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The Spirit in Word and Sacrament: Reflections on Potential Contributions of Eastern Orthodoxy to the Development of Pentecostal Liturgical Theology

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Abstract

This paper offers a constructive exploration of Eastern Orthodox liturgical pneumatology's potential contributions toward the development of Pentecostal liturgical theology. It highlights two main themes: the organic continuity between word and sacrament as a proclaimed and 'choreographed', communally-enacted theology; and the catechetical significance of 'visualized theology' or 'theology in images' within the context of worship in the Spirit, constituting the life of the church as a continual Pentecost.

Keywords

Liturgical theology – Orthodox pneumatology – word and sacrament – liturgical pneumatology – liturgical aesthetics

While Pentecostalism is over a century old, it still suffers a tangible 'ecclesiological deficit'.¹ Yet, the growing number of Pentecostal scholarly contributions to the exploration of the church and its sacramental, liturgical life² signals both the rising interest in the subject and recognition of its relative neglect in the past. As Veli-

¹ Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: An Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (JPT Supp. Series, 38; Dorset, UK: Deo Publishing, 2011); Peter Althouse, 'Ascension – Pentecost – Eschaton: A Theological Framework for Pentecostal Ecclesiology', in John Christopher Thomas, ed., *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), p. 227, Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), p. 127.

² While a number of Pentecostal theologians have developed ecclesiologies which touch on the church's sacramental/liturgical life, presently there are only a few scholarly works offering an in-depth study on a given Pentecostal sacrament. They include John Christopher Thomas' monograph on footwashing in John 13 [*Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014)]; Kimberly Ervine Alexander's investigation of early Pentecostals' practices and theology of healing [*Pentecostal Healing: Models in Theology and Practice* (JPT Supp. Series, 29; Dorset, UK: Deo Publishing, 2006) – the text mentions only briefly the sacramental dimension of early Pentecostal's understanding of healing, yet offers a detailed historical study with useful insights towards the future development of Pentecostal sacramental theology]; and Chris E.W. Green's proposal for a constructive Pentecostal theology of the Lord's Supper [*Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord's Supper: Foretasting the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012)]. While not being specifically dedicated to the exploration of speaking in tongues as a Pentecostal sacrament, Frank D. Machia's work *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), constitutes one of the foundational contributions to the movement's theology on Spirit-baptism. Examples of monographs and edited volumes in Pentecostal ecclesiology (in addition to the above mentioned monograph by Simon Chan), include Wolfgang Vondey's *People of Bread: Rediscovering Ecclesiology* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008); John Christopher Thomas, ed., *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), Chris E.W. Green, ed., *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2016), which contains essential/key texts that have contributed to shaping Pentecostal ecclesiology; as well as the special issue on Pentecostal ecclesiology of the *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* (vol.11, No. 4, November 2011), guest-edited by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, and (most recently) Terry L. Coss' *The People of God's Presence: An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, MI:

Matti Kärkkäinen has wittily observed, Pentecostal ecclesiology (and this, no doubt, includes liturgical theology) could be compared to the Leaning Tower of Pisa – from whichever perspective one looks at it...it is still leaning.³ Its multidirectional orientation reflects the kaleidoscopic diversity present within the Pentecostal movement's historical roots and corresponding theological heritage.⁴ In its staggering global expansion beyond the boundaries of the West, Pentecostalism has brought about a remarkable convergence of the legacies of the free-church and evangelical traditions with the theological insights and acute sacramental consciousness of Latin American Catholicism, as well as of Balkan and Eurasian Eastern Orthodoxy⁵ – an extraordinary fusion with undoubtedly significant but still not properly evaluated ecumenical promise.

The effort to develop a viable Pentecostal ecclesiology is fueled by the growing awareness that many of the problems confronting the movement today are essentially ecclesiological in nature.⁶ The ongoing ecumenical dialogues between Pentecostals and other traditions have highlighted further the need for systematic Pentecostal ecclesiology and liturgical theology while simultaneously offering some helpful 'conceptual tools' toward articulating the distinctives of the Pentecostal liturgical experience and sacramental theological imagination.⁷ It is not accidental that some of the noteworthy contributions toward this effort have drawn inspiration from Eastern Orthodoxy. The similarities between the two traditions have been

Baker Academic, 2019). Notably, Simon Chan remains the only Pentecostal scholar who has authored a monograph on liturgical theology [*Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006)]. Yet, there are two volumes edited by Lee Roy Martin which have set the tone for further investigations in liturgical theology – *Toward Pentecostal Theology of Preaching* (Cleveland TN, CPT Press, 2015) and *Toward Pentecostal Theology of Worship* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2016).

³ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, 'The Leaning Tower of Pentecostal Ecclesiology: Reflections on the Doctrine of the Church on the Way', in John Christopher Thomas, ed., *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), pp. 261-2.

⁴ In light of this, it is, indeed, more appropriate to speak about Pentecostal 'theologies' rather than 'theology'. Amos Yong in *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010).

⁵ For a brief insight on the influence of Eastern Orthodox spirituality and liturgy on the liturgical practices of Russian and Eurasian Pentecostals, see Olga Zaprometova, 'The Eucharistic Mystery: The Meaning of Pneumatology and Ecclesiology', *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 14 (1):24–39.

⁶ Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, p. ix.

⁷ Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, p. 118. The lack of systematic Pentecostal ecclesiological and liturgico-theological articulation has been felt also in the current Orthodox-Pentecostal Theological Dialogue (where I serve as a steering committee member). Since 2017, the dialogue has been conducted in conjunction with the annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion.

highlighted in recent Pentecostal scholarship – particularly regarding the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* and the Pentecostal doctrine of sanctification, in view of the believers’ Christoforation as constituting the very essence and *telos* of the Christian experience.⁸ Reflecting upon the striking similarities between the two traditions’ theology, worldview and commitment to direct and mediated mystical experience of transcendence, Edmund J. Rybarczyk argues that Pentecostalism could be considered ‘as a *via media* between Orthodoxy and the more rational branches of Protestantism’.⁹ Telford Work notes that Pentecostals and Orthodox share a dynamic understanding of the tradition, except that the first emphasize newness while the latter stresses continuity.¹⁰ Simon Chan magnifies a deep, shared affinity by both traditions – ‘the inseparable link between the Spirit and the Church’ – and suggests that ‘Pentecostals could learn from Orthodoxy the need for a theology of the church to sustain their practice’.¹¹ Further, the centrality of the Pentecost event within Orthodox theology and its robust, luminous pneumatology harmonize with a fundamental aspect of Pentecostal theological reflection – the confession of Christ as Spirit-Baptizer and the corresponding sacramental practice of speaking in tongues as focal points of Pentecostal theology and spirituality.¹² The event of Pentecost serves as the hermeneutical lens and anchor of Pentecostal theological inquiry, continually shaping Pentecostal theology as a theology of Pentecost.¹³ In light of this, the Orthodox assertion of

⁸ Edmund J. Rybarczyk, *Beyond Salvation: Eastern Orthodoxy and Classical Pentecostalism on Becoming Like Christ* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004); Veli-Matti Karkainen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005). Daniel Castelo’s monograph *Pentecostalism as a Mystical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017) further elucidates the affinity between Pentecostal and Orthodox spirituality.

⁹ Edmund J. Rybarczyk, *Beyond Salvation*, p. 8.

¹⁰ Telford Work, ‘Gusty Winds, or a Jet Stream? Charismatics and Orthodox on the Spirit of Tradition’, AAR, Evangelical Theology and Orthodox Theology Joint Session, Boston, MA, 1999.

¹¹ Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, p. 8.

¹² Simon Chan argues that this is, in fact, the fundamental distinctive of Pentecostal theology and should be the originating point of a truly Pentecostal ecclesiology (and liturgical theology). ‘Jesus as Spirit-Baptizer: Its Significance for Pentecostal Ecclesiology’, in John Christopher Thomas, ed., *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), p. 139.

¹³ See Daniela C. Augustine, *Pentecost, Hospitality, and Transfiguration: Toward a Spirit-Inspired Vision of Social Transformation* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012).

Pentecost as the very goal/purpose of the Incarnation¹⁴ and the anticipation of the pneumatization of both humanity and the rest of the creation accords with Pentecostal spirituality and its theological vision.¹⁵

As Amos Yong observes, Pentecostal ecclesiology (to the extent to which it has been articulated) is ‘inherently pneumatological’ and missional – the church is ‘founded’, ‘nurtured’ and ‘empowered’ by the Spirit to take the gospel to all creation. Yong concludes, however, that future Pentecostal ecclesiology ‘can no longer be attempted apart from the ecumenical conversation’.¹⁶ In agreement with this statement and in light of the above-mentioned argument for reaching to the theological heritage of the Orthodox tradition, the remainder of the present paper offers a constructive exploration of two particular themes within Orthodox liturgical theology that can aid the efforts toward developing a Pentecostal liturgical theology. These themes are the organic continuity between word and sacrament as a proclaimed and ‘choreographed’, communally-enacted theology, and the catechetical significance of ‘visualized theology’ or ‘theology in images’¹⁷ within the context of worship in the Spirit, constituting the life of the church as a continual Pentecost.¹⁸ Alexander Schmemmann, one of the most significant Orthodox liturgical theologians of the twentieth century, famously defined ‘liturgical theology’ by contrasting it with ‘theology of the liturgy’ and articulating it in terms of depicting the liturgy not as an ‘object’ of theological investigation but as the fundamental ‘source’ of theology

¹⁴ Echoing St. Athanasius, Vladimir Lossky asserts that God became flesh so that humanity may receive the Holy Spirit – become pneumatized. [Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), p. 179.] Therefore, Pentecost is not merely a continuation of the Incarnation or its sequel. It is its result and purpose. Through the redeeming ontological renewal of creation in Christ, the ‘creature has become fit to receive the Holy Spirit’ (p. 159) and be the dwelling place and in-fleshed reality of the Trinitarian *koinonia* in the cosmos.

¹⁵ See for example Frank Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer: Christology in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), pp. 302–9; Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 155–74; Steve M. Studebaker, *From Pentecost to the Triune God: A Pentecostal Trinitarian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), pp. 66–70, 263–67; Daniela C. Augustine *Pentecost, Hospitality, and Transfiguration*, p. 79.

¹⁶ In his work *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology*, Amos Yong offers a brief overview of the current stage of Pentecostal ecclesiology, concluding that Pentecostalism does not have its own ecclesiology but ‘have drawn uncritically from the free-church tradition’. Yong points out to the emerging consensus that a Pentecostal ecclesiology (and this includes liturgical theology) has to be inherently pneumatological, bound up with the church’s missionary task, informed by an ecumenical conversation, and ‘intimately connected’ with Pentecostal soteriology (while confronting ‘the ecclesiological-soteriological question as understood by both the Catholic and the Orthodox theological traditions’. (p. 127).

¹⁷ Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992), I, p. 9. Ouspensky famously describes icons/iconography as ‘theology in images’.

¹⁸ Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1988), p. 110.

(‘a kind of *locus theologicus par excellence*’),¹⁹ as ‘the elucidation of the meaning of worship’,²⁰ as the first/fundamental form of theology – the church’s *theologia prima*.²¹ The present work highlights Schmemmann’s thought and embraces his understanding of liturgical theology while focusing particularly on liturgical pneumatology, explicating/elucidating the Christoforming work of the Spirit articulated in/by the worship of the church.

The Christoforming Continuity between Word, Sacrament and Mission: The Gift of Liturgical Pneumatology

Most North-American and Western-European Pentecostal worship is marked by a notable disconnect between Word and sacrament. In a way (inconsistent with its mystical ethos), Pentecostal liturgy has substituted the communion table with the pulpit as central liturgical space for encounter with the divine presence.²² Thus, the sacramental form of the communion bread (Jn 6.32-33, 51) as ‘visible word’ is replaced by *kerygmatic* proclamation as ‘audible word’ in the worship’s feast of the ‘heavenly bread’²³ (a term commonly applied in Pentecostal services to scripture and its homiletical explication).

In view of this regrettable disconnect, Eastern Orthodox liturgical theology can magnify for the

¹⁹ Alexander Schmemmann, ‘Theology and Liturgical Tradition’, pp. 11-20 in Thomas Fish, ed., *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), pp. 11-12.

²⁰ Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1966), 16.

²¹ Simon Chan’s approach to liturgical theology is one of that reflects Schmemmann’s understanding and utilization of the term. See for example his work *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, MI: IVP Academic, 2006), pp. 48-52.

²² While it may be argued that charismatic praise, anointing with oil and laying of hands during prayers for healing, or the ‘alter call’ (and responsive expectation of the Spirit’s transformational work on behalf of believers) are the central Pentecostal sacraments, for most Pentecostal congregations, the sermon often represents the liturgical center of their weekly gatherings. See Daniela C. Augustine, ‘From Proclamation to Embodiment: The Sacrament of the Word for the Life of the World and its Destiny in *Theosis*’ in Lee Roy Martin, ed., *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Preaching* (Cleveland, TN: CPT, 2015), pp. 82-110.

²³ As Jaroslav Pelican points out in relation to the Reformation’s emphasis on *sola scriptura*, ‘the stress on the Word as proclamation did not cause Luther to relegate Sacrament to a secondary place in the church, for the Sacrament “proclaimed the Lord’s death.” It may be, in fact, that Luther made the proclamation alongside the other Sacraments. To put it another way, not only was the Lord’s Supper the visible Word of God, but the proclamation of the Word of God was the audible Sacrament...[they] were co-ordinate’. *Luther and the Liturgy* (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1959), pp. 220-21.

Pentecostal sacramental imagination the essential organic unity of Word, sacrament, and mission – of kerygma, Eucharist, and witness – that undergirds the life of the Church in its holistic pneumatic totality.

While some recent Pentecostal scholarship has highlighted in compelling theological constructs the continuity between sacrament (particularly the Eucharist) and mission,²⁴ the connection between Word and sacrament remains relatively obscured. However, within the celebration of the Divine Liturgy,²⁵ the Liturgy of the Word (encompassing the scriptural readings and the accompanying homily in the first half of the service) primes/prepares the communicants for what follows – the Eucharistic communion – so that they can partake in it rightly discerning the body and blood of Christ and be revealed by the Holy Spirit as His communal, eschatological body on earth.²⁶ Therefore, the entire liturgy uplifts the mystery of the incarnation as the Word's *telos* for the world, actualized through the agency of the Holy Spirit within the community of faith.

The paradigmatic biblical story of the sacramental continuity between the liturgy of the Word, the Eucharistic communion and the mission of the Church is Luke 24.13-53 – the narrative of the post-resurrection encounter between the living Christ and the two disciples traveling on the road to Emmaus.²⁷ Reflecting upon the revelatory progression inscribed within the event's unfolding, Fr. John

²⁴ Especially, Chris E.W. Green's *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord's Supper* and Wolfgang Vondey's *People of Bread*.

²⁵ The most commonly used versions of the Divine Liturgy are attributed to two of the greatest fourth century theologians and defenders of orthodoxy – St John Chrysostom and St Basil of Caesarea (known as Basil the Great). Their full texts are available at <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-divine-liturgy-of-saint-john-chrysostom> and <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-divine-liturgy-of-saint-basil-the-great?inheritRedirect=true>

²⁶ Here the allusion is to the epiclesis in the Divine Liturgy of St Basil. As Paul Meyendorff states, 'the fact that in the liturgy we invoke the Holy Spirit "on us and on the gifts here offered," ... that that means that it is we who are supposed to become the body of Christ, and certainly not just those elements there'. (Remarks during the questions and answers segment after a lecture by Fr. Robert Taft, entitled 'The Liturgical Enterprise 25 Years after Alexander Schmemmann - The Man and His Heritage'. The lecture is available at https://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/svs_liturgical_symposium/the_liturgical_enterprise_25_years_later)

²⁷ For a compelling Pentecostal interpretation of the passage see Wolfgang Vondey, *People of Bread: Rediscovering Ecclesiology* (Lanham, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), pp. 160-173. While Vondey does not reflect explicitly on the continuity between the homily/sermon and the sacrament, he emphasizes the dynamics of eucharistic hospitality articulated in the story, pointing to the experience of Christ's presence in the breaking of bread. He explicates the significance of 'the bread of

Behr emphasizes the obscurity of the Savior's immediate presence to the minds (human rationality) of the disciples. 'It has been only a few days and yet *they do not recognize him*...they even start telling this "stranger"²⁸ about the events surrounding Christ's crucifixion – His powerful prophetic ministry, His unjust sentence to death on the cross (and the painful death of their own hopes for the redemption of Israel), the astonishment of the faith community on the third day beholding the empty tomb, the unbelievable report of the women about the angelic proclamation that He is alive. Yet all this seems clouded by doubt and suspicion for while indeed, some saw the empty tomb, they 'did not see Him' (Lk 24.24). Only when the risen Christ 'opens the Scriptures' (and explains their Messianic anticipation of the suffering servant) the disciples' minds are also opened and their hearts start 'burning', stirred by the Word's revelation. Yet, it is not until He (the Word in flesh) takes bread, blesses it, breaks it and gives it to them that this revelation is completed – now their eyes are opened and they finally see and know Him. Then He suddenly disappears from their sight; yet, they have become first-hand eye-witnesses of His living, illuminating presence and start to proclaim eagerly the Good News – 'The Lord has truly risen...' (Lk 24.34) – and as the Gospel of Luke remarks, '...while they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst' (Lk 24.34). The liturgy is the joyous proclamation of His resurrection in the anticipation of His appearance.²⁹ In light of this understanding, reflecting on

the Presence' in the Old Testament and states that in the Gospels "the bread of the presence" becomes "the bread of the face" of Jesus Christ' (p. 165). Vondey reflects also on the significance of Jesus' 'disappearance' from the communal 'fellowship with his disciples' as marking a transition from the pre- to the post-resurrection 'form of companionship' in which Jesus 'is no longer physically present' (p. 165) in anticipation of the final disappearance at the ascension (p. 165-6).

²⁸ John Behr, *Becoming Human: Meditations on Christian Anthropology in Word and Image* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2013), pp. 10-11.

²⁹ As Fr. Steven Freeman states in his reflections on Holy Week, "The knowledge that comes within the liturgy belongs to a different class of knowing ... It is not history that draws Christ's disciples back behind the doors year by year and week by week. It is not memorial and sentiment that stands for hours in darkened Churches, lighting candles and breathing prayers. It is not superstition and ethnic pride. It is the appearing'. (Fr. Steven Freeman, *His Appearing in the Liturgy*, <http://glory2godforallthings.com/2014/04/08/his-appearing-in-the-liturgy/>) As I have pointed out, Pentecostals can relate to this very Orthodox outlook to the congregation's weekly worship services, where they practice this different 'knowing' in intense communal anticipation of the appearing of the Lord. See Daniela C. Augustine, 'From Proclamation to Embodiment', pp. 102-104.

the so-called ‘little entrance’ (or the ‘entrance of the gospels’) within the Divine Liturgy, Alexander Schmemmann affirms that

the gospel book is a verbal icon of Christ’s manifestation to and presence among us. Above all, it is an icon of his resurrection. The entrance with the Gospels is not...a sacred dramatization of events of the past...It is the appearance of the risen Lord in the fulfillment of his promise: “where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them” (Mt. 18.20). As the consecration of the Eucharistic gifts is preceded by their offering at the sacramental table, so the reading and proclamation of the word is preceded by its *appearance*.³⁰

Schmemmann points out that according to all the evidence offered by the earliest liturgical texts (as well as by the structure of the liturgical order), there is a clear continuity between the reading of scripture and the accompanying homily, on the one hand, and the Eucharistic offering, on the other.³¹ Therefore, the two parts of the Divine Liturgy (the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Faithful) constitute one indivisible whole.³² Schmemmann affirms that ‘the word presupposes the sacrament as its fulfilment, for in the sacrament Christ the Word becomes our life. The Word assembles the Church for his incarnation in her.’³³ He states that (while it may be difficult for many Western Christians to grasp it due to being accustomed to the separation between Word and sacrament) the ‘Word is sacramental as the sacrament is evangelical’.³⁴ Schmemmann continues by asserting that the alienation of the sacrament from the Word deprives the sacrament of ‘its evangelical content, converting it into

³⁰ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), p. 71.

³¹ *The Eucharist*, p. 66. Here Schmemmann chooses to utilize Justin Martyr’s description of the Sunday worship, as the earliest text, outlining the liturgical *ordo* with its two indivisible components – Word and Eucharistic communion. (Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 67:3-5)

³² Schmemmann states that in the life and practice of the Church, the Eucharist ‘consists of two inseparably linked parts’, thus placing the reading of the word and the sermon *within* (as part of) the Eucharistic sacrament. *The Eucharist*, p. 66.

³³ A succinct summary of this organic liturgical continuity between the kerygma and the partaking in the Eucharistic elements is articulated also by John Behr’s statement that ‘*In the Church*, the Scriptures are opened to us – in the readings, the preaching, the hymnography, the iconography, the liturgical rites. And in the midst of all this, bread is broken in the Eucharistic offering, *and we become his body*’. John Behr, *Becoming Human*, p. 16.

³⁴ *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY; St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1963), pp. 32-33; also p. 21, where Schmemmann highlights the Western Christian thinking of sacrament as opposed to the Word, as well as in relation to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel.

a self-contained and self-sufficient ‘means of sanctification’,³⁵ leading to the gradual ‘decomposition’ and ‘dissolution’ of scripture within the life of the Church.³⁶ He warns that ‘[i]n separation from the word the sacrament is in danger of being perceived as magic, and without the sacrament the word is in danger of being reduced to doctrine’.³⁷ Schmemmann reminds the reader that the ‘sacrament is a manifestation of the Word’³⁸ – both of them flow from and witness to the event of the Word’s incarnation, pointing to Christ (the incarnate Word) as being the Life and sustenance of the new creation. In this organic liturgical unity of Word and sacrament, the Eucharist becomes the locus where the Word of God is fulfilled³⁹ through the Holy Spirit who makes it flesh in the church as Christ’s communal body on earth.⁴⁰ This pneumatic movement of the Word’s embodiment starts with the first liturgical act that constitutes ‘the assembly as the Church’ around the Word.⁴¹ Therefore, as Schmemmann insists, not just the Eucharist but the entire liturgy is sacramental, for it is the Church’s ‘procession’ into the Kingdom (into the *eschaton*) in which the assembled are to hear the proclaimed Word so that they may become the Word’s body.⁴² In light of this eschatological dimension, (as noted above) Schmemmann describes the liturgy as the joyous proclamation of Christ’s resurrection in anticipation of His appearance. Through the Spirit, the believers’ experience Christ’s *parousia* in the

³⁵ *The Eucharist*, p. 66. Schmemmann states that an outcome of this alienation is that the scriptures and the Church ‘are reduced to the category of two formal *authorities*, two “sources of faith” – as they are called in the scholastic treatises, for which the only question is which authority is the higher: which “interprets” which’. According to Schmemmann, this is a false (and crippling) dichotomy.

³⁶ Schmemmann expresses the same concern in *The Eucharist* (p. 66). He articulates the conviction that unless the false dichotomy between word and sacrament is overcome, the true meaning of both of them would remain obscured and the nature of Christian sacramentalism would not be comprehended and properly represented/articulated.

³⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, p.68.

³⁸ *For the Life of the World*, p. 33.

³⁹ ‘Liturgy and Eucharist’, pp. 69-88 in *Liturgy and Tradition*, and there p. 85. There the Church ceases to be ‘institution, doctrine, system’ and ‘becomes Life, Vision, Salvation’.

⁴⁰ *The Eucharist*, p. 68.

⁴¹ ‘The Liturgical Revival and the Orthodox Church’, pp. 101-115 in *Liturgy and Tradition*, and there, p. 105. For Schmemmann, ‘their gathering together results not in the mere sum of so many individuals, but in the *ecclesia*’ herself.

⁴² *For the Life of the World*, p. 27. Notably, for Schmemmann, in a way, the liturgy starts before the liturgy, for this procession begins when Christians leave their homes on Sunday morning, starting the symbolic journey from the present life into the life of the Kingdom, gathered by the Holy Spirit in the *synaxis* of Christ’s communal body. According to Schmemmann in this journey ‘a sacramental act is already taking place’ for the believers ‘are on their way to *constitute the Church*’.

proclamation of the Word – the announcement that He has come in their midst.⁴³ Therefore, according to Schmemmann, the proclamation of the Word ‘is a sacramental life *par excellence*’ which, on the one hand, ‘transforms the words of the Gospel into the Word of God and the manifestation of the Kingdom’, and on the other hand, transforms humanity into a ‘receptacle of the Word’, and a consecrated sanctuary of the Spirit on earth.⁴⁴ As the Eucharist, so also the proclamation of the Word is, therefore, an in-Spirit-ed eschatological event. It is not accidental, therefore, that in the Divine Liturgy both are preceded by *epicletic* prayers. The Words is *proclaimed, heard and received* in the Spirit – a conviction articulated in the prayer for illumination which precedes the Gospel’s reading.⁴⁵ As Schmemmann points out, within the liturgy of the Word, this prayer occupies the same place corresponding to the *epiclesis* has in the Eucharistic prayer.⁴⁶ He states that, like the consecration of the gifts, ‘*understanding and acceptance*’ of the Word depends not simply on the desire of the hearer but on the ‘sacramental transformation’ of ‘the eyes’ of one’s mind – it depends ‘on the coming of the Holy Spirit’⁴⁷ who carries the believers into heavenly places and opens their eyes to *see* the Lord’s arrival in the Gospel, empowering them to embrace His transformational presence by becoming flesh in their lives. In light of this assertion, Schmemmann uplifts the centrality of the sermon as a pneumatic

⁴³ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), p. 71. Here Schmemmann echoes Origen’s affirmation that there are two communions in the Divine Liturgy – the first, with the Word of God; the second, with the Body and the Blood. See ‘The Liturgical Renewal and the Orthodox Church’, p. 108. See, for example, Origen’s *Homily 16 on Numbers* (9:2). In both cases it is a communion with Christ, the eternally coming to us incarnate Word, meeting us in the liturgical synaxis of His communal body. *For the Life of the World*, p. 33.

⁴⁴ *For the Life of the World*, p. 33.

⁴⁵ The celebrant petitions God to send (or ‘shine’) down the pure light of His divine knowledge and open the eyes of the minds of the hearers, granting them understanding and the ability (not just to comprehend but also) to embody what is proclaimed, living ‘spiritual life’ pleasing to God. The prayer in the Divien Liturgy of St John Chrysostom reads: ‘Shine in our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our mind that we may comprehend the proclamations of Your Gospel. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments so that, having trampled down all carnal desires, we may lead a spiritual life, both thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the illumination of our souls and bodies, and to You we offer up glory, together with Your Father, Who is without beginning, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.’ (The full text of the liturgy is available at <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-divine-liturgy-of-saint-john-chrysostom>)

⁴⁶ *The Eucharist*, p. 76.

⁴⁷ *The Eucharist*, p. 76.

liturgical act⁴⁸ – as a ‘witness of the hearing, reception and understanding of the Word. Here we find Schmemmann’s striking definition of the homily as ‘the eternal self-witness of the Holy Spirit, who lives in the Church and guides her into all the truth (Jn 16:13)’.⁴⁹

Further, highlighting the vital theological connection between sacrament and mission, Schmemmann contemplates the extroverted missionary orientation of the Eucharist in reflecting upon the three liturgical movements of its celebration. It starts with a movement of ascent as the church is carried by the Spirit into heaven in ‘its entrance into the new eon’.⁵⁰ The church experiences the fullness of the life of the community of the Trinity at the table of the Lord, and being filled and illumined by the divine presence she is called to descend back to earth. This second movement of descent is part of her missiological identity, for unless the church reenters this world there will not be ‘heaven on earth’. Yet, the church returns on earth for the sake of the world and her final liturgical movement is from the interiority of the temple to the exteriority of all the world – even to its ‘utmost’ parts – the farthest, the darkest, the most different from us. Therefore, states Schmemmann, ‘the Eucharist transforms the church into what it is, transforms it into mission’.⁵¹ In fulfilling her calling, the church enters the cosmos as Christ’s living communal body, luminous with the presence of the Word, permeated with the life the Spirit – a consecrated community of royal priests where no one is unordained for the life-embodied proclamation of the Gospel in which the Word breaks and gives itself as the bread of heaven for the life of the world.

Liturgy as a Vision of the Beautiful: The Gift of Pneumatological Liturgical Aesthetics

⁴⁸ *The Eucharist*, p. 76.

⁴⁹ *The Eucharist*, pp. 76-77.

⁵⁰ Alexander Schmemmann, ‘The Missionary Imperative’, ‘The Missionary Imperative’, pp. 209-216 in *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1979), p. 200.

⁵¹ Alexander Schmemmann, ‘The Missionary Imperative’, p. 200.

The extraordinary, breath-taking beauty of the Orthodox liturgy, as multi-sensory experience of ‘heaven on earth’, has ‘often been denounced as unnecessary and even sinful’ extravagance. Schmemmann’s famous response to this accusation articulates one of the essential aspects of Orthodox worship. He states that ‘Beauty is never “necessary”, “functional” or “useful”’ – creating beauty in expectation of the loved one is itself an act of love.⁵² Over the past 100 years, the dynamic aesthetics of Pentecostal liturgical forms in the West have drifted away from the plain pragmatism and austerity of their Protestant roots. Pentecostal worship has become extravagant in its own way, yet the theological articulation of its undergirding pneumatology of aesthetics and their consequences for Christian formation is still a work in progress.⁵³ Here the insights of Eastern Orthodox theology can contribute some conceptual tools and frameworks toward the development of authentically pneumatological Pentecostal liturgical aesthetics of Christofomation.

Echoing John Meyendorff, one can think of Eastern Orthodox Theology as a vision of the Triune God, and of the Orthodox liturgy as the vehicle for the believers’ incorporation, through the Spirit’s agency, into that vision.⁵⁴ The liturgy inscribes this vision upon the believers, forming and shaping them (mind, heart and body/thoughts, affections, actions) into what they behold in the Spirit – the Trinitarian communal life as *the* vision of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. Therefore, the liturgy is

⁵² Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, pp. 21-30.

⁵³ Steven Felix-Jäger has emerged as the most notable contributor to the development of a Pentecostal theology of aesthetics through a pneumatological lens. See, for example, his monograph *The Spirit of the Arts: Towards a Pneumatological Aesthetics of Renewal* (Switzerland: Palgrave Mccmillan, 2017). The author challenges and stretches Pentecostals’ traditional focus in worship on music and orality by offering a compelling reflection on the significance of liturgical dance and architecture for the communal life within the broader theological framework of the Spirit’s ‘universal outpouring motif’ (pp. 205-6).

⁵⁴ John Meyendorff describes Orthodox theology ‘as internal vision, which requires personal, ascetic effort’. It requires not only an individual, but also a communal effort, ‘an effort made within the community of saints.’ Doing Theology in an Eastern Orthodox Perspective’, pp. 79-96 in *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader* (ed. Daniel B. Clendenin; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), p. 87.

the consecrated *synaxis*⁵⁵ of time and space in which the Spirit makes *lex orandi* into *lex corporalis*, inscribing our faith (*lex credendi*) on our very being in virtually inerasable ways.⁵⁶

If the liturgy engraves the believers with what it reveals to them, then it is not just an icon of what they are to become but also the iconographic process itself, in which the Spirit (the great iconographer) makes them living icons of Christ⁵⁷ so that the world can behold the One Who is truly human and (by mirroring Him) become re-humanized. This vision points to the pneumatic, participatory, communal (and eschatological) reality of truth, goodness and beauty as harmonious life in the Spirit with the other and the different – the life of the Kingdom conceived by the Spirit’s indwelling presence within redeemed humanity. It also illuminates the theological synthesis between dogmatics, ethics and aesthetics within the liturgy as a choreographed theology, a Christoforming communal dance in and with the Spirit. Indeed, this is also the vision of the Holy, articulating truth, goodness and beauty as love for the other. As Bishop Maxim Vasilijevic asserts, God’s mandate for humanity issued in the summoning of Lev. 11.44-45 – ‘Be holy, for I am holy’ – is ‘the most perfect invitation...because it enables the acquisition of true hypostatic existence for every participant’.⁵⁸ This is an invitation to partake of and image the Triune life as the freedom to be oneself in communion with other/s through the Spirit’s sanctifying movement of nurturing and sustaining diversity in the unity of love. The liturgy ‘re-trains’ the believers’ affections, teaching them to love and be loved

⁵⁵ Bishop Maxim Vasilijevic discusses the Divine Liturgy as the representative icon of the synaxis of time – past, present and future – in the mystery of Christ. See *History, Truth, Holiness: Studies in Orthodoxy and Epistemology* (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2011), p. 166.

⁵⁶ Edward Foley, ‘Re-attaching Tongue to Body: The Aesthetics of Liturgical Performance’, pp. 99-113 in Clare V. Johnson, ed., *Ars Liturgiae: Worship, Aesthetics and Praxis – Essays in Honor of Nathan D. Mitchell* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2003), pp. 105-106. James K. A Smith articulates the foundations of liturgical anthropology as residing in the understanding of human beings as liturgical, sacramental, story-telling and story-incorporated animals, and builds the case for perceiving liturgies ‘as compressed, repeated, performed narratives that, over time, conscript us into the stories they “tell”, by showing, by performing.’ *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2013), p. 109.

⁵⁷ Bishop Maxim Vasilijevic describes the Church in terms of the Eucharistic gathering of living icons. *History, Truth, Holiness*, p. xxi.

⁵⁸ Bishop Maxim Vasilijevic, *History, Truth, Holiness*, p. 3.

rightly. It molds them into the likeness of the Lover of humanity and the world (Jn 3.16), making them lovers of God and neighbor, and of all creation. Indeed, they become ‘people in love’ (and a living extension of God as love – of the active, creative, generous spaciousness and unconditional hospitality of divine love). Embodying this love, transfigures the totality of one’s life into an act of worship to the Creator, making it *ars liturgica* and, therefore, *ars amoria*.⁵⁹ Thus, being liturgical/worshiping creatures, the believers perform the liturgy as the inspired art of true love and live its Christoforming *telos* in their daily lives as incarnate love – love as self-giving for the life and flourishing of others – love as the essential, embodied form of holiness – living out what is true, good and beautiful *with* and *for* others.

If in worship the believers become what they behold, then both the iconic representation of ‘the great cloud of witness’ (in image and story – iconography and hagiography) as well as the living icons who surround them are essential for the cultivation of their understanding of truth, goodness and beauty. Eastern Orthodox iconography teaches the beholder to discern the rapturous beauty of the body of Christ with its radical racial, ethnic, gender, age, class inclusivity as visible celebration of in-Spirit-ed diversity in unity. The iconography brings before one’s eyes the human face of the holy (always reflective of the paradigmatic holy face – or *the Face of the Holy One* itself – the face of Christ) which appears in this unavoidable summoning by *the Face* (into this ‘face to face’ encounter with the divine face inscribed upon humanity) in all skin-colors, in different ethnic attires, as both male and female, as young and old, rich and poor. In a world plagued by escalating anxiety at the sight of the other (fueled by the dehumanizing, iconoclastic forces of racism, sexism and xenophobia), this vision teaches the beholders that the segregation or marginalization of the racial, ethnic, gender other (as well as of the handicap, the homeless, the poor) – their exclusion from the Church, as the gathering

⁵⁹ See Gilbert Ostdiek’s inspiring essay, ‘Let the Poet Speak’, pp. 115-133 in Clare V. Johnson, ed., *Ars Liturgiae: Worship, Aesthetics and Praxis – Essays in Honor of Nathan D. Mitchell* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2003).

of living icons, (or of the universal human community created to become a living icon of the triune God) is, indeed, a form of iconoclasm – a violence against the bearer of the divine face, against the temple of God on earth. In contrast, love, as the ultimate act of freedom, (in the words of Hannah Arendt) has the capacity to ‘insert a new world into the existing world’⁶⁰ – a world of fusion of the self with the other, a world in which the good is what we have in common – the common good. We know this love as the beginning and end of creation – the love that hosts the world, sustaining its very breath in unconditional hospitality towards the other; that same love that through the Spirit finds residence within humanity and renews the world, carving space for the other, refusing to see one’s wellbeing and future without them. Thus, John exclaims with confidence, ‘God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him’ (1 Jn 4.15); we are capable of this love ‘because He first loved us’ (v. 19).

As James K. A. Smith points out, the Eucharist hallows and sanctifies not only nature brought forth as grain and grapes but human creative productivity, presented as bread and wine.⁶¹ Bartholomew I, Patriarch of Constantinople, asserts that, ‘Beauty is a call, beyond the here and now, to the original principle and purpose of the world.’⁶² Therefore, the liturgy reveals that not only creation itself but also human creativity is intended as a divinely-ordained means of communion with the Creator – as prayer and offering to God, as act of worship. The church’s liturgical anamnesis commits to the Spirit what is still being perfected in order for it to be enabled to articulate perfection. The Spirit makes human culture the medium of this articulation as the encounter with the divine mystery takes the ordinary and the mundane and transfigures it into an extraordinary experience of heaven on earth. Thus, the divine presence transforms music into an assent to the throne of God

⁶⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 242.

⁶¹ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* ((Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2009), p. 199.

⁶² Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch, *Encountering the Mystery* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), p. 28.

where the community of faith joins the angelic choirs in exultation and adoration of the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7.9). It unveils the icons and frescoes of the saints (the church victorious) as windows to heaven and glimpses of ‘the great cloud of witnesses’ (Heb. 12.1) that surrounds us as we join the echo of their voices over the span of two millennia in proclamation of the core of our faith: ‘We have seen the Resurrection of Christ’⁶³ (and now He lives in us as we live in Him). The nearness of the Spirit turns bricks and mortar into a sanctuary, bread and wine into an eschatological feast, inspired speech into spiritual food, and the community of faith into a living icon/vision of the trinitarian proto-communal life. The Spirit takes what is and makes it what is to come before the spiritual eyes of the beholder who sees the advent of the eschaton in the midst of the present until the now is transfigured into its future form. Thus, the epiclesis of the divine presence (the invocation of the Holy Spirit) is a conditioning for a new way of seeing the world – a new worldview as an outcome of liturgical (trans-)formation.⁶⁴ The believers’ redeemed vision of the world emerges through beholding the vision of God. They see the world bathed in the brilliant light of Mt. Tabor’s transfigured and transfiguring Christ and discern it as a gift of grace, beauty and goodness that reflects the glory of God. Such a vision mandates a different way of relating to the world – not as to a disposable commodity but as to a sacrament of communal transformation from glory to glory into the likeness of God. Such a vision makes the life of the Trinity the aesthetic and ethical/‘social program’ of humanity⁶⁵ and the Spirit crafts its living icon (the Church) through the Christoforming movement of the liturgy so that the world can behold the Community of the Beautiful.

⁶³ An ancient Christian chant that is still proclaimed in Orthodox liturgy during every service of matins and for forty days after Easter. Bartholomew I, *Encountering the Mystery*, p. 35.

⁶⁴ For a great articulation of the dialectic of the movement from worship/liturgy to worldview see James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2009), pp. 133-154.

⁶⁵ Bartholomew I, *Encountering the Mystery*, p. 133. As Patriarch Bartholomew states, ‘Every form of community – the work-place, the school, the city, even a nation – has as its vocation to become, each in its own way, a living icon of the Trinity. Nations are called to be transparent to one another, just as the three persons of the Trinity are transparent to one another. Such is surely part of the role of religion in a changing world – namely, to promote freedom among human beings as the basis of encounter and communion.’

Conclusion: The Cosmology of the Eucharist and the Trans-epochal Body of Christ

Alexander Schmemmann articulates the Eucharist as all-permeating cosmic ‘joy’. It is ‘the entire creation – its matter and its time, its sounds and colors, its words and its silence – that praises and worships God, and in this praise becomes again itself: the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity, the sacrament of the new creation’.⁶⁶ George Theokritoff offers a breathtaking vision of the Eucharist’s cosmic scope by provoking the reader to see it in the Spirit’s epicletic omnipresence, depicting the participation of the non-anthropocentric creation as co-celebrant alongside (in communion with) redeemed humanity. Describing the complex bio-chemical processes that have taken place in the preparation of the elements (joined by the askesis of human labor), the author strikingly depicts the beginning of the Eucharist’s procession not as starting in the home (with humanity’s journeying to the church building, as suggested by Schmemmann), but ‘in Creation – “*In the beginning.*”’⁶⁷ Teokritoff states:

In the Eucharist we offer in this piece of bread and in this cup of wine, the entire Cosmos and every living creature including ourselves – everything from the tiniest particles of matter to the farthest reaches of space, as well as from the fruits of human labor in all places and all times. We thus come to see that the Eucharist is central to the Cosmos. And it is the Eucharist that enables us to recognize more clearly that the Cosmos is transparent to Christ, who shines through all matter.⁶⁸

In/through the Spirit, the Eucharist joins together in one worshipping community not only the anthropic and non-anthropocentric creation, but also heaven and earth – the visible and the invisible creation. The liturgy of the Church celebrates this union as its very essence and self-expression. Therefore, the liturgical worship of the community of faith is not only a portal to heaven but a merging

⁶⁶ Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and Spirit*, p. 118.

⁶⁷ George Theokritoff, ‘The Cosmology of the Eucharist’, pp. 131-135 in eds. John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz, *Toward and Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013).

⁶⁸ George Theokritoff, ‘The Cosmology of the Eucharist’, pp. 133-134.

of the celestial and earthly celebration of God's nearness. Heaven's invisible host joins redeemed humanity around the altar – the table of the Lord. The 'great cloud of witnesses' (Heb. 12.1) surrounds the worshiping congregation, re-sensitized to the nearness of eternity and enlivened with its life – the life of the Spirit where Christ is all in all.