical scholars, what has gone wrong with the Church’s worship, but to *understand* and *grasp* the pristine liturgical life which has been passed down to us, in the Orthodox Church, from antiquity. The spirit of doubt, the rubrics of suspicion, and all of those negative things which are too often the very stuff of liturgical scholarship are not to be found, therefore, in the following pages.

Our second guideline stems from a critical concern for the integrity of Orthodox worship. We do not deny that there are other

forms of Christian worship. Nor do we dispute that there are those who, even within Orthodoxy, would argue that we have too narrowly defined Orthodox worship, as though there were not possible within Her bosom such novelties as a western rite, or even a *Western* Orthodoxy. We would simply cite the words of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco, recently Glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, to his spiritual child, the late Hieromonk Seraphim of Platina. Having enthusiastically supported and fostered the growth of a western rite movement while serving as a Bishop in Western Europe, this contemporary Saint confided, towards the end of his life, to Father Seraphim: "This was a mistake," characterizing his efforts in this regard as a "bitter disappointment." In the same spirit, we would argue that our concern for the integrity of Orthodox worship as it has reached us today is as much motivated by a desire to avoid error and disappointment as it is by our conviction that the Church's liturgical life is Divinely directed. And such a desire is best fulfilled by following the ecclesiastical consensus and by avoiding what violates the integrity of established practice. If a Saint erred, during his earthly sojourn, in deviating from this guideline, what peril might await us in a similar *faux pas*?

Now, if we have avoided approaching Orthodox liturgical issues, in the following essays, from the hermeneutics of doubt and suspicion so popular in contemporary scholarship, there is, nonetheless, a negative tone throughout much of what we have written. This is because a number of the issues that we discuss have been—at least in terms of the aforementioned guidelines—*improperly* treated both by Western scholars and by Orthodox scholars beset by a Western mentality. In setting forth a traditionalist Orthodox view on these matters, we have of necessity addressed such scholarship in a corrective manner.

We might also remind our readers that one of the first books on Orthodox liturgics in the English language, a volume of very uneven scholarship, was the late Father Alexander Schmemmann's *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1966). Father Schmemmann presented the West with a glimpse of the development of Orthodox worship in the critical language that it could understand: movement away from the normative worship of the Early Church, the separation of ritual piety from personal devotion, historical upheavals, conceptual distortions, and deviations from *pure* worship. In short, he approached his subject with a spirit wholly alien to the traditionalist guidelines which we have set forth for ourselves. For all of its helpful and insightful observations, Fa-

ther Schmemmann's book reinforced a subsequent trend in Orthodox liturgical studies that has, at least in the West, prevailed for a number of decades. This trend, too, we have of necessity taken into account in the following studies.

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