

The Eucharistic Mystery: The Meeting of Pneumatology and Ecclesiology

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This presentation aims to investigate the relationship between Ecclesiology and Pneumatology by analyzing the celebration of the Eucharist¹ in Russian Pentecostalism using a historical-comparative approach. It attempts to discover the Pentecostal approaches to the interpretation of the New Testament texts that have been developed in different cultural contexts and their influence on Pentecostal memory and identity formation.

Let me start with my personal story (following the Pentecostal pattern): as far as I know there are eight bloodstreams in my veins, and the history of three main streams of Christianity: German Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox. I was brought up in a Lutheran tradition, my grandfather on my mother's side was Prof. (of Geophysics) Richard Zimmermann, one of the founders of the first University in Central Asia, in Tashkent. He was the son of the pastor and was brought up in Baku, now in Azerbaijan, where his father ministered to the Lutheran community. During the time when the Lutheran church was destroyed and ceased to exist (the ministers and many church members lost their lives in prisons and GULAGs) my grandfather always fulfilled the role of pastor to many of his extended family. Throughout my childhood and since, I have heard many family stories – stories about the Lord's provision for His children, about miracles and about tests of Christian faith. It was possible for the persecuted minority to form a kind of Christian inner circle within the family scattered all over the country. The central annual event for us was the "Abendmal" (Germ. – communion service or Eucharist). It was quite natural that after my grandfather's death, seeking Holy Communion which meant so much for me, I found myself in the underground Pentecostal church, the so-called "forest brotherhood".

¹ Taken from a Greek word *εὐχαριστία* meaning "thanksgiving": *εὖ* – to do/be well, good, kind and *χάρις* – graciousness, favour, grace, gracious care of help, goodwill. *Eucharist* designates Holy Communion, the central act of Christian worship. The word came into use very early, as exemplified by its use in the writings of the apostles (*Didache* 9:1) and the letters of Ignatius of Antioch (Ign. Phil. 4:1, about 107 AD).

Severely persecuted at that time, the underground Pentecostal church saw its main goal not in the development of theological doctrines but rather in pursuing a life of practical holiness that was the only way to be strengthened and protected by God. It was much more with teaching on holiness and on the development of personal experiential relationships with the Almighty, and on seeking His will for everything rather than with the formulation of general creedal statements that the leadership was concerned. And the central event of the intensive spiritual life of the church was the Lord's Supper or the communion service that was conducted monthly.

Brought up in the Lutheran tradition I was shocked by the footwashing ceremony when I had to take part in it for the first time (remember that I was a professional microbiologist and biochemist!). This was a regular practice and a vital part of the communion service of the Russian Pentecostals that took place before the breaking of bread. Keeping in memory the communion service conducted by my grandfather, and especially after reading the book "Selected Letters from the Correspondence between Martin Luther and Erasmus of Rotterdam" in 1987, I turned to the church leaders with the following questions: Why is our communion service closer to the Orthodox one than to the Lutheran/Protestant one? What is the Pentecostal doctrine of the Eucharist? The answer I got was honest and sincere: We do not know. Russian Pentecostals were used to a literal interpretation of Scripture, for them the Lord's Supper had never been merely a memorial service, but rather it had been a true mystery (the mystery of faith!). Various spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophetic utterances and visions were in operation and were the norm at the Eucharist service. At the same time Russian Pentecostalism was formed in the cultural context of Orthodoxy and was greatly influenced by it. Even without a properly developed doctrine the church conducted the Eucharist in the fear of God and depended greatly on a literal Scripture interpretation and on prophetic utterances (that had to be tested before being accepted). This is what the Lord told me once during the Eucharist service:

This is my death – the cup of My blood, but your death to the world is in it and your life for Me. That is why, My child, I left it, because there is strength/power in it, the power of My blood, My new covenant. In My life there is My strength/power, My healing, My joy and My peace! Mine, my child (1993).

The meaning of Eucharist for the traditional Pentecostal church is evidenced by special collections of hymns, namely *For the Breaking of Bread*, entirely devoted to the Communion service. Several of them are based on the Scripture quotation (Matt 26:26-29) and its interpretations, one is entirely dedicated to the footwashing ceremony, the rest are mostly about Christ's suffering and death, the cleansing power of His blood, or the unity of the disciples with the Trinity through the Eucharist. One of the favourites was the famous hymn: *There is power in the blood* by Lewis E. Jones.

Definition of the terms.

After this brief introduction may I turn your attention to the main concept of the Eucharist and the definition of terms. According to the American Pentecostal scholar James Beaty², "the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Church which means it is (1) a ceremonial act (2) instituted by Christ and (3) given to His people/His body, the church"³. *Ordinance* (from Lat. *ordinans* – "arranging") is defined by the Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms⁴ as a religious rite, similar to a "sacrament", engaged in as a memorial act of obedience rather than as having sacramental efficacy. Neither *ordinance* nor *sacrament*⁵ appears in the English Bible and for the Western/Latin Christian world the use of the term *sacrament* by the church was not very precise till it was defined by Augustine as *the visible sign of an invisible grace*⁶.

The Russian Bible goes back to the translation of the Holy Scripture into the Slavonic language by the two Greek monks, the brothers Cyril and Methodius in the 9th century. Cyril, also known as Constantine, was a humanist scholar, known to his contemporaries as Constantine the Philosopher. It was the time of the First Byzantine Renaissance and of the rediscovery of the ancient texts⁷. Photius, the patriarch of Constantinople initiated Byzantium's

² James M. Beaty, Ph.D. – Professor of New Testament at the COG Theological Seminary, Cleveland, TN.

³ Beaty J.M. A Theology of Holy Communion. Handouts for "Sacraments in the Early Church" by David L. Franklin and James M. Beaty. COG School of Theology, Cleveland, TN. 1999.

⁴ McKim D.K. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1996. P. 196.

⁵ Lat. *sacramentum*, Gr. *mysterion*. Ibid. P. 245.

⁶ The "outward visible sign" definition is attributed to the catechism from the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and was derived from Augustine of Hippo's work *De Catechizandis Rudibus*.

⁷ The pagan classics again began to be copied, stimulated by the importation of paper from the Arabs. The other impetus came from the development of cursive or minuscule script which rapidly replaced the capital letters

greatest cultural triumph, the conversion of the Slavs to Orthodox Christianity. In order to have worship services in the Slavonic language, Cyril and Methodius first had to create a script for the Old Church Slavonic language; only after that could they translate liturgical books into Slavonic. Cyril expanded the Slavonic language with Greek loanwords, *calques* (loan translations), and phraseology⁸. It is obvious that the first Slavonic translation had been changing constantly during the following centuries (mostly due to continuous corrections made according to different Greek manuscripts), but we are grateful that the foundational translation was done by those for whom Greek was their mother tongue and who spoke Slavonic fluently (as was common for Thessalonians)⁹. In the Russian language the word for sacrament is “ТАИНСТВО” that derives from the word “mystery/secret” – *μυστήριον* (1 Tim 3:9 – *the mystery of faith*)¹⁰. It reminds us of hidden things or secrets that have their hidden purpose and are beyond our understanding in their fullness while here in this world, but that will be revealed in the world to come. To express the hidden purpose or mystery of our faith we need signs or symbols and symbolic actions. A sign or a symbol¹¹ is something such as an object, picture, written word, or particular mark that represents something else by association, resemblance or convention. It does not produce that other reality, which is independent of and not caused by the sign. In Orthodox usage, however, a *symbol* does not merely stand for something else, as does a “sign”; it indicates the actual presence of its subjects¹².

Communion is the other frequently used term for the Lord’s Supper. The word *communion* comes from the Latin *communis* (adjective), meaning *common* or *shared* and

employed by earlier copyists. See: Wells C. *Sailing from Byzantium. How a Lost Empire Shaped the World*. NY: A Division of Random Dell, Inc. 2007. P. 184-185.

⁸ The brothers started by translating the Book of Psalms, then the books of the New Testament. After Cyril’s death Methodius and his disciples continued the work, finishing the New Testament and almost the entire Old Testament.

⁹ The empire’s second city had been surrounded by Slavic settlers and this was the reason why the Slavonic language was heard in Thessalonica as often as Byzantine Greek. Wells C. *Sailing from Byzantium*. P. 187.

¹⁰ The ways of God, especially God’s plan for salvation, which cannot be known with the rational, finite human mind, but can be experienced only by the revelation of God. The Orthodox Church also uses the term *mystery* for the sacraments of the Church. See: *The Orthodox Study Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1997. P. 803.

¹¹ From Greek verb *συνβαλλω*, some of whose meanings are “unite, compare”. As an ideal construction, symbol keeps in itself in a hidden form all possible manifestations of an object and creates a perspective for its endless unfolding (A. Losev). See: *Философская Энциклопедия*. М.: Советская Энциклопедия, 1970. Т. 5. С. 10. *Philosophical Encyclopedia* (in Russian).

¹² As an example of such understanding the *Orthodox Study Bible* gives the dove as the symbol which brought to Jesus the descent of the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:13-16). See: *The Orthodox Study Bible*. P. 808.

communio (noun), meaning *mutual participation*. When we partake of the Holy Communion, we are acknowledging our dependence on the Lord. This is true both in the natural realm and in the spiritual. He is our strength. We share in His mission in the world and He shares His wisdom, guidance and strength with us, so that we may participate in His mission. The Sacrament of the Table functions very much as a renewal of the covenant. The new commandment of Christ at the Last Supper is to love one another as He loved us. This is to love as Christ loved us, which is, of course, possible only with Christ within and with the help of His Holy Spirit. Over the centuries in the Early Church the people of God have come to greet each other with the kiss of peace – this was a common practice of the Russian Pentecostal communities and still is in some of the conservative Pentecostal circles. The words “The Peace of the Lord be with you” are still the typical greeting in the evangelical milieu all over Russia.

Ecclesiology

It is through the sacraments and in the communion of the church that divine grace comes to each of us through Jesus Christ¹³, or as it was well put by Jürgen Moltmann (b.1926): there is no *Eucharist* without *charis*¹⁴. *Sacraments* are the earliest liturgical practices of the churches. However while the doctrine of the means of grace developed very rapidly, the doctrine of grace itself (as justification, forgiveness, sanctification, etc.) developed slowly and unsteadily. Historically, the relation between the doctrine of grace and the doctrine of the means of grace has been ambiguous¹⁵. Moltmann, who was named as the outstanding theologian of the 20th century, defines three paradigms for the Church in modern society as follows: the *hierarchical church* of God the Father (it was the hierarchy of the Graeco-Roman world and is still seen in Roman Catholicism and in Orthodoxy), the Christocentric *brotherly church* of God the Son (the Protestant and evangelical churches) and the *charismatic church* of God the Spirit (to which belong many congregations and churches that perceived, experienced

¹³ According to Augustine the person who partakes of communion becomes a partaker of the body and blood of Christ by the eating of bread and wine. See: Gonzales J.L. *A History of Christian Thought. Vol.II. From Augustine to the Eve of the Reformation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1987. P.53.

¹⁴ Moltmann J. *The Spirit of Life. A Universal Affirmation*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1994. P. 298.

¹⁵ Pelikan J. *The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine. 1. The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1975. P. 155.

and practiced the charismatic fellowship of the Holy Spirit)¹⁶. It is a fact that the Pentecostal movement has become the second largest group in Christendom (due to its growth worldwide, especially in Latin America, Africa and Asia).

A typical understanding of the Eucharist in American Pentecostalism may be found in *Living The Faith* – COG's text-book produced by the School of Theology (Cleveland, TN) analyzing a sample listing of the means of grace:

... preaching, teaching, water baptism, footwashing, the Lord's Supper, worship, gathering together, submission one to another, speaking the truth in love, speaking ourselves in psalms and hymns in the Holy Spirit, Scripture reading, prayer, and works of mercy and kindness to others¹⁷.

What becomes obvious from this list is that the Lord's Supper does not have a central place in comparison with the Russian Pentecostal tradition. Instead the list emphasizes the importance of coming together (a communal experience or Ecclesiology) for preaching or teaching, for footwashing, etc.

A similar view can be found in the writings of contemporary Orthodox authors. According to Metropolitan Zizioulas (b.1931), the Eucharist is an icon/image of the Kingdom of God that is yet to come and that is already here on earth¹⁸. This famous contemporary Orthodox theologian is emphasizing the difference between the Western tradition which connects the Eucharist with Calvary (following Anselm of Canterbury's theology with its climax in the sacrifice of Christ as a satisfaction for sin – *Cur Deus homo*)¹⁹ and the Eastern one which connects the Eucharist with the Kingdom of God.

Pentecostals see the Kingdom of God and the message of its breaking in (through the gospel ministry of words, power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit) as their goal and passion.

¹⁶ Moltmann J. *Sun of Righteousness, arise! God's Future for Humanity and the Earth*. London: SCM Press, 2010. P.20-27.

¹⁷ *Living the Faith*. Homer G. Rhea (ed.). Cleveland, TN: Church of God School of Ministry, 2001. P. 281.

¹⁸ Zizioulas J., Metropolitan of Pergamus. *The Eucharist and the Kingdom of God // Church and Eucharist*. Transl. from Greek by Hieromonk Leontias (Kozlov). Bogoroditze-Sergiev Pustin (2009): 203-298.

¹⁹ See: Gonzalez J.L. *A History of Christian Thought. Vol. II. From Augustine to the Eve of the Reformation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1987. P. 163-165.

Land defines Pentecostals as a goal-oriented community on the way to the Kingdom²⁰. Thus we see how close Orthodoxy and Pentecostalism are coming together in their ecclesiology – the Kingdom of God is viewed by both traditions as the climax of the whole salvation history. The tension between the “already” and the “not yet” in the Kingdom of God, well realized by Pentecostals is analyzed by Zizioulas in his exegesis of the Lord’s Prayer:

... Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread... (Matt 6: 10-11)

Following the well rooted tradition of the early Church Fathers regarding the interpretation of the expression *daily bread*²¹, he is pointing out that it indicates not merely bread for this day, taken for the sustenance of physical life; it is bread for the eternal day of the Kingdom of God, for the sustenance of our eternal life. This bread, prepared by God in the beginning for the immortal element of our nature, is the bread of Life which will triumph over the death brought by sin. Jesus commands us to seek first the Kingdom of God (Matt 6:33). Thus the Lord tells us to ask not merely for material bread which keeps us in good physical health, but for spiritual bread which gives us life – the Living bread, Christ Himself, given in the Eucharist to those who receive Him²².

In the persecuted Pentecostal church those who had been preparing themselves for the Communion service did it through prayer and fasting (no water, no food), realizing the breaking in of the Kingdom and longing for the festal meal that is waiting for them (Matt 26:29) at the marriage of the Lamb (Rev 19:7)²³. An essential part of the preparation was the confession of a believer/church member before the pastor or deacon, prior to the Lord’s Supper. It was recommended to confess in advance, not on the day of the Eucharist service. 1 Cor 11:28-29

²⁰ Land S. *Pentecostal Spirituality. A Passion for the Kingdom*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1977. P. 174.

²¹ Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (died 258), Cyril of Jerusalem (ca.313-386) and Augustine of Hippo (354-430) are among the selected authors quoted in the well known work “The Interpretation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Words of the Holy Fathers” of bishop Theophan (Theophan the Recluse, 1815-1894). See: Епископ Феофан. *Истолкование молитвы Господней словами Святых Отцов*. Изд-е Австралийско-Новозеландской Епархии Русской Православной Церкви Заграницей. 1990. 161 с. Bishop Theophan. *Interpretation of the Lord’s Prayer through the Words of the Holy Fathers*. (in Russian).

²² Zizioulas. Eucharist and the Kingdom of God. *Ibid*. See ref. 18.

²³ There is the parallel tradition in Rabbinic Judaism: the righteous ones, those who fulfil the Torah here in this world will be rewarded by the Almighty in the world to come by attending a the great banquet (Vayikra/Leviticus Rabah 13,3 and Midrash Tehillim 146:4).

was taken literally and very seriously, as it is formulated by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his famous “Nachfolge”, the Kingdom of Christ that is already/not yet costs a lot²⁴. ... *My yoke is easy and My burden is light* (Matt 11:30). It was a part of the cost of discipleship, of seeking the values of the Kingdom in the secular world with its communist ideology. Such an attitude towards grace (revealed to us in the sacraments as well) was considered to be the only one appropriate. In the cultural context that was mostly defined by the Russian Orthodox Church, the Pentecostals realized that we are taking part in the Communion service only because through Christ and in Christ we are made holy, and at the same time we are taking part in it in order to become and to be holy (to be the salt, the light, etc.) as He is holy. It is still costly for a Christian to go against the main stream of our contemporary culture with its major values: success, safety, leadership, competition, prestige, etc.

The congregation (prepared after the individual and common confession and prayer) had been waiting in prayer for a revelation from the Lord to bless the coming Lord’s Supper. Sometimes it took hours till the blessing was given (through a prophetic utterance or a vision). I remember that it happened only once that the Communion service had to be moved to another day because not all the people (church members) had prepared themselves for the Eucharist. Everyone had been praying for himself or herself, asking the Lord whether it is not he or she who is not yet prepared (and needs to confess some sin committed), and for the whole church (community), that the Lord would grant His grace in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The church members were called to intercede for each other, and to pray in tongues, asking for redeeming experiences of the fellowship of Christ and liberating experiences of the Holy Spirit. That practice of the church and its self-identification as a Eucharistic fellowship had a lot in common with the British Apostolic tradition described by Black in his recent publication on Pentecostal Ecclesiology²⁵.

Being a biochemist by my first (secular) profession I understand even better than most the importance of an organic understanding of the Church (1Cor 12:12, 27). When one member

²⁴ The other understanding is: the preaching of forgiveness without the required repentance, baptism without church discipline, Eucharist without confession, ... or grace without discipleship, without the cross, without Jesus Christ ... Bonhoeffer defined this as a “cheap grace”. See: Бонхёффер Д. *Хожделение вслед*. М.: ПГТУ, 2002. С. 14-15. Bonhoeffer D. *Nachfolge*. (in Russian).

²⁵ Black J. The Church as Eucharistic Fellowship: A British Apostolic Contribution toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology // *JEPTA XXIX*, N 2 (2009): 78-89.

suffers (or is lacking holiness) the whole body is at risk. The same is true at the molecular level – a tiny change in the genetic code can result in a major change that is crucial for a human personality (much more important than the lack of a finger or leg, for example). This takes us back to the Old Testament and its ideology of Israel as a chosen nation, the one that has to be holy because YHWH is holy (see: Ex., Lev., Num. etc.)²⁶. God entered into a relationship with the Israelites so that they might perpetually sanctify His name. According to biblical tradition, holiness means not just “otherness”, or moral perfection, but physical and spiritual separation from the impure. The Eucharist reminds us that although churches are minorities in our multi-faith and secular societies, we are still a worldwide community that belongs to the Kingdom of God. As an organic union (not primarily an organization!) the church consists of members who have the same life flowing through them, the new spiritual life that renewed in them by the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist.

Schmemmann in his *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* expressed the Orthodox point of view: the meeting together of God’s people to worship the Lord is, in a sense, a sacrament in itself²⁷. The very word *communion* means sharing (1 Cor 11:18-20) and that is why Schmemmann defines the Liturgy as a “sacrament of coming together” as a Church (John 11:52)²⁸. It is in the Lord’s Supper that we experience most profoundly what it means to be the church. It is His holiness that is making us holy through the grace given to us in the Eucharist but how it is possible is a mystery. We are partaking bread and wine, following His commandment to do it regularly in faith until the Lord returns, keeping the faith – *the mystery of the faith* (1 Tim 3:9). This *mystery* of salvation in Christ was revealed *among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Col 2:12) and it is considered mystical in Russian culture as is everything that is beyond our rational understanding.

Pneumatology

²⁶ The biblical teaching on the holiness of a human being derives from his/her becoming like God. It is understood in the Eastern tradition as a reflection and actualization in a human being of the divine perfection. God is the one and the only source of “holiness”. That is why humans are able to be partakers of His “holiness” only by sharing His divine essence that became possible in Christ. See: Концевич И.М. Стяжание Святого Духа в путях Древней Руси. М.: Лепта, 2002. С. 57-58. Kontzewich I.M. (in Russian).

²⁷ Schmemmann A. *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986. P.11-26.

²⁸ Протоиерей Александр Шмеман. *Евхаристия. Таинство Царства*. М.: Паломник, 2007. С. 27. Schmemmann A. *Eucharist. The Sacrament of the Kingdom*. (in Russian).

The community of the church is a trinitarian experience of God. Jesus' high priestly prayer was for the future church, which participates in the life and glory of the Father and the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit:

I do not pray for these alone but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. < ... > I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me (John 17:20-23).²⁹

We have to remind ourselves that it is only the Holy Spirit Who is revealing the mystery of our gifts of bread/the body and wine/the blood of Christ that we are partaking of to signify the organic union/the church. According to Metropolitan Benjamin (Fedchenkov, 1880-1961) the essence and the goal of the Eucharist is the mystical reunion of Christ with those who are partaking of the holy gifts (John 6:56)³⁰. This is the reason why in the Eastern Church there were no discussions about the definition of the Eucharistic terms discussed earlier in this presentation as there were in the Western Christian world. In Eastern Christianity all of it was embraced by the concept of mystery³¹. The Eucharist is perceived as the foreshadowing of the coming Kingdom, the entrance to which is possible only through the sacrifice of Christ, through His blood shed for our sin.

In the Russian underground Pentecostal church the white cloth put on the table on which the Eucharist was served was considered "holy" after gifts of bread and wine, the sanctified in prayer, had been put on it. The literal interpretation and the awe of the moment left no room for questions or confusion. The real experience of the presence of God intensified the importance of the Eucharist in the life of the church.

²⁹ *The Orthodox Study Bible. New Testament & Psalms*, New King James Version. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997.

³⁰ Metropolitan Benjamin (Fedchenkov). *The Thoughts on/about the liturgy of the Faithful // Liturgy of the Faithful*. Moscow: The Rule of Faith (2006): 55-356.

³¹ Both East and West believe in the real transformation of the bread and wine in the Body and Blood of Christ in a mysterious way by the power of the Holy Spirit. However, each church developed its own approach to this mystery. The Roman Catholic Church since Tomas Aquinas speaks about *transubstantiation* (Lat. *transubstantiatio* – "change of essence"); the Eastern Church emphasizes that this is just one of the possible approaches to define what is taking place and sees in such categories and definitions of the Holy Spirit's activity a rejection of the divine mystery. See: Лич Дж. и Кросс Л. *Дух и огонь: Опыт введения в богословие таинств*. Духовная библиотека, 2007. С. 74-75. Leach H.J. & L. Cross. *Spirit and Fire: An Introduction to the Holy Mysteries*. (in Russian).

Thanksgiving, prayer, adoration, praise, and the silent sinking into wonder, proceed from the energies of the Spirit, Who gives life, are directed towards the Son, and go with the Son to the Father.³²

According to Moltmann, the Kingdom of God (that is revealed to us in the Eucharist as we have just discussed) is the perfected *perichoretic*³³ unity of God and the world and therefore the final goal of the Lord's Supper is not just reunification and fellowship with the Son of God the Saviour, but is so much more. The idea of perichoresis, or reciprocal indwelling, derives from the theology of the Greek fathers³⁴. While in Greek patristic writings perichoresis defined the circular dynamic bond that unites the three Persons in their interaction, the Latin authors emphasized the mutual fusion and rest of the Persons united in nature. Moltmann clarifies that the Latin translation of this Greek word was first of all *circumincessio* (indicating a dynamic interpenetration – *incedere*), and later also *circuminsessio* (*insedere* – an enduring, resting indwelling). The Latin words express a double sense of the Trinitarian unity: dynamics and rest, complete peace and complete turbulence at the same time³⁵. With a grateful heart we are praising (and asking) the Lord for participation in the fellowship of the holy Trinity.

This paradigm was introduced to Russian religious philosophy by Vladimir Solovyov and others who belong to the Russian Silver Age. Sergey Bulgakov (1871-1944) developed Solovyov's ideas, forming a doctrine of the Trinity as a perichoretic love, Lev Karsavin (1882-1952) enriched the anthropological approach, borrowing from the medieval mystic and love tradition. Nikolai Berdyaev (1872-1948), with his "new religious consciousness", anticipated the theology of the Crucified God and the theology of Mystical Experience, with its pneumatological language, that was later expanded by Moltmann. The contemporary Russian-American scholar Mikhail Aksenov-Meerson (b.1942) in one of his recent works managed to bring together the

³² Moltmann J. *The Spirit of Life. A Universal Affirmation*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1994. P. 298.

³³ From Greek *perichoresis* – "penetration". A term used in the theology of the Trinity to indicate the intimate union, mutual indwelling, or mutual interpenetration of the three members of the Trinity with each other. McKim D.K. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1996. P. 207.

³⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus (the Theologian, 329-389/390) was probably the first to use this concept (a movement from one another, passing round and going round) for the description of Trinity. See: Hieromonach Ilarion (Alfeyev). *The Life and the Teaching of St. Gregory the Theologian*. Moscow: Lovers of Church History Society's Press, 1998. P.268-269. (in Russian). Later it was made the key concept for the doctrine of Trinity by John of Damascus (676-749) who described it as "cleaving together".

³⁵ Moltmann J. *Sun of Righteousness, arise!* P. 152-160.

traditions of the Church Fathers (from Augustine and medieval Western mysticism to neoplatonism and the Eastern Church Fathers) with German classical philosophy and the personalism of Russian religious thought by offering the Trinitarian paradigm on love³⁶.

Let me specify the Eastern tradition by turning your attention to the Rublyov's³⁷ famous icon of the Trinity:



1) The full image 2) There is a circle, a symbol of God's perfection, the One Who has no beginning and no end, holding eternity. Then there is a triangle within the circle, a symbol of the Trinity. 3) There is a dynamic of complete turbulence holding the Trinity in One with the cup in the center. 4) There is complete peace and the image of a cup (repeated four times), that speaks of a meal offered to the visitors by Abraham and of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary³⁸. This image of the Trinity invites us to join the perfect fellowship, there is an open space left for us so as to show us that we are welcomed. It is possible only in the Spirit and I was surprised to find

³⁶ Аксенов-Меерсон (протоиерей Михаил). *Созерцанием Троицы Святой ... Парадигма Любви в русской философии троичности*. Киев: Дух и Литера, 2007. 328 с. Aksenov-Meerson (Archpriest Mikhail). *Contemplating the Holy Trinity ... A Paradigm of Love in Russian Trinitarian Philosophy*. (in Russian).

³⁷ Andrey Rublyov (1360-1430).

³⁸ Рёттинг Г.Я. *Единение в любви*. Гуммерсбах: Миссия «Восток-Запад», 1993. 93 с. Rötting H.J. *Unification in Love*. (in Russian).

out that even the secular Russian philosophers of today remind us that the mystical encounter of God and a human being is a process which starts by the intervention of the Holy Spirit³⁹.

Pneumatology has always been at the very heart of Eastern theology, and this emphasis on the Holy Spirit, typical of the theological thought of the Christian East, has sometimes led to the rejection of such 'pneumatocentrism' by Western theologians. In one of my recent works I mentioned that an experiential theology (such as the Pentecostal one) aims to be a category of wisdom drawn from the experience of knowing God, rather than doctrinal wisdom⁴⁰. The experiential way of doing theology is related to the prayer life of a believer and is inseparable from the spirituality of a Christian. The hidden truths of the Kingdom are revealed only through the Holy Spirit. Unification with God is impossible without prayer because prayer is a personal encounter with God. The inner experiences of a person taking part in the Eucharist (including the one who is conducting the service) are described and analyzed by many contemporary Orthodox authors⁴¹ in continuity with the tradition of the early Church Fathers, especially the teaching of Isaac on bitter and sweet tears⁴². Deep Christian affections are at the core of Pentecostal spirituality as well and are considered to be essential for understanding theology. We do not love principles or doctrines, we love the Person! Literally, spirituality means life in God's Spirit, and a living relationship with Him. Bitter and sweet tears, as well as joy and love, were a vital part of the transformation process going on in a Christian, which was embraced by the Eastern teaching on what is sometimes infelicitously rendered in English as *deification*⁴³.

The development of this concept owes its most decisive progress to Paul, as was shown by the French scholar Jules Gross who has attempted to investigate New Testament roots of

³⁹ The future of mankind is envisaged in the acquisition of religious meaning. Russian religious philosophy has been waiting for the new birth of Christianity already since the end of the 19th century. See: Gregory S. Kiselev, Post-modernity and Christianity // *Questions of Philosophy* 12 (2001), pp. 3-15 (in Russian).

⁴⁰ Zaprometova O. Religious Experience as a Way of Doing Theology: Challenges of the Twentieth Century // *History and Mission in Europe: Continuing the Conversation* /Eds. Mary Raber & Peter F. Penner. Schwarzenfeld: Neufeld Verlag, 2011. P. 399-411.

⁴¹ The book of Metropolitan Benjamin on the liturgy is just one. See: Metropolitan Benjamin (Fedchenkov). Thoughts about the liturgy of the Faithful // *Liturgy of the Faithful*. Moscow: The Rule of Faith (2006): 55-356.

⁴² Zaprometova O. Experiencing the Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Reading of the Early Church Fathers. Part 2: Isaak of Nineveh and Simeon the New Theologian // *JEPTA* (2010) 30-1: 1-19.

⁴³ From Lat. *deificatio*. Elevation to the position of a god. In early Eastern Church theologians, an image for salvation in which through Christ believers can be made like God (2 Peter 1:4). Also, divinization. McKim D.K. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1996. P. 73.

this doctrine that developed in a uniquely Christian form from the time of Irenaeus onward⁴⁴. The Pauline concept of divinisation or *theosis* (Greek: “making divine”) – the unification of a human being with God, the theology and mysticism of the apostle, present divinisation as the direct effect of the assimilating union with Christ, the death and resurrection of God the Saviour. According to Gregory of Nyssa, in order to permit us to partake of His body “raised to the divine dignity”, Christ instituted the Eucharist, by means of which He, like a seed, is put into the body of believers. By this union He makes them partakers of incorruptibility, in other words, He deifies them⁴⁵. It is the union of human nature with divinity, established by the incarnation and sealed by the resurrection, that, so to speak, “deifies”. This union is extended to individuals through the sacraments (or hidden truths) of baptism and the Eucharist, and is made a reality by the Holy Spirit. Here we see how close Pneumatology and Ecclesiology are coming together. The new birth is given and one starts one’s pilgrimage following Christ. The Eucharist is bringing us to Christ’s “likeness” and to a total unification with the Lord. According to Gregory Palamas (1296-1359), the unification of a person with Christ in the Eucharistic mystery is the highest form of divine love revealed to us⁴⁶. There is a vibrant dynamic in the Lord’s Supper service! We are becoming one with Him in partaking the bread and wine, following His commandment – it isn’t easy to understand it fully – it is a mystery, the mystery of faith!

Conclusion

I do realize that my presentation has hardly achieved anything more than raising some questions and concerns related to the perception of the Eucharist by contemporary Christians, and it is appealing for a more profound development of the theology of the Eucharist for Russian Pentecostals.

First, we know a lot about the Spirit, especially in the Pentecostal context, but do we know the Spirit Who is leading us into the fellowship of the Trinity?! Do we realize that in

⁴⁴ To share the “newness of life” (Rom 6:4) or to become a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17, Eph 2:4-10) a person must be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), etc. See: Gross J. *The Divinization of the Christian according to the Greek Fathers*. Anaheim: A & C Press, 2002. P. 82-83.

⁴⁵ Gross J. *Ibid.* P. 185-186.

⁴⁶ Мандзаридис Г. *Обожение человека по учению святителя Григория Паламы*. Свято-Троицкая Сергиева Лавра, 2003. С. 45-46. Mantzaridis Georgios I. *The Deification of Man. St. Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*. (in Russian).

Eucharist we are invited to share the Trinitarian experience? What could we offer to the contemporary, mostly secular, world seeking for new experiences in life, for something that will fill the emptiness and loneliness, for spirituality? Do we ourselves realize the richness of our spiritual heritage? (I have to admit that a lot of the treasures of Eastern Pneumatology the Lord revealed to me during my studies in the United States, which I called my American exile. Reading the Eastern Fathers as primary sources I found explanations for my own spiritual experiences! For these lessons I am really grateful!). Could we preach and teach about the concepts of *perichoresis* and *theosis* that are our common heritage⁴⁷? Perhaps we will have to start with updating or contextualizing the terminology? Pentecostals know it by experience, Orthodox believers, primarily scholars, know it from tradition, although I do recognize that there are those who truly experience the Holy Spirit in every Christian tradition. At the same time a lot of the experiences that I shared concerning the underground Pentecostal church back in the 1980s, my students, who are mostly from unbelieving families, have never experienced in the contemporary church context.

Second, “The Church is a gathering of all believers to whom the pure Gospel is preached and to whom the Holy Sacraments are given” – this is the definition of the Church by the Augsburg Confession (paragraph seven). Thus this Western statement pointing as it does to the importance of the Eucharist for Ecclesiology (which is the theme of our presentation), is in accord with the Eastern one: “The Church is coming into view in the sacraments” (Nikolaos Kabasilas, 1322-1392) and “The sacraments constitute the Church” (Georghy Florovsky, 1893-1979)⁴⁸. The idea of the Eucharist as the Kingdom of God is in tune as well with the Pentecostal passion for the Kingdom and it is in the Eucharist where Pneumatology and Ecclesiology are coming together.

Finally – I was glad to find the same concern for spiritual experiences among contemporary Orthodox and Catholic scholars/ministers. Schmemmann shared his grief when writing about his realization of the same kind of *Eucharistic crisis* in the Church. He considers that it is the urgent need of the Church to open once again, and for every church member, the

⁴⁷ Once, I remember, I was approached by one Russian Orthodox scholar (after her acquaintance with my article on the Pentecostal reading of the Church Fathers) with a question: How do you dare to use our Fathers”?

⁴⁸ Quoted according to: Zizioulas J., Metropolitan of Pergamus. Eucharist and the Kingdom of God // *Church and Eucharist*. Transl. from Greek by Hieromonk Leontias (Kozlov). Bogoroditze-Sergiev Pustyn (2009): 203-298.

true meaning and the true purpose of the Eucharist as a Mystery of the Church. To realize the service of the Eucharist as the central act, in which the Church is becoming the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the gift of a New Life, the manifestation of the Kingdom of God, the knowledge of God and fellowship with Him – this is what we need⁴⁹. The encyclical of Pope John Paul II *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003) once again affirmed that the Eucharist is the source, centre and climax of the life of a Christian and of the church, and therefore, of its pastoral ministry. Cardinal Walter Kasper (b.1933) considers that we are living in the time when there is a need to re-open the meaning of the Eucharist and the Liturgy, and points to the need for liturgical education⁵⁰.

I consider theological education to be nowadays a true mission of the Church because it is developing our cultural memory allowing us to experience the mystery of remembrance! At the same time I am really concerned about the change of the educational paradigms that are taking place in many schools and programs. It is obvious that even within Biblical Studies and Theology our seminary curriculum is following a secular pattern and moving from a focus on God to a focus on man – more counseling, marriage and family, theology of children, etc., anthropology and sociology, instead of theology proper – the doctrine of God the Holy Trinity, Christology, Soteriology and Pneumatology. While the world (not only in Russia) is seeking for *spirituality*, and the academic world is working on the spiritual values without which we (as a society) are in danger of losing our self-identity, the church instead is trying to adapt to contemporary society. Quite often, due to the loud and joyful praise and worship, we are failing to recognize the seriousness of the Eucharist in our church service.

I started my presentation by sharing my longing for the Eucharist. I needed it as my *daily bread*, although at that time I didn't realize the depth of its theological meaning. Our house liturgy was very simple, and we never identified it as a liturgy. Still it was the mystery of the Church, and the Holy Spirit was present among us as He was with so many God-fearers worldwide, those who were without any church building or even sometimes without bread or wine. I believe you've heard such stories (at least I have heard them).

⁴⁹ Протопресвитер Александр Шмеман. *Святая Святых*. Киев: Центр Православной Книги, 2007. С. 69
Schmemmann A. *Holy things for holy people*. (in Russian).

⁵⁰ Каспер В. *Таинство единства. Евхаристия и церковь*. М.: ББИ, 2007. С. 17. *Walter Kasper. Sacrament of Unity*. (in Russian).

At the EAAA⁵¹ meetings Eurasian evangelicals expressed the urgent need for liturgical renewal. I believe the same is true within the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Russia, a renewal that will be God-centered rather than man-centered. We need to deepen our worship and to bring the Eucharist back its proper place as a climax of the Christian life⁵².

When we mention the symbolic character of the Eucharist, we have to keep in mind that all language consists of symbols that serve to help us in understanding the most difficult concepts or ideas. Symbols are challenging us to ask questions about their meaning and are a vital part of our cultural memory formation process. Let us follow the example of the Pesakh Haggadah and the important role of questions and answers for Judaism. Old symbols become reinterpreted, due perhaps to environmental changes. It was a problem for the pagan world in the first Christian era to grasp the meaning of this most important service celebrated in the catacombs during the persecution by officialdom. Later in history the concept of the Eucharist will appear at the center of the discussion within both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, both among those who came before the Reformation and those who followed in their steps (Evangelicals and Pentecostals). Moreover it serves always as the main disciplinary tool of the Church next to excommunication. The Eucharist is functioning, according to Lotman, as a “semiotic condenser”, emerging as “the mediator between textual synchrony and cultural memory”⁵³. Jan and Aleida Assmann’s theory of *communicative and cultural memory* could be applied to such a study and could serve as an example of the postmodern approach to historiography (to be compared with the traditional historical-comparative approach) with text as its main object and which presents the formation of a new way of thinking⁵⁴. It is possible to discover in different Christian bodies (subcultures) and their approaches to the interpretation of the Eucharist the patterns that might be defined as implicit (traditional) and explicit (the

⁵¹ The Eurasian Accreditation Association serves the needs of theological education for the former Soviet Union countries and is celebrating its 10th anniversary in October 2011 (Kiev). <http://www.e-aaa.info>

⁵² Second Vatican council – the liturgical renewal is a sign of the Holy Spirit’s visitation of the Church (SC 43 – p.33).

⁵³ Лотман Ю. Символ в системе культуры // *Статьи по семиотике культуры и искусства*. Санкт-Петербург: Академический проект (2002): 211-225. Lotman Y. Symbol in the System of Culture // *Articles on the Semiotics of Culture and Art*. (in Russian).

⁵⁴ Jordan S. Theorien und Methoden der Geschichtswissenschaft. – Paderborn, 2009. S. 169. Assmann J. Guilt and Remembrance. On Theologization of History in the Ancient Near East // *History and Memory. Studies in Representation of the Past*. 2.1. 1990: 5 – 33.

concepts that are in the process of formation, defined by Jan Assmann as *theological discourse*⁵⁵).

The Eucharist is challenging our memory and at the same time is inviting us to join the fellowship of the divine uniting into a single whole past, present and future. This is not just the ancient ritual: all parts of this experience are realities that are already granted. The Holy Trinity is gathering us together as the Church uniting the beginning with the end and giving us a new beginning in Love through the Holy Spirit. Mystery is neither rational nor logical; communion with the Holy Trinity is possible only through the Holy Spirit! This memory is helping us in the process of building our self-identity (as members of the covenanters, those who belong to the Kingdom and not to this world). The Eucharist is our reunification with the Father through the sacrifice of the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is a well known fact that Pentecostalism is fundamentally experiential and culturally constructed. Nowadays Pentecostals (including the Charismatic movement which some Russian authors call Neo-Pentecostalism) are growing in numbers in Russia, and have become a visible phenomenon in both religious and social spheres, attracting the attention of the media and provoking considerable controversy. The formation of our memory, our communal memory, is influencing our own formation as His children, His chosen ones. The Eucharist is the essence and the centre of our Church life – life in the Kingdom and longing for the Kingdom that is at the same time already and not yet.

⁵⁵ This term Assmann borrowed from M. Foucault. See: Ассман Я. Египет. Теология и благочестие цивилизации. М.: Прицельс, 1999. С. 244. Assmann J. *Theologie und Weisheit im alten Ägypten*. (in Russian)..