

2016

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MATERIALITY, BEAUTY, AND SPACE: THE EASTERN TRADITIONS AS A RESSOURCEMENT FOR PENTECOSTAL WORSHIP AND THE ARTS

History Interest Group

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Presented at the 45th Annual Meeting of the Society of Pentecostal Studies

I am wounded in my heart. Your fervor made me melt, your love changed me, O Master; I am a prisoner of your love. Let me be filled with your flesh; let me be satiated with your life-giving and deifying blood; let me have enjoyment of your good things; let me be filled with the delights of your Godhead! Make me worthy to meet you, when you come in glory, caught up in the air in the clouds with all your chosen ones, as I hymn and worship and glorify you with thanksgiving and confession, together with your Father without beginning and your all-holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now, and forever, and to the ages of ages.

Prayer said before receiving Communion, attributed to John of Damascus¹

INTRODUCTION

In my late high school and early college years I became closer to my friend, Theodore Pappas, and spent more time around his Orthodox family. While outwardly their piety and church life seemed very different from what we practiced at the newly founded, charismatic “New Testament Church” I attended, at the same time, somehow, I felt there was some considerable deep structure commonality. In retrospect, I can see that their more communal, mystical, and experiential approach to the faith embraced elements that were important to us as well.

¹ Translation by Fr. Ephrem Lash, in Andrew Louth, *John of Damascus: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 251.

It turns out Pentecostals have reason to feel some affinity with the more Eastern traditions.² In his groundbreaking comparison of Pentecostal and Orthodox approaches to transformation in Christ, Edmund Rybarczyk helpfully suggests that many of the apparent differences between the two traditions are to a great extent a result of their very different “meta-contexts.”³ When taking these contexts into account, with their more holistic gospels, emphasis on experience and the power of worship, embrace of super-rational and mystical dimensions, and concern with transformation unto holiness, Pentecostal churches exhibit significant affinities with the ancient churches of the East. Rybarczyk notes that many of these shared values and visions came into Pentecostalism via the Holiness movement, through the “sieve” of John Wesley who, according to Rybarczyk, not only knew the Greek fathers but preferred them to those of the West.⁴

Since the publication of Rybarczyk’s monograph a number of Pentecostal leaders and scholars have begun to encourage Pentecostal interaction with the Eastern Christian witness.⁵ Some have begun to study the Eastern tradition in greater depth⁶ while others have published

² Fr. Daniel MacKay...You can certainly keep the dichotomy of East-West; but, do be aware that there are those who disagree with the presentation of the Orthodox church as “Eastern,” even though this has been a common designation and the Latin-Greek dichotomy easily corresponds with West-East. The last vestige of the Orthodox Church in the West was actually in the Far West, holding on in Ireland for a period of time after the Schism. Others point to the effect of various diasporas, which populated the world with Orthodox. This issue really seems to come up when one is considering ecclesially, what is “the Church”? I would keep it here, this is more food for thought for later.

³ E. Rybarczyk, *Beyond Salvation: Eastern Orthodoxy and Classical Pentecostalism: On Becoming Like Christ* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004), 324-326.

⁴ Rybarczyk, *Beyond Salvation*, 10. For a comparison of several Wesleyan scholars’ views on Wesley’s precise knowledge and use of the Eastern fathers see Michael J. Christensen, “John Wesley: Christian Perfection as Faith-Filled with the Energy of Love”, in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. M. Christensen and J.A. Wittung (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 219-229.

⁵ C.M. Robeck foreward to Rybarczyk, *Beyond Salvation*, xx; Dale Coulter, “Surprised by Sacraments”, at <http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2013/11/surprised-by-sacraments>.

⁶ Eric Leigh Lopez, “Maximus the Confessor and the Trinity: The Early Works” (PhD Dissertation, Durham University, 2014); Loren Kerns, *Platonic and Stoic Passions in Philo of Alexandria* (Faculty Publications, George Fox Evangelical Seminary, 2013), digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gfes/6/. Scott Ables, “Did John of Damascus Modify His Sources in the *De fide orthodoxa*?” *Studia Patristica* 68/16 (2013): 355-361.

works which explore various aspects of the two traditions.⁷ But what about worship and the arts in the Spirit? Are there insights which the older church tradition can provide for Pentecostals as they find their way into richer expressions of their worship vision and practice?

Since liturgical worship is a central and highly developed aspect of Orthodox Church life and practice, this paper will focus specifically on the elements of materiality, beauty, and space in the tradition and worship life of the Eastern churches. To begin with, using the writings of Maximus the Confessor (d.662), a compendium of the early Eastern tradition and a foundational bridge into the full development of Byzantine theology, I will briefly sketch out some cosmological and soteriological accents which provide a context for the church's views on materiality, beauty, and space. I will then move on to trace the refinement of these perspectives and enfranchisement into the dogmatic tradition. After a sampling of resulting Orthodox vision and practice with respect to our three foci, I will suggest some possible ways the witness of the Eastern churches might serve as a confirming and enriching resource for the further development of Pentecostal worship and the arts in the Spirit.

COSMOLOGICAL AND SOTERIOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The vision Maximus received from the fathers and cared for affirmed that God created the universe as one.⁸ But it is a unity comprised of an almost inconceivable, beautiful and

⁷ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, "The Ecumenical Potential of Theosis: Emerging Convergence Between Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, and Pentecostal Soteriologies" *Sobernost/Eastern Churches Review* 23, no.2 (2002): 45-77; Daniela C. Augustine. *Pentecost, Hospitality, and Transfiguration: Toward a Spirit-inspired Vision of Social Transformation* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012).

⁸ For two contemporary, authoritative explications of Orthodox vision and practice, completely consistent with the Maximian synthesis, see Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, Revised edition (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996) and Dumitru Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar*. Trans. Archimandrite Jerome (Newville) and Otila Kloos (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Press, 2002). Pentecostal scholars might be interested to know that Jurgen Moltmann mentions Staniloae as being particularly helpful to him in his appropriation of Orthodox tradition for a renewed Trinitarian theology in the West. Jurgen Moltmann, *A Broad Place: An Autobiography*. Trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 87, 291.

generative diversity.⁹ The profound simultaneous union and distinction in the universe mirrors the same simultaneous union and distinction, “without confusion,” “without change,” “without division,” and “without separation” found within the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, even as it is affirmed in the first seven great Ecumenical Councils of the Church.¹⁰

While there is a transcendent chasm between the created and uncreated (Ie. The Holy Trinity) realms, at the same time the Divine Logos intimately interpenetrates the creation through His presence in the *logoi* of being.¹¹ Pre-existing as potentialities in God but brought into being at the appropriate time by the Creator, the *logoi* are particular expressions of the Divine Logos variously embodied in each entity of the creation. Every creature has its particular *logoi* of being, its fundamental character and purpose. Creatures of all kinds, human beings, animals, insects, plants, minerals and so forth, even entities such as the Scriptures, the commandments, or the virtues, have not only their presenting, objective surface but also an underlying *logoi* of being which comprises their true nature, principle and meaning.¹² Subsisting as parts of the whole, the *logoi* are not only held together in God but are also oriented toward God, so that when we

⁹ *Mystagogy*, 1. PG 91: 664D-665C. See *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*. Trans. George Berthold (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 186-187.

¹⁰ Melchisedec Toronnen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). The phrases in quotation marks, “without confusion” and so forth, are key qualifiers for the nature of the ineffable hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Christ set forth in the definition of the Council of Chalcedon (451). Balthasar calls this simultaneous union and distinction Maximus’ “Chalcedonian logic” and sees him embracing it as a “fundamental law of metaphysics”, “which discovers the formal structure of all created being”. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*. Trans. Brian E. Daley, S.J. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2003), 65-70.

¹¹ Maximus’ fullest discussion of the *logoi* appears in Ambiguum 7, PG 1077C-1080D. See Maximus the Confessor, *On the Difficulties of the Church Fathers: The Ambiguum*, volume 1. Trans. Nicholas Constas (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), 95-99, or Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*. Trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 54-58. For a concise tracing of the development of the doctrine from Plato to Maximus, see David Bradshaw, “The Logos of Being in Greek Patristic Thought”, in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, edit. John Cryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 9-22.

¹² Torstein Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 228.

perceive and encounter not just the presenting surface of another entity but its true *logos*, we are drawn toward God, in whom we find ourselves and our true unity with one another.

Within this universe, God has given the human being a place and a role. Specially related to God, oriented to God, and dependent upon God, each person is privileged to enjoy the goodness and beauty bestowed by God's providence and to work with God to preserve the co-creative unity-in-diversity of the cosmos.¹³

Unfortunately, instead of moving toward God, to whom they are oriented and upon whom they are dependent, and accepting and trusting natural limitations, human beings moved away from God and crossed those natural boundaries. As a result, they were affected by the corruption of death. Their natural desires became disordered and their perception distorted. They were no longer able to fully enjoy all they were being given, and they were unable to perform their role. Instead of uniting that which is divided, they divide what is united. What's more, humanity cannot achieve its reintegration without help from the uncreated realm.¹⁴

Far from being a mere reaction to the fragmentation created by humankind's downward movement in the Garden, the Incarnation has existed before the foundations of the world as an expression of the Mystery of the universe. Nevertheless, through its manifestation the unmoved Logos has accomplished for humanity and the creation what it could not accomplish for itself. By joining Himself to humanity and creation and divinely living a human life, Christ has

¹³ For humankind as a "microcosmos" which contains within itself the poles of created and uncreated, rational and sensible, heaven and earth, paradise and the inhabited world (*oikumene*), and male and female, and is thus able to work with God to mediate between them, see Maximus, *Ambiguum* 41, PG 91:1304-1305A in Maximus the Confessor, *Difficulties of the Church Fathers: The Ambiguum*. Vol. II. Trans. Nicholas Constatas (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), 102-105, or in Louth trans. *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), 156-57.

¹⁴ Epistle 2, PG 396D-397B in Louth trans., *Maximus the Confessor*, 87.

recapitulated or “reinstated” the natures and performed the initial mediations humankind was unable to perform.¹⁵

The “reset” is received through faith and baptism, and the receiving of the Spirit through Chrismation.¹⁶ But in order to fully participate in its true nature and purpose, following a three staged model of spiritual development, the soul must journey out of its disorder and distortion into clarity, and its ultimate fulfillment of transfigured deification in God.¹⁷ Stage one is that of *praktike*, where through following the commandments and virtues, and embracing spiritual practice in community, including liturgical worship, the soul gradually becomes appropriately detached from disordered passions and settled in stability (*apatheia*).¹⁸ From this place of stability it can move into the second stage, *physike*, the contemplation of the *logoi* of all beings. As the soul makes contact with these true *logoi*, it is drawn toward God and moves into the third phase of *theologike mystike*, a union with God beyond both words and conceptual knowledge, wherein the soul is becoming transfigured in love.¹⁹ This is why contemporary artist and Russian Orthodox theologian, Paul Evdokimov, referring to Basil’s comments on “the beauty of the hidden poetic *logoi* of the universe,” is able to say “the art of contemplation is at the heart of

¹⁵ “Through himself he has, in accordance with nature, united the fragments of the universal nature of all, manifesting the universal *logoi* that have come forth from the particulars, by which the union of the divided naturally comes about, and thus he fulfils the great purpose of God the Father, to ‘recapitulate everything both in heaven and earth in himself’ (Eph.1:10). Thus he divinely recapitulates the universe in himself, showing that the whole creation exists as one, like another human being, completed by the gathering together of its parts with one another in itself and inclined towards itself by the whole of its existence.” *Ambig.* 41, PG 91: 1308D; 1312AB. Trans. Louth, *Maximus*, 159-160.

¹⁶ Maximus, *Centuries on Knowledge*, I.87 in Berthold trans., *Maximus Confessor*, 145.

¹⁷ For a contemporary Orthodox treatment of the three stage development model, see Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 105-128; Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality*, 69-73.

¹⁸ Maximus describes *apatheia* as “a peaceful state of the soul in which it becomes resistant to vice.” *Centuries on Love*, I.36, in Berthold trans., *Maximus Confessor*, 39.

¹⁹ The phases are not to be taken as a strictly linear progress, but rather interpenetrating one another in a cyclical and spiraling manner. For examples in Maximus see *Centuries on Love*, I.86 and *Centuries on Knowledge* I.37-39, 51-56, and II.8 in Berthold trans., *Maximus Confessor*.

the father's cosmology: The vision of the archetypal *logoi*, or the thoughts of God concerning beings and things, builds up a grandiose visual theology, an iconosophy."²⁰

This brief sketch of some of the more Eastern cosmological and soteriological accents is perhaps enough to see that they provide a context for a positive evaluation of the material world, seeing it not as a mere object, but as a transparent bearer of the sacred, a window into the transcendent logos and a connection with the Divine and its transfiguring power. Working from this context, in the next section I will trace the further clarification of these understandings and their placement within the dogmatic tradition of the Church.

ICONOGRAPHIC MATERIALITY: FORMATION OF THE DOGMATIC TRADITION

Although scholars have often read the early church fathers as being opposed to religious pictorial art, citing the work of Mary Charles Murray, Andrew Louth contends that on closer examination the opposition was to idolatry and not religious imagery as such.²¹ On the basis then of numerous archeological finds, such as the richly decorated church and synagogue at Dura Europos, dated no later than 256, and the writings of the church fathers, Louth asserts that religious pictorial imagery was most likely used in various Christian communities from very early on. Nevertheless, he affirms that it is probable that the use of such imagery grew to play a more prominent role over time, especially in the East. The sixth century in particular saw an increase in the use of icons, with the emergence of claims for wonder-working images and the

²⁰ Paul Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty*. Trans. Fr. Steven Bingham (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood, 1990), 12.

²¹ Andrew Louth, *John of Damascus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 195. Mary Charles Murray, "Art in the Early Church" *Journal of Theological Studies*, no.28 (1977), 504-45. In his criticism of the decrees of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicea (787), John Calvin cites Canon 36 of the Council of Elvira (c.305): "It is decreed that there shall be no pictures in churches, that what is revered or adored be not depicted on the walls." But this Canon is exceptional and seems likely to be more cautionary than ecumenically definitive. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Volume I. Trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 106.

attribution of protective power to some icons, such as the icon of the Virgin, which in 626 was purported to have saved Constantinople from an Avar-Persian attack.²²

This entire period of history was for the Eastern Empire, centered in Constantinople, one of insecurity, hostile attacks, and shrinking borders. The emperor Heraclius defeated the Persians in 629, also at that time recovering the true Cross. But within several years of Muhammad's death in 632 in Arabia, Islamic Arab armies were rapidly making conquests, which took the Eastern Empire completely by surprise. Damascus fell in 635, the surrender said to have been negotiated by John of Damascus' grandfather, the chief fiscal administrator of the city.²³ Jerusalem was surrendered to the Arabs by Maximus' friend and mentor Bishop Sophronius in 638 and the great city of Alexandria was taken in 642. In the 640s, the Arabs defeated the Persians and from there continued their march around the northern coast of Africa, finally arriving in Spain in 717. And in the meantime, although they did not succeed in breaching the city either time, the invading Arabs – in 674-678 and 717-718 – twice got to the very gates of Constantinople.

In such a climate, it was natural for people to wonder whether the success of the Islamic Arabs was at least partly due to their avoidance of idolatry through a prohibition of representational art in worship.²⁴ In this context a question pressed itself in a fresh way: Is it appropriate for Christians to depict Christ, Mary the Mother of God, saints, and holy events in images and use them in life and worship? Is it appropriate to use icons in worship? The questions concerned not just panel icons (as in current art-historical usage), but mosaics, frescoes, manuscript illustrations, images woven into cloth, engraved in metal, carved in wood, statues and

²² Louth, *John of Damascus*, 195-196.

²³ Eutychios, *Annals*, 278-280, cited in Louth, *John of Damascus*, 5.

²⁴ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Viking, 2010), 442.

more.²⁵ Iconoclasts (literally, “Image smashers”) said no. Such veneration was idolatry, which is explicitly forbidden by the Law of Moses:

“I am the Lord your God...you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol (Gk. *eidolon*), whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them (*proskuneseis*) or worship them (*latreuseis*); for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

Exodus 20:2-6 (NRSV)

Iconodules, or “image venerators,” argued differently. What the Law of Moses prohibited was the worship of foreign idols, not an appropriate use of images as such. This is why the churches have always been free to appropriately use them in their worship life.

In 626 Byzantine Emperor Leo III issued a ban on Christian religious imagery and its veneration, inaugurating the policy of iconoclasm.²⁶ When a second edict was issued in 630, and the Patriarch Germanos refused to endorse it, he was deposed and sent into exile for the rest of his life.²⁷

It was during this time that the great John of Damascus, safely ensconced in his Palestinian monastery outside the borders of the empire, in his three volume work, *On the Divine Images*, wrote what were to become the enduring foundational arguments for the Church’s

²⁵ Louth, *John of Damascus*, 194-195.

²⁶ Neither of Leo’s bans survive; however the reactions of Patriarch Germanos and John make it clear that the stated reason for the edicts was that the veneration of icons was considered to be idolatry. Louth, *John of Damascus*, 200.

²⁷ Dale Irvin and Scott Sundquist claim that opposition to icons came primarily from the emperor and the military, while veneration remained popular among the people. Dale T. Irvin and Scott Sundquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, Volume I: From Earliest Christianity to 1453. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 362. Both Irvin and Sundquist (361) and MacCulloch, *Christianity*, (445) note that use of icons was especially prevalent among nuns and monks, and in homes, where often mothers and grandmothers would exercise their customary household power to preserve the icons, bringing questions of social power and gender into the picture of the controversy. In this regard we might also note that it will be in fact, two female imperial leaders, Irene in 787 and Theodora in 843, who act to officially preserve the veneration of icons.

formal, dogmatic affirmation of the enchanted iconographic dignity of the material world. We can briefly enumerate several of his main arguments:

1. Exodus 20:4 is referring to the worship of pagan idols, not to an appropriate veneration of images (*eikon*). After citing several passages in Exodus and Deuteronomy where Moses elaborates on the concern behind the command, John summarizes, “You see that the single purpose of this (commandment) is that one should not worship, or offer the veneration of worship, to creation instead of the Creator, but only to the One who fashioned all.” (*Imag.* I.6; cf. II.8; III.7)²⁸
2. There is a difference between venerating images and worshiping the living God. John makes a distinction between the act of veneration (*proskunesis*), which is appropriate to images, and worship (*latreia*) which belongs to God alone (*Imag.*I.14). As Andrew Louth points out, the Greek word *proskunesis* has a very concrete meaning of bowing down or even prostrating oneself. Its etymology possibly suggests touching with the mouth or lips.²⁹ And indeed when exploring the dimensions of proskunetic veneration in the Old Testament, John shows that it can actually be quite deep and intense, including bowing and kissing. Yet, while it may share physical acts with it, it is never the same as the worship of *latreia*, which belongs to God alone.
3. When we venerate or pay respect to an image, we are paying respect not to the mere image itself, but to what lies behind it, that is, its prototype. Using an example taken from Basil the Great, John points out that an image of the Emperor does not possess a glory in

²⁸ All quotations are taken from John of Damascus, *On the Holy Images*. Trans. Andrew Louth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003).

²⁹ Louth, *John of Damascus*, 201. Cf. The Letter of the Synod of Nicea II to the Emperor and Empress: “For *kunein* in the old Greek tongue signifies both ‘to salute’ and ‘to kiss’. And the preposition *pros* gives the additional idea of strong desire towards the subject.” In *NPNF*, Volume XIV, 572.

and of itself. Its importance derives from that which it is imaging forth. It follows that the honor, respect, and dignity of images of all kinds derives from the fact that they are created by God and are suffused with God's energy and grace. Louth notes this means,

“...all true veneration is an entailment of that worship which is due to God alone. It is not just that veneration as worship and veneration as honour are different; for John the latter is implicit in the former. For all honour derives from the one we worship (“the One naturally (ie by nature) worthy of veneration”): both the authentic honour or worth of those who are his friends, the saints, and the honour we owe kings and rulers who are set over us, does not depend on their intrinsic worth, but their place in God's providential ordering of the world (*Imag.* III.41). Veneration is our response to God's *philanthropia*, expressed both in providence and in the divine love manifest in the Incarnation and the Redemption: it is an expression of wonder, of thanksgiving, of hope based in need, of repentance and confession (*Imag.* III.29-32), all ultimately given meaning in that worship we owe to God alone.”³⁰

4. God has created and placed within His creation all kinds of images. He himself first created images when he created humankind in His own image. In the Old Testament all kinds of images and signs are ordained and used, as is the case in the New Testament as well, including the bread and the wine, and preeminently God's Son, Jesus Christ (Col.1:15). And in the material universe there are layers upon layers of all kinds of signs, which manifest and display hidden realities, while simultaneously leading us to them (*Imag.*III.17).
5. The Emperor does not have the right to determine dogma for the Church, it is “piracy” (*Imag.* II.12).
6. Although it is impossible to depict the nature of the formless and invisible God, now that God has been seen in the flesh, it is not only possible but necessary:

“Of old, God the incorporeal and formless was never depicted, but now that God has been seen in the flesh and has associated with humankind, I depict what I have seen of God. I do not venerate matter, I venerate the fashioner of matter, who became matter for my sake and accepted to dwell in matter and through matter worked my salvation, and I

³⁰ Louth, *John of Damascus*, 215.

will not cease reverencing matter, through which my salvation was worked. I do not reverence as God –far from it; how can that which came to be from nothing be God? If the body of God has become God unchangeably through the hypostatic union, what gives anointing remains, and what was by nature flesh animated with a rational and intellectual soul is formed, it is not uncreated. Therefore I reverence the rest of matter and hold in respect that through which my salvation came, because it is filled with divine energy and grace.”

On the Divine Images, I.16 (cf. II.14)

The Incarnation then, by associating with, embracing and indeed assuming material being has confirmed the sacred nature of matter. In the Person of Jesus Christ, God has unchangeably united Himself to matter, thus divinizing it. To reject veneration implies that matter is evil, a view held by Manicheans, but not Christians (*Imag.*I.16). Matter is indeed a transparent image of the divine, filled with divine energy and grace, and capable of being a bearer or vehicle of the Spirit.

Louth summarizes John’s doctrine of the icon, asserting that, “the making of icons and their veneration rests for John on two principles: first, what one might call the architectonic significance of the created order, and secondly, on the Incarnation, in which the source of everything, including images, himself beyond image, takes on a form, the human form, of which there can be images: in the Incarnation, as Maximus puts it, the Lord “became a type and symbol of Himself.”³¹ On the basis then of these two foundational principles, Louth can say that, for John, the universe as created by God is an inherently iconographic place, an order of signs, where in a multitude of ways, “reality echoes reality,” Images “body forth” hidden and higher realities which call for our acknowledgement, acceptance and devotion. In all kinds of ways, “images establish relationships between realities: within the Trinity, between God and the inner

³¹ Louth, *John of Damascus*, 213-214. Maximus Ambig. 10 PG 91.1165D. Trans. Louth *Maximus*, 1996, 132.

reality of the human soul, between visible and invisible, between the past and the future, and the present and the past. The image, in all its different forms, is always mediating, always holding together in harmony.”³² The Damascene, “sees the soul attaining transcending reality through the senses, rather than by abandoning them.”³³ And for John, the poet, songwriter and liturgist, the God who created humankind in His image, created them to make images and to use the imagination given to them by God.³⁴

From all this we can see that for the Orthodox, iconoclasm was not simply a controversy over proper modes of worship. At stake rather was the full integrity of the Incarnation, the dignity of matter and the cosmic dimensions of salvation. In light of the Trinitarian and Christological definitions of the foregoing ecumenical councils, one might even say the seventh, which would occur in 787, contained, contended for, and affirmed the determinations of the previous six.

While iconodules were not severely persecuted during the reign of Leo III, they were during that of his son Constantine V (741-775), who intensified the imperial attack against the veneration of images. In 754 he called a Synod in Hieria, which condemned the veneration of icons, and also anathematized both Germanos and John.³⁵ The decree of the synod argues that a true image must be of the same essence or nature (*homoousios*) as its prototype. But since God in His nature cannot be depicted, if an image of the God-Man is made, then either his divine natures

³² Louth, *John of Damascus*, 212, 216.

³³ Louth, *John of Damascus*, 217.

³⁴ Louth, *John of Damascus*, 216. For all his undisputed importance as a preacher and theologian, John is perhaps more widely experienced through his multitude of liturgical songs. Another significant contribution of Louth's monograph on the Damascene is his rich and extensive treatment of many of these songs. See Louth, *John*, 252-282.

³⁵ The decree of this synod, the only remaining expression of iconoclast argument, is contained in the extracts of the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the Second Council of Nicea II (787) in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Volume XIV. Edit. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids. Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), 543-546.

are mingled (Monophysitism) or they are separated from one another (Nestorianism).³⁶ To this Theodore the Studite and his contemporaries –the next generation of iconodules- responded that the image is not identical to the prototype, but is a likeness. And it is the likeness that is being depicted. Furthermore, the depiction is not of the human or divine natures (*ousioi*) of Christ, but of the Person (*hypostasis*).³⁷ Catherine Roth explains that according to Orthodox teaching, “the Logos assumed human nature in general, not a human hypostasis (in other words, there is no man Jesus apart from the incarnate God). Therefore Christ’s human nature cannot be portrayed as nature, but only as it occurs in the hypostasis which combines the two natures. And in this hypostasis Christ’s humanity has the properties of an individual man, including a particular appearance which was seen and can be portrayed.”³⁸

When Constantine’s son and successor, Leo IV died, a few years after his death, in 787 his iconodule widow Irene took the opportunity to work with their son to convene an Ecumenical Council in Nicea to formally settle the controversy.³⁹ Using many of John’s arguments, the Council restored the veneration of icons to the churches. Among the items in the Acts of the Council is a letter from the absent Pope Hadrian in Rome, whose Western churches had escaped any controversy regarding icons, congratulating the Council for choosing to return to “the traditions of the orthodox Faith,” returning “the venerable icons” to be “placed in their original state.”⁴⁰ But after the death of Irene, supporters of the iconoclast position again pushed forward their agenda and in 815 succeeded in seeing a new imperial edict put forth once again removing icons from the churches, the so-called “second iconoclasm.” Finally, with the death of the last

³⁶ *NPNF*, Volume XIV, 543-544.

³⁷ Evdokimov, 30. 196-198. Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons* I.8-12., Introduction and translation by Catherine Roth .Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1981, 27-33.

³⁸ *On the Holy Icons*, Roth trans., 11-12.

³⁹ *NPNF*, Volume XIV, 529-577.

⁴⁰ *NPNF*, Volume XIV, 536-537.

iconoclast emperor, Theophilus, and the practice of icon veneration as popular among the people as ever, his iconodule wife, Theodora, ordered an end to the persecution.⁴¹ The following Sunday, the first Sunday of Lent, 843, a sermon was preached by the Patriarch of Constantinople in the Hagia Sophia reinstating icons back into the life of the church, a Sunday still celebrated today throughout the Orthodox world as “The Feast of Orthodoxy.”

Despite Pope Hadrian’s affirmative letter, reception of Nicea II in the West got off to a rocky start. Due to an unfortunate mistranslation of one part of the Council’s Acts, one of the bishops of the Church in Cyprus was understood to affirm that he gave the same veneration to images as he did to the Holy Trinity.⁴² Charlemagne condemned the theology of the East which promoted icons and authorized theological statements, known as the *Carolini Libri*, which minimized the value of images. In 794 a Council at Frankfurt am Main recorded their disapproval of what they took to be Eastern misuse of images.⁴³ Yet despite this official theological thinking, Western Christian art up to the eleventh and twelfth centuries still carried a sense of the world as an epiphanic revelation of the invisible, as can be seen in the great cathedral at Chartres, Romanesque art, or Italian iconography. Nevertheless, Paul Evdokimov judges that the initial impact of the *Libri Carolini* and subsequent synodical assertions of the mere ornamental purpose of images permanently affected the West, where art tended to become “linked to what was useful, utilitarian that is, what teaches and consoles.”⁴⁴ During the Reformation, Protestants rediscovered the *Libri Carolini*, which were first published by a friend

⁴¹ Irvin and Sundquist, 362-363.

⁴² The passage can be read, with notations, from Session III of the Acts of Nicea II in *NPNF*, Volume XIV, 539, 577, 579.

⁴³ MacCulloch, 449.

⁴⁴ Evdokimov, 168.

of John Calvin, and used them in their polemics against images.⁴⁵ But the Roman Church explicitly affirmed Nicea II at the Council of Trent (1545-63).⁴⁶ In the East however, the dogmatic determinations of the iconoclasm were refined and flourished in the tenth through fifteenth centuries, so that today they pervade throughout the Orthodox world.⁴⁷

Within the context of the theological accents of the more Eastern traditions, which affirm the iconographic nature of the material world, we have traced the enfranchisement of these visions into the dogmatic tradition of the churches. We will now offer a brief tour of aspects of Orthodox liturgical practice wherein we can catch exemplary glimpses of resulting approaches to materiality, beauty, and space in worship.

MATERIALITY, BEAUTY, AND SPACE IN LITURGICAL WORSHIP

Maximus, in fact, was one of the first Eastern theologians to produce an entire monograph on the mystical meanings of Orthodox liturgical practice, his *Mystagogia*.⁴⁸ But for our purposes we will look at some features of contemporary Orthodox worship - which is remarkably similar to that depicted in Maximus- guided by the artist and Russian Orthodox theologian, Paul Evdokimov.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ MacCulloch, 451. While Calvin did not accept what he termed “the childish arguments” and the “ridiculous use of Scripture texts” of the Council of Nicea (787), and decried what he considered to be the idolatry rampant in the papist veneration of images, he did not argue for an absolute prohibition on images. Rather he encouraged, “a pure and legitimate use” of sculpture and painting, “lest the things which the Lord has conferred upon us for His glory be not only polluted by perverse misuse, but also turned to our destruction.” And he does make use of the *Libri Carolini. Institutes*, XI.1-16.

⁴⁶ *The Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Session the Twenty-Fifth. Ed. and trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), 232.

⁴⁷ Evdokimov judges that the evolution of the icon in the East took place in three periods: 1) The Justinian era of the sixth century and the miracle of Hagia Sophia; 2) The First Byzantine renaissance under the Macedonian and Comnenian dynasties of the tenth and twelfth centuries; 3) The Second Byzantine renaissance under the fourteenth century Palaeologan dynasty, the icon’s “golden age.” *Art of the Icon*, 165.

⁴⁸ The *Mystagogia* is available in English translation in *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*. Trans. George C. Berthold. (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

⁴⁹ Paul Evdokimov. *The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty*. Trans. Fr. Steven Bingham (Redondo Beach, CA.: Oakwood, 1990).

Entering into an Eastern Orthodox church is a gradual and guided ascent and initiation which the topographical arrangement of the parts helps us to see. Entering the front gate, passing through the atrium and by the bell tower, the welcome makes us feel at home, and the ringing of the bells constitutes both a celebration and an exorcism. In front of the main door sits the baptistery, a fountain of living water.⁵⁰

The church building itself is not designed to be a place on earth reaching up, but an architecture which represents and welcomes God's descent into creation. Its architectural challenge is "to create harmony between the natural scale of the human and the transcendent scale of the infinite," a cosmic center reproducing within itself "the internal structure of the universe," where "the rhythms of nature, the flesh of this world, having been enrolled into the sacramental and liturgical action, integrate themselves into sacred history."⁵¹

The three main sections of the church are modelled on the three sections of Moses' sanctuary and Solomon's temple. The altar or sanctuary, always at the eastern end, corresponds to the Holy of Holies, the place of God's dwelling, from which God shines out. It is separated from the nave, where the congregants stand, by a large screen called the iconostase. The iconostase is covered with brilliant icons, but the central icons are standardized, anchored in the middle by Christ vested a bishop, blessing humankind. This is the *deisis*, the "supplication" or "intercession." There are three doors through the screen, the two swinging and central doors, or "royal" doors, and the two smaller, "north" and "south" doors, used by deacons and acolytes to

⁵⁰ Evdokimov, 158.

⁵¹ Evdokimov, 143, 145, 119.

go in and out of the sanctuary.⁵² The third section is the narthex, today serving as a point of entry.

Rising up the steps into the outer and then inner narthex one begins to get the sense of ascent, a sense confirmed when looking to the east end we see a raised platform, the *solea*, the upper room which is the place of Eucharistic communion. The various walls, barriers, doors, curtains and screens, as liminal sites, have the capacity to distinguish but also provide connection between the binary categories they image forth, such as heaven/earth, here/there, sensible/intelligible.⁵³ The square shape of the building represents “the immutability and stability of the accomplished plan,” while on the inside, “the circular dynamics of the services and rites take place.” Symbolized by the rising of incense, “the perfume of the sun and light, the sweet smell of Pnuma...the development of the liturgical space proceeds along a vertical plane,” ascending to God. “Along with these upward linear movements we have the procession (originally a sacred dance) around the church or the altar which designates a movement around the cosmic center,” uniting heaven and earth and imitating the stars moving in their orbits.⁵⁴ Through the various elements of the Divine Liturgy, the worshipper encounters a holistic representation of and touch point for the invisible divine through the elements and the reordered human senses, in the Spirit. Emphasizing the wholeness of the human being, and bodily experience in liturgy, Evdokimov notes that, “in the liturgy, we hear chants sung, contemplate visible icons, smell incense, receive through the senses and eat matter in the sacraments: This

⁵² Evdokimov, 154-155.

⁵³ Fr. Maximos Constas, “Beyond the Veil: Imagination and Spiritual Vision in Byzantium” (University of Chicago Workshop Paper, March 2014), 1-2.
https://www.academia.edu/11995072/Beyond_the_Veil_Imagination_and_Spiritual_Vision_in_Byzantium_University_of_Chicago_Workshop_Paper_March_2014_

⁵⁴ Evdomikov, 146.

allows us to speak of a liturgical sight, hearing, smell, and taste.”⁵⁵ “The liturgy integrates the most elementary actions of life: drinking, eating, washing, speaking, acting, communing...It restores to them their meaning and true destiny, that is, to be blocks in the cosmic temple of God’s glory.”⁵⁶

But if the architecture of the church building orders space, while the liturgical Eucharistic memorial orders time, “the icon gives us the experience of the invisible, of the ‘interior form’ of being,” an experience which is nevertheless dependent on the grace of illumination.⁵⁷ To the Western eye, icons can seem strange, even distorted, with their non-naturalistic, non-perspectival, and non-progressive appearance. But when we understand their precise liturgical and sacramental purpose, the reasons for their various distinct characteristics become clear.⁵⁸ The icon is not designed to mirror physical nature nor to provide a venue for the artist’s imagination to exercise itself. Rather the icon is primarily designed to image forth the conciliar, dogmatic vision of the church, to provide a vehicle of presence for the Prototype, and, through that vehicle of presence, also, through the Spirit, create a point of access to the indescribable.

Therefore, the Council of Nicea II (787) decreed that, “the painting of icons is not to be exclusively left to the initiative of the artist.”⁵⁹ For these reasons also, almost invariably the icon is not signed by the iconographer, the artist fading behind the expression of Holy Tradition. The figures have a bare minimum of historical detail; a “too perfect” human form can be an obstacle

⁵⁵ Evdokimov, 28. Here also, in light of a Christian theology of the body, he quotes Gregory Palamas “The body also has an experience of divine things.” (*Tome Hagiorite*, PG 150, 1233 D) and Maximus who said that “the powers of the soul expand and develop through the senses” (no reference).

⁵⁶ Evdokimov, 117.

⁵⁷ Evdokimov, 188.

⁵⁸ Clemena Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God* (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate, 2010), 153-154.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Evdokimov, 144.

that obscures the content of the message or throws “an opaque shadow over the invisible.”⁶⁰ A certain “hieratic dryness” and “ascetic detachment,” “oppose any sort of artistic decoration or aesthetic enjoyment for their own sake,” attempting to create and maintain space for the expression of dogmatic vision and experience with ineffable presence.⁶¹ The elongated and slender figures evoke movement and especially an ascension to the Source, within which all being finds its proper place.

Capturing the Eastern sense of transfiguration through holistic, liturgical worship, near the end of his *Mystagogia*, Maximus relates that “the blessed old man, whose teachings he is passing on, urged Christians to regularly attend “the holy synaxis” both because the holy angels take note each time we enter and because “the grace of the Holy Spirit,” which is always with us, is with us there in a special way. It “transforms and changes each person who is found there and in fact remolds him...even if he does not himself feel this, because he is yet a child in Christ and unable to see either the depths of reality or the grace operating in it, which is revealed through each of the divine symbols of salvation being accomplished, and which proceeds according to the order and progression from preliminaries to the end of everything.” He walks through each element of the liturgy, enumerating what is “effected” by each, including the belief that when we confess the Symbol of the Holy Trinity, its intuited reality of simultaneous union and distinction in love is communicated to us, imprinting itself in us and shaping us into its likeness.⁶²

⁶⁰ Evdokimov, 147.

⁶¹ Evdokimov, 179.

⁶² *Mystagogia* 24, Trans. Berthold, *Maximus*, pp.206-207. Reference to internal imprinting of the Trinity in *Mystagogia* 23, Trans. Berthold, 205.

PENTECOSTAL APPROPRIATION

Pentecostal appropriation of earlier Christian worship traditions is not without precedent. In her March 1939 sermon, “This is My Task,” Aimee Semple McPherson relates the great interest and admiration she felt listening on the radio to the anointing of Pope Pius XII in Rome. She was particularly taken with the details of the anointing itself, expressing a desire to adopt those details for use in ordination rites at Angeles Temple:

“But I can’t help being very impressed with that ceremony, especially the part where they set him aside and put oil on his hands to anoint him and gave him the communion. And I said, ‘Well, my, from now on when I ordain my young people, I’d love to see their elders anoint their hands with oil that they might go out and lay hands.....and take the Lord’s Supper that they might go and give it to others.’”⁶³

With respect to the more Eastern witness regarding materiality, beauty, and space, it seems that the Orthodox tradition can serve as a significant support and enrichment for the further development of Pentecostal intuitions for a new, global age. For example, recently James K. A. Smith has attempted to articulate from the practices of pentecostal worship five key elements of a distinctly pentecostal worldview, including “an ‘enchanted’ theology of creation and culture,” and “a nondualistic affirmation of embodiment and materiality.”⁶⁴ The first, he finds grounded in the implicit pentecostal affirmation of the dynamic, active presence of the Spirit –and spirits- not only in the church, but also in the creation and in a positive recognition of the Spirit’s work in the realm of human culture-making. It is a sense that “all of creation –nature and culture- is charged with the presence of the Spirit...”⁶⁵ The second he derives from

⁶³ “This is My Task”, preached at Angeles Temple, Sunday March 12, 1939. Thanks to Karen Heimbuch for help locating this passage.

⁶⁴ James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 31-33.

⁶⁵ Smith, 41.

pentecostal affirmation of the holistic ministry of Jesus, “for whom the message of salvation was primarily a message of *liberation* from sin and its effects, including the material effects of illness and disease, as well as oppression and poverty.”⁶⁶ However, “inchoately embedded in this central affirmation that God cares about our bodies is a radical affirmation of the goodness of creation that translates (or *should* translate) into a radical affirmation of the goodness of bodies and materiality *as such*. Here, I think is one of the most underappreciated elements of a Pentecostal worldview.” Echoing one of John of Damascus’ specific critiques of an iconoclastic worldview, Smith contrasts the holistic pentecostal sensibility with “a basically Manichean (or Platonic) approach to the world that sees material reality – both bodies and material elements associated with bodies (sexuality, the arts) –as fundamentally bad or evil, and therefore something to be avoided, suppressed or ultimately escaped.”⁶⁷ From our foregoing survey of its theological and dogmatic perspective, and its present day liturgical practice, we can see that the highly developed and nuanced insights of the Eastern churches can indeed provide affirmation and enrichment to these important and helpful Pentecostal distinctives. From its beginning, Pentecostalism has exhibited a sort of sacramental sensibility, a way of seeing the world which has no problem viewing material creation as a vehicle of the Spirit and affirms a way of knowing and experiencing the divine which does not exclude the senses, the body, movement, rhythm or extra-cognitive dimensions.⁶⁸

More specifically, it seems that many elements of the Eastern vision are features which in some ways have from the beginning been present in the Pentecostal ethos as well. In this regard it seems the Eastern tradition can serve as an encouragement to Pentecostals to not lose them

⁶⁶ Smith, 42-43.

⁶⁷ Smith, 42. For John, *Imag*. I.16: “Do not abuse matter; it is not dishonorable; this is the view of the Manichees.” Trans. Louth, 30.

⁶⁸ Dale Coulter, “Surprised by Sacraments”, 3.

and, in certain of the areas, provide further resource for their continued enrichment and development. Without elaboration I might offer a few possibilities:

- The strong and positive creational context of Orthodox theology can reinforce this Pentecostal intuition and remind Pentecostals to not lose this appropriate and important context for all Fall-Redemption theology.⁶⁹ Along these lines Pentecostal artists can be encouraged to write songs that include creational contexts and dimensions, and Pentecostal liturgists can continue to use many of the core elements of creation – water, oil, bread, juice, fire, ash, rock and so forth- in Pentecostal worship environments and rituals.
- Beauty can be affirmed, not just for ornamental or instructional reasons, but as, “a fundamental category, both biblical and theological, according to which beauty in the world is a divine reality, a transcendental quality of being analogous with truth and goodness.”⁷⁰
- The insistent apophatic emphasis in Eastern theology can remind Pentecostals to not neglect this dimension of their own witness. Along these lines, taking a cue from the intentions and principles of Eastern iconography, Pentecostal artists can create pieces that not only seek to provide ornamentation, anamnesis, and instruction, but also ones which seek to provide liminal thresholds between the seen and the unseen, the cognitive and experience which transcends words. Pentecostal song writers and worship leaders might also in spots use music which is more chant-like, with fewer words.

⁶⁹ Steve Delamarter, “Creation’s Cry Against Shallow Shalom: The Uneasy Relationship Between Covenant Theology and Creation Theology in the Conflict Between True and False Prophets”, in *Covenant Making: The Fabric of Relationship*. Chuck J. Conniry and Laura Simmons, editors (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 53-74. Delamarter argues that when “salvation theology” is not done in the context of a prior and strong creation theology, it can become impoverished and distorted.

⁷⁰ Evdokimov, 25.

- The highly developed Eastern witness can provide further insight into the precise way material objects carry the divine energies (*energeia*), and a deeper understanding of the distinction between iconographic and idolatrous use of material creation.
- In a time when many people are looking for respite from what Walter Hollenweger has called “the tyranny of words” in the Western churches, through the Eastern liturgical tradition, Pentecostals can be affirmed –and perhaps even further resourced- in their instinct for communal expressions which incorporate movement, include bodily and sensory experiences, and create space for intuitive interaction with the indescribable.⁷¹

From the perspective of local church life, as one tiny example of a very modest appropriation, I could share that for several years in our congregation, we have been making our Communion bread with wheat grown at a nearby organic farm, kneaded and baked by the hands of congregants. We have had the family who owns the farm come to meet the church and share some of the heart and vision they have for their work. We have also used grape juice created by two men in our church, using grapes they have grown. The connection with other people and the input of our own hands highlights and intensifies the relational reality of the Communion, and the connection with the local land includes in the Communion our relationship with the other realms of the creation. Though an admittedly modest appropriation of the earlier church tradition, it is surprising to see and feel the power of such small things. Through this and other experiences we are re-discovering what Pentecostals have known all along: That sharing communal, bodily, sensory, elementary movement together is something the Spirit is happy to indwell.

⁷¹ Walter Hollenweger, (Lecture during the Fourth Phase of the International Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue, July 27, 1994, Kappel a Albis, Switzerland).

Perhaps in years to come, as these two traditions interface, other kinds of mutual enrichment can occur in ways that will be a blessing for us and our world.

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