

Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies
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I. The Glorious Church

The Church as the Revelation of the Glory of Christ

The Glory of Christ: Power and Cross

John 2:11: “This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”

Through the miracle Jesus reveals God’s generosity

John 12: 23-33: The “hour” for him to be glorified is the hour of his death: the kernel of wheat falling to the ground.

v. 32: “lifted up” exaltation; lifted up on the Cross

The *revealed* glory of God is always manifested in a paradoxical manner.

Ex 33:18-23; 34:5-7

The church is glorious because she is meant to be like Christ both in “the power of his resurrection” and in “the fellowship of his suffering” (Phil 3:10).

But how is the church to reflect Christ’s glory?

By imitation

Through the work of the triune God: the church is brought into existence by being spiritually and ontologically linked to the triune

The Church as the Body of Christ: The *totus Christus*

Who Christ is, cannot be understand apart from his relation to the One he calls “Father” and to the Paraclete who is sent from the Father in Jesus’ Name.

Jesus and the Spirit

Jesus’ relation to the Holy Spirit at the Incarnation and at his baptism illuminates the NT portrayal of Jesus as the Temple of God

- Immanuel: “God with us” (Mt. 1:22,23):
- “one greater than the temple is here” (Mt 12:6)
- John 2:18-21: His body is the temple
- Mt 28:16-20: he promised: I am with you always—“God with us”
- John sees the coming of Jesus in the flesh as the pitching of God’s tabernacle among his people (John 1:14)

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Jesus and the church

The church's most basic identity is defined by her relationship to Jesus Christ. This relationship is established at baptism.

Jesus is the most decisive factor of life. We either gain all with him or lose everything without him

Matt 10:33: "But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."

Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother...

Matt 10:34-35: Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth...

The church is instituted by Christ

With bread and wine he established the new covenant with them. He made them the primary witnesses of his resurrection.

John 20:21-23: Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²²And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Authority to proclaim reconciliation

The apostles laid the foundation and were themselves the first "building blocks" of the church and the ones through whom the church came into existence.

The church is the "embodied Christ" in the world

Jesus is the foundation, but the apostles are also foundations (Rev. 21:14)

What happened to Christ could be said to happen to the church

The suffering church implies that she is not of this world.

The church most clearly embodies and reveals Christ in its suffering

Conclusion

To be the body of Christ is to be called to reflect the glory of Christ, a glory manifested in power and poverty, meekness and majesty, weakness and authority.

II. The Church as the Communion of the Holy Spirit

There is a Christological and also a pneumatological dimension of the church.

- The church is *instituted* by Christ and *constituted* by the Spirit (Zizioulas)
- Jesus institutes the church, i.e., establishes the church and gives to the church a distinct identity. Jesus establishes the “legal” status as the Body of Christ.
But the Holy Spirit *con-stitutes*, i.e. brings it together or actualizes the church as a vibrant communion.

Distinctions:

- The church is instituted by Christ as the *de jure* Body, but constituted by the Spirit as the *de facto* Body.
- If the gift of the Spirit in John 20:22 is an institutive act of Jesus, Pentecost is the constitutive event of the Spirit.
- The redemptive work of Christ is once-for-all. It is decisive, in the aorist tense, whereas the work of the Holy Spirit is on-going and dynamic.
- Christ’s work is a work *for us*. It is the objective basis of our reconciliation and peace with God. The Spirit’s work is a work *in us* through his indwelling presence.

This distinctive work of the Spirit gives rise to an important theological principle concerning the liturgy: **The liturgy, which is the work of the people of God, is also the work of the Spirit.**

Constituted by the Spirit as a Communion

Summary

- In Scripture, communion is appropriated to the Holy Spirit, as seen in Paul’s benediction in 2 Corinthians: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.”
- Theologically, the Spirit effects communion by uniting the church to the Christ, making the church the Body of Christ and vivifying the church with his life.
The Holy Spirit is the Lord and giver of life, according to the Nicene Creed.
- By his indwelling the church becomes “the temple of the Spirit.”

In his indwelling the church, the Spirit is revealed as the Third Person of the Trinity.

The Pentecost Event: The Personal Indwelling of the Spirit

The intimate connection between the church and Holy Spirit has been noted through much of church history:

- In the third article of the Creed the Holy Spirit and the church are linked together.
- In the *Canons of Hippolytus*, a third century liturgical document, the question put to catechumens is: “Do you believe in the Holy Spirit *in* the catholic church?”
- Josef Jungmann: The church *is* the unity of the Holy Spirit

The Communion of Saints

The essential characteristic of the church is communion: “I believe in the holy catholic church, the communion of saints.”

Three ways of understanding communion of the Holy Spirit

First, the Holy Spirit stands as the bond of unity between Father and Son.
Second, the Spirit is the communion between the *church* and the Trinity.
Third, the Spirit is the communion *between* members of the body of Christ.

Spirit as Gift and Giver of gifts

Actualized most supremely in the liturgy

The whole liturgy begins with the *coming together* from the world and ends with the *scattering* into the world.

The nature of ecclesial communion in the Holy Spirit

Yves Congar: The Spirit is “the person without a personal face.”

The communion of the Holy Spirit in the church is characterized by a certain self-forgetfulness, a personal self-effacement.

The same principle applies to the worship of the church.

The church images the Spirit

If the Spirit is Gift and Communion, the church reveals the Spirit’s face by being Gift and Communion.

Spirit as Third Person

Vladimir Lossky: a relation of two implies “reciprocal limitation,” whereas a relationship of three “establishes absolute diversity” and “open-ended infinity.”

In the Spirit-fellowship the primary reality is not individual self-fulfillment or even mutual enrichment but an ecstatic movement.

Ecstasy and Missio Dei

Just as the communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not satisfied with just themselves but desires to include the “other,” that is, the church in the Trinitarian communion, the church mirrors the Trinitarian fellowship by being the missionary church.

Communion expressed in a concrete visible structure

Charisma and institution belong together in the church. Institution without charisma is dead; charisma without institution is destructive.

Visible structure ordered hierarchically

...patterned after the Trinitarian hierarchy in which the Father is the source of both the *unity* and the *distinction* of persons in the Trinity

The very structure of the church enables real communion to take place because it is in this very structure that we can be liberated from individualism

Communion of the *Holy Spirit*

The holiness of the communion is the holiness of separation from the world and devotion to God

The separation of the church from the world is the very means of the consummation of the world

III. The Church as the Consummation of Creation

The church is called out of this world, but this is not dualism. The world finds its consummation in the church.

The creation of the world and man

The creation of the world was to prepare for the entrance of man.

Man is created free in order that he may freely enter into a relationship of communion with God.

The covenantal relationship takes its most concrete shape in the election of Abraham.

The church is what God wanted the world to *become*. It embraces the non-human and inanimate creation.

The scandal of particularity

Through one man Abraham comes a particular nation through whom comes one Man, Jesus Christ, who will ultimately bless the world.

The story of salvation did not end with the coming of Christ but continues with the sending of the *particular* Spirit: the Holy Spirit.

Ratzinger, “Dominus Iesus”: rejects the concept of the cosmic Christ that separates the eternal Logos from the incarnate Christ

This is the vision of the church that is most consistently preserved in Orthodoxy:

Without limiting the Spirit to the institutional church, we have always to remember that the destiny of the whole creation somehow passes through the church, where the world finds its true meaning and salvation. All this makes the community of the church the place where creation is liberated from self-sufficiency and is offered to its Creator as being “His own.”¹

The church is *intrinsic* to the whole process of renewing creation

Two fundamental concepts underlie the Orthodox understanding of the church:

1. Personhood as the ultimate ontological category for uniting church and creation
2. The doctrine of the church as a divine-human reality

Personhood

Orthodoxy: does not just see persons as relational beings, but more specifically as *ecclesial* beings.

¹ “Orthodox Reflections,” §4e.

Zizioulas: “chain of hypostatic existence”:

1. The triune God as the source of personhood and particularity;
2. Human persons made in the image of God
3. The rest of creation hypostatized by “incorporation in the human being”

Vladimir Lossky: The “absolute correspondence of person with a personal God allows him to ‘personalize’ the world. Man no longer saves himself through the universe, but the universe is saved through man. For man is the hypostasis of the whole cosmos which participates in his nature.”²

Ecological implication: Zizioulas:

The Church as *koinōnia* relates also to the animal and material world as a whole. Perhaps the most urgent mission of the Church today is to become conscious of and to proclaim in the strongest terms the fact that there is an intrinsic communion between the human being and its natural environment, a communion that must be brought into the Church’s very being in order to receive its fullness.³

The whole creation must pass through the church—eucharistically

The church as a divine-human reality

Catholicism stresses church’s institutional life

Protestantism reduces church to sociological phenomenon

Orthodoxy stresses both institution and spiritual nature of church, both earthly and heavenly.

Divine origin of church seen in various aspects of Orthodox theology

1. Liturgy as enactment of worship of heaven; icons
2. The Bride of Christ “coming down out of heaven from God (Rev 21:2); a divine-humanity

Conclusion

Eucharist, the means for the spiritualization of creation

Three visions of the glorious church:

1. She is clothed in cruciform glory
2. She is the communion of the Holy Spirit, united with Christ by the indwelling Spirit
3. She is the sign and means of the consummation of creation

The liturgy is the embodiment and expression of such a church.

² *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Ian and Ihita Kesarcodi-Watson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1989), 71.

³ John Zizioulas, “The Church as Communion,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 38.1 (1994): 13.

IV. The Liturgy as the Actualization of the Church

Karl Barth:

The work of construction in which the community is the true Church is at its centre...the work in which true to its name of *ekklesia*, the community comes together as the congregation of the Lord and is at work and confesses and gives itself to be known as such before God and His angels and the world and not least itself and its individual members. This work is its common worship.⁴

Schmemmann, worship is church “manifesting, creating and fulfilling herself as the Body of Christ.”⁵

J.-J. von Allmen:

[I]t is in the sphere of worship, the sphere par excellence where the life of the Church comes into being, that the fact of the Church first emerges. It is there that it gives proof of itself, there where it is focused, and where we are led when we truly seek it, and it is from that point that it goes out into the world to exercise its mission.⁶

von Allmen:

Every time the Church assembles to celebrate the cult, to “proclaim the death of Christ” (1 Cor 11:26), it proclaims also the end of the world and the failure of the world. It contradicts the world’s claim to provide men with a valid justification for their existence, it renounces the world: it affirms, since it is made up of the baptized, that it is only on the other side of death to this world that life can assume its meaning.... Christian worship is the strongest denial that can be hurled in face of the world’s claim to provide men with an effective and sufficient protest against the pride and the despair of the world than that implied in Church worship.⁷

True worship distinguishes the church as church

The church’s defining characteristic is its worshipful response to the call of God to be his people.

At worship we “glorify” God; and to glorify God and enjoy him forever (communion) is to realize “man’s chief end.”

Worship and liturgy

Non-liturgical worship

In non-liturgical worship the *needs of the people* determine how the worship is to be constructed or deconstructed

⁴ CD IV/2, 638.

⁵ *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1966, 1996), pp. 29, 31.

⁶ J.-J. von Allmen, *Worship Its Theology and Practice* (London: Lutterworth, 1965), p. 44.

⁷ *Worship: Its Theology and Practice* (London: Lutterworth, 1966), p. 63.

monological rather than dialogical

Liturgical worship

The liturgy seeks to be faithful to this theological given: The revelation of the triune God summed up in the Paschal Mystery.

1. God reveals himself as the triune God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. The focal point of the revelation of the triune God is Jesus Christ and the work of redemption
3. In this work God shows himself to be both loving and holy (the cruciform glory)
4. The end of his work is the church

Liturgy as enactment

We are participating in the fullest sense, “indwelling” the liturgy

We are proclaiming *corporately and objectively* who God *is* and not how I *feel* about God.

Liturgical: “Gloria in Excelsis”

Non-liturgical: “I Will Worship”

The liturgy may be compared to a drama in which all the worshippers are engaged in acting out a given script.

The liturgy manifests the faith of the church

Active participants are given a fresh vision of the Church

In indwelling the liturgy, we are participating in *the faith of the church*.

Ritus pacis: “Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles: I leave you peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom.”

In the Western Church, the glorious church seen in the Doxology: “with angels and archangels and all the heavenly hosts.”

In the Eastern Church, the liturgy manifests the solidarity of the church on earth with the church in heaven: the iconostasis

The form and content of the liturgy

Differences in liturgical traditions: The Paschal Mystery is not understood in the same way

In mainline Protestantism, liturgical language has actually distorted the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. The language of Father, Son and Spirit conspicuously muted.

Conclusion

The liturgy cannot be compromised either in its basic rationale or content.

- How do we educate the people of God to better appreciate and better participate in *the liturgy*?
- How do we carry out the liturgy *well* so that it will form people as the church of Jesus Christ

Liturgical education is more than liturgical instruction; it requires imagination.

V. The Liturgy as Theology

The development of the liturgy reflects the development of theology. A “liturgy” governed by human needs distorts the worshippers’ understanding of God.

Seen in “contemporary” worship:

- Christian life is primarily about my personal relationship with God
- No place for sorrow and weakness
- God is the “nice guy”
- A sentimental concept of divine holiness

Biblical concept holiness and the divine glory seen in:

Isa 6:1-5

Job 42:1-6

Eze 1:28; 3:23

Rev. 1:12-17

The traditional liturgy is structured around certain theological “givens” and communicates the central truths of the Christian faith.

1. It enacts a Trinitarian theology as seen in

- The opening of the service
Roman missal: The Pauline benediction
Orthodoxy: “Blessed is the kingdom of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”
The Trisagion
- Hymn of Adoration
Gloria in Excelsis/ Gloria Patri
- The collects
- The Creed
- The Eucharistic Prayer
- The Doxology at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer

2. It centers in the gospel of Jesus Christ

A definition of the liturgy: “The liturgy...is making present in word, symbol and sacrament of *the paschal mystery of Christ* so that through its celebration the men and women of today make a saving encounter with God.”⁸

⁸ *The Study of Liturgy*, eds. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, SJ, Paul Bradshaw (London: SPCK, 1992), p. 17.

The centrality of the gospel seen in...

- The church calendar
- The Kyrie
- Gloria, Creed and Eucharistic Prayer: Jesus given the longest description
- The Memorial Acclamation:
- Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again
- Agnus Dei
- The readings and sermon

Result: The church becomes a gospel-shaped community

3. It reveals God as both loving and holy

Rom 3:21-26: What God did in Christ reveals the justice of God.

In Scripture, God's goodness and holiness are juxtaposed:

- Deut 7:9-11
- Deut 10:16-22
- Rom 11:22

In the liturgy,

- Confession: "Almighty God, our heavenly Father" (ASB)
- Collect for purity

4. It shows the end of worship to be the creation of the church

Liturgy forms our corporate identity as seen in...

The "we" of corporate prayer and songs

Rare exceptions: Two occurrences of "I" in the Roman Missal

- Prayer of confession
- Before reception of eucharistic bread and wine

The eucharistic celebration

The importance of active participation

Good liturgy could suffer from bad practice. But practice could occur in "contemporary" services too.

Active participation is a demanding exercise. Worshippers should be like good actors who "indwell" the script of a drama.

Promises of the "convergence" movements

Liturgical worship in a theological community

According to Orthodox theology, dogmatic theology is simply a commentary on the liturgy. The faith of the church is embodied in the normative liturgy.

If this is the case, liturgical worship plays a vital role in theological education:

- Lessons learned in the classroom are enhanced in the chapel

- The truth enacted in chapel equips us to engage in further theological reflection

VI. Liturgy as Practice

A theologically sound liturgy must be soundly implemented. How?

Active participation is based on the fact that the liturgy is as much the work of the Spirit as it is the work of the people. Both the Spirit and the people are simultaneously at work:

Synergy

Synergy must be understood in relation to the Eastern concept of human freedom as part of the *imago Dei*. Freedom is an ontological reality, “the essence of the original relationship of love between Creator and creatures (Nikos Nissiotis).

Synergy is humans acting freely as humans in *response* to God’s initiative in Christ. *Respons-ibility* is an essential part of human nature before *and* after the Fall.

The liturgy is the work of the Spirit in and through the work of the people of God.

The nature of active participation

Drawn largely from two post-Vatican II documents: *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (RS) and *Sacramentum Caritatis* (SC)

There are a number of important principles to foster active participation which these Documents highlight:

Flexibility, variety, and creativity

The liturgy is more than a set of words to be recited; it is a drama to be acted out involving cognition and imagination.

A deep sense of awe

The Eucharist itself, properly understood and well celebrated, would instill a sense of awe.

Other forms of spiritual exercises

Liturgy of the Hours and personal daily devotions are important preparation of active participation.

Personal responsibility and attitude

“an inner disposition...fostered...by recollection and silence....” (SC §55)

Public and private confession of sin (cf. Ps 24:2, 4)

Involvement in the *missio Dei*

Proper understanding

Liturgical education in the catechumenate is most vital (SC §64)

In RCIA the whole initiation process is linked closely to the liturgy.

Celebrating the liturgy well

This is the responsibility of the celebrant: “the best catechesis on the Eucharist is the Eucharist itself, celebrated well” (SC §64)

Personal active participation does not mean that one engages the liturgy for the purpose of one’s own benefit.

The liturgy is not my work alone but the work of the whole people of God. In good liturgical engagement one so indwells the script that it acts itself through us: an “active passivity,” not necessarily found in “activism.”

It is very similar to contemplative prayer.

Beware of a mindless routine. We must be open to the coming of the Holy Spirit “beyond history” (Zizioulas). This is why there is a place for a limited number of prayers *to* the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Active participation based on the doctrine of synergy.

Good liturgy integrates the sacramental, evangelical and charismatic dimensions of worship.

The liturgy helps to structure our personal devotions and helps us overcome individualism.

VII. The Liturgy as the Means and End of Mission

If worship is the response of the church to the work of the triune God which is essentially missional, then the liturgy is an enactment of the *missio Dei*.

The *ultimate* end of mission is not getting people saved but communion with the triune God.

The church and the mission of God

The modern church experiences a deep disconnect between worship and mission. It sees worship as a practical arrangement and lacks a *theology* of worship to link it to mission.

Nissiotis: The church *witnesses* to the Trinitarian event at worship; there is not dichotomy between a doxological witness and prophetic witness.

Worship defines the mission of God

The NT sets mission in its liturgical context

Rom 1:9: “I render *to God* spiritual service in proclaiming the Gospel of his Son.”

Rom 15:15-16: I have written to you boldly...because of the grace given me by God to be a minister (*leitourgos*) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service (*hierourgōn*) of the gospel of God, so that the offering (*prosphora*) of the gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

Eph 1: 6, 12, 14: Salvation of sinners has to do with the glory of God: “to the praise of His glory”

Eph 2:10: we are God’s work of art. Mission is about building the church into God’s masterpiece. The building up (edification) is what we do at worship.

Eph 3:8-11: Paul proclaims the mystery of Christ revealed through the church. The mystery is first proclaimed vertically in the liturgy and then horizontally in the world.
The liturgy includes concerns for the world (“The Great Litany” in Orthodoxy)

Worship shapes the rest of life

Zizioulas: life is colored by the “Eucharistic ethos” which grows out of the Sunday Eucharist.

The Sunday Eucharistic event shapes mission: we see the missional God coming to us to bring us back to communion through Jesus Christ in the Spirit.

Mission leads us back to communion with God

We call sinners in to offer them up to God as “living sacrifices”

The issue of “missional ecclesiology”

The “sending out” is completed in the “return” to communion.

Yves Congar: “The whole liturgy expresses...a movement of God towards us and of us towards God. This movement passes from the Father through the Son in the Spirit and returns in the Spirit through the Son to the glory of the Father, who takes us, as his children, into communion with him” (*I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, I: 104).

Missional ecclesiology is not complete without ecclesiological mission.

Mission per se does not define the essence of the church, but communion.

C. S. Lewis: “Aim at heaven and you will have earth thrown in; aim at earth, and you’ll get neither.”

VIII. The Liturgy as a “Perpetual Pentecost”

The Paradoxes of the Liturgy

The liturgy is full of paradoxes. These paradoxes reflect the paradoxical glory of Christ: his cruciform glory which the glorious church images.

Sunday: the 1st and 8th day, a juxtaposition of the old and the new
Eucharist enacts the paradox of the “already” and “not yet”

Christian existence is marked by this eschatological tension enacted in the Eucharist (G. Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*)

The church both remembers (*anamnesis*; “Memorial Acclamation”) and anticipates the Eschaton: calling on the Holy Spirit to “come!” (*epiclesis*)

The liturgy expresses both warning and hope.

The Paradoxes of the Spirit

The coming of the Spirit to the church is itself a paradox: his coming is made possible by Jesus’ “departure” through the cross, resurrection and ascension (*Dominum et Vivificantem*)

The key to maintaining this eschatological tension is the liturgy where the church acknowledges her epicletic existence. She constantly calls upon the Spirit to come, and whenever the Spirit comes he brings a new Pentecost (Nissiotis).

Pentecost is the liturgy of the word; it culminates in the Eucharist: word leading to Eucharist, mission leading to communion.

Each coming of the Spirit is a fresh encounter.

The Spirit’s paradoxical relationship with the Church

He is in the church and also coming from “beyond”; there is both permanence and newness.

Spirit of truth makes the truth both historical and charismatic
Church experiences a continuing transfiguration

Baptism: the first step in the process of transfiguration

Eucharist: the church undergoes on-going transformation by feeding on spiritual food and drink

Newness of the Spirit is not novelty but the newness of the “old, old story”

Spirit reveals the “not yet” of Christ: church is shaped Christologically and conditioned pneumatologically

The Pentecostal contribution to the church as “perpetual Pentecost”:

Where in the liturgy is the Spirit’s work acknowledged? How high an expectation do we have for the Spirit to work in our liturgical assembly?

Liturgical Spirituality

The task of liturgical spirituality is to ensure that the paradoxes of the liturgy are properly juxtaposed and kept alive.

Avoiding two enemies of worship:

1. Traditionalism
Canonizing one particular period of history leaves no room for the Spirit to lead the church forward
2. Novelty
Reliance of passing fads cuts the church from its permanent foundation

How do we maintain the paradoxes of the liturgy?

1. Need to give more room for the Spirit to move freely in the regular liturgy (not just occasional, special meetings): prayer for healing
2. Communion as a “converting ordinance” (Wesley)
3. Pentecost corresponds to the Liturgy of the Word. More attention needs to be given to proclamation of the gospel rather than motivational talks
4. The *whole* liturgy is epicletic, not just at a certain point in the Eucharist. There are other places in the liturgy where the work of the Spirit is actualized: the “altar ministry”; tactile expressions