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THE EUCHARIST AESTHETICS AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY

SUMMARY. Through the example of different understanding of the Eucharist in Orthodoxy and Protestantism this paper demonstrates a role of sensibility and aesthetics in the process of self-understanding of the human and society, in formation of aesthetic-anthropological ideal, which underlies social culture. Distinct aesthetic features, involved into the orthodox sacrament of Communion, contribute to consolidation of social unity of believers and let them consider the universal (catholic) church experience as the supreme authority. As a rule, rational and semantic features of the Eucharist come to the fore in Protestantism, when sensitive ones withdraw into the shadows. In some protestant confessions the Community is considered as spiritual nourishment with the Word of God, i.e. as acceptance of truths, contained in the Holy Writ. Diminution of the sensibility role contributes to the formation of an aesthetic-anthropological ideal, which lies in the background of rational culture, alien to mysticism, which consecrates the routine of rational practice and critically approaches an accomplished collective church experience. Dedication and appeal to sensibility contribute to an increase in confidence to the social unity experience. Socialization of such experience leads to its canonization and builds a socio-centrist hierarchical model of society, which is very stable on the one hand, and hardly develops, on the other.

KEY WORDS. Aesthetic-anthropological ideal, Eucharist, deification (Theosis), sacred, society, human, sensibility, rationality, mysticism.

The aesthetics of the Eucharist has significant influence on the formation and functioning of the aesthetic-anthropological ideal, which is a “personified, concrete sensory representation of the human norm, of something that should be. Having appeared, aesthetic-anthropological ideal begins to determine the specific character of the existence of society. A personality who brought the new vision and understanding of the sacred into the social life often becomes an embodied ideal” [1; 85]. In Christianity primarily the figure of Jesus Christ serves as an aesthetic-anthropological ideal [2; 80-82]. In Orthodoxy and Catholicism this ideal includes the Church as a mystical anthropomorphic entity, whose head is Christ himself (Ephesians 1:22-23, Eph. 5:23, Max. 1:18). Sensory and aesthetic sides of the Eucharist largely contribute to the understanding of the Church as the infallible Body of Christ.

The Eucharist (thanksgiving) is considered as the most solemn and joyful event in Christianity. In various denominations it is also called Oblation, the Fraction, the Table Spread and the Lord’s Supper. This ordinance serves to remind the faithful of

their unity in Christ, of the last meal of Jesus Christ with the Apostles, of His atoning death on the Cross, the Resurrection and the Second Coming, etc. The Eucharist contains many meanings. Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev) summarizing the notion of the Eastern Church Fathers on the sacrament of the Eucharist, distinguishes up to seven key concepts [3]. According to the Orthodox teaching, during the liturgy the sacrament of bread and wine becoming the body and blood of Jesus Christ takes place. Theologically, the Orthodox teaching on the Eucharist derives from the concept of a perfect man — Jesus Christ who inseparably combined Divine and human nature. Jesus Christ's Incarnation of God is the foundation of the Eucharist. As God took flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary and became truly Human, so are the worthy, who, partaking of the Holy Sacraments, accept Christ and become gods by grace. As Christ was conceived in the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, so the Eucharist partakers bear Christ in himself and transform into His likeness.

Thus, a member of the liturgy partaking of the Holy Sacraments, joins the divine nature. This sacrament is opposed to the process of eating perishable food. It is not the food that goes into someone who consumes it, but Christ through the Holy Spirit transforms someone who partakes of Him into Himself. This performance of the Eucharist and the transformation of human were described by John Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo in the 4th-5th centuries, and Nikola Kavasila in the 14th century [4; 54], [5]. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407), who taught that in the Eucharistic bread and wine there was the real presence of Christ and the real unity of a partaker of the sacrament with Christ, conveys the sensual corporeal nature of the sacrament with peculiar skill. In *Conversation (Homily) 82 minutes on the Gospel of Matthew* the saint writes: "How many now say, I would wish to see His form, the mark, His clothes, His shoes. Lo! You see Him, Thou touchest Him, you eat Him. And thou indeed desirest to see His clothes, but He gives Himself to you not to see only, but also to touch and eat and receive within you (In *Matth. 82, 4*) [6; 826]. John Chrysostom's force of statement strikes. Also strikes the beauty of Orthodox worship. But, as Orthodox authors point out, salvation is not transmitted by aesthetics liturgy, but "through the gift of Christ", through the real Sacrament of Him. [5]

The great Byzantine mystic St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022) claimed that in the Eucharist humanity is granted with the immediate unity with Christ, and through it — with the union with His divinity "by position" or "by grace" [7]. In his enthusiastic writings the saint indicates that, partaking, a man "must behold God with soulful eyes and feel His living presence in the consecrated Sacrament" [7]. Simeon pays much attention to the moral condition of the Eucharist partakers. Without deep penance, without tears and sincere regret for one's sins, it is impossible to begin the Lord's Supper. He believed that those who partake of the Holy Sacrament unworthily, only nourish the body, not the soul, and therefore, decay and death are the fate of those people.

Orthodox thinkers unanimously indicate the need for an inner transformation of man. They speak absolutely right about the necessity of moral perfection of an individual. And only the community of the transformed individuals can create life that

will not be hell. This world still exists only by virtue of prayers of the righteous. However, the understanding of the role of Life's feast in the process of moral transformation, in our opinion, makes it difficult to recognize the role of social structures that prevent the malversation of people in power. Individuals captured by the beauty of the Eucharist, transfer religious, enthusiastic and aesthetic attitude to persons representing both church and state, cooperating with the church. In other words, the concept of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist influences the perception of certain individuals who, by virtue of their position, are sanctified by authority of religion as God's representatives. Not by chance during the worries in late 2012 — early 2013, Patriarch Kirill spoke in favour of inner spiritual transformation, not of the changes in the external structures of power, preventing malversations [8].

There exists an alternative understanding of the Eucharist, and therefore, of the man, in other, not Orthodox, branches of Christianity. In Protestantism there is no single attitude to the sacraments. Some, following M. Luther, consider them as the Word of God and believe that they are capable of transmitting grace. Others find in the sacraments only a symbolic expression of God's mercy and his faith in Him.

As a rule, Protestants deny the conversion, implementation, transubstantiation of bread and wine into the real body and blood of Jesus Christ. Due to the fact that many Protestant denominations insist that the words of Christ, summoning to eat His flesh and drink His blood, have purely symbolic significance (John 6), then eat Christ, in this case, means to partake of the word of life — the Bible, which bears the life-giving power.

In other words, Christ, who is named the Word of God in the Bible, calls to partake of His words contained in His Writings: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63); "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). From this view point, participation in the ministering of the sacrament shows that the believer depends on Christ in the spiritual life as well as on food and drink in physical life.

Ellen White, the famous Protestant writer, expressed the similar understanding of communion as follows: "The Word of God is to be the support of the afflicted, the comfort to the persecuted. God Himself speaks to the believing, trusting soul, for God's Spirit is in His Word, and a special blessing will be received by those who accept the words of God when illuminated to their mind by the Holy Spirit. It is thus that the believer eats of Christ, the Bread of Life. Truth is seen in a new light, and the soul rejoices as in the visible presence of Christ" (Signs of the Times, Oct. 10, 1895) [9; June 30].

Symbolic comprehension of performed actions and personal belief that during the Lord's Supper a Christian meets with his God, as if pushing spiritual activity from the scope of church-ritual, cult actions into the everyday world and everyday life, in which the sacred is manifested, according to the Protestant thought. As the bread and wine, consecrated in prayer, do not represent Christ in themselves, but due to the committed acts, commanded by Christ, He personally meets with his people through the Holy Spirit, alike is in everyday life, taken by itself, there is nothing worthy of

attention. Without God, it is senseless. The Apostle Paul wrote: "I count all things but loss"(Phil. 3:8). However, everyday life makes sense due to the faith in the invisible presence of God in their lives. And even if here and now a Christian is not able to see this sense, to understand that he has faith expressed in the actions commanded by Christ.

Thus, true worship for the Protestant is his daily life. Therefore, in Protestant denominations the cult is not as developed, as in Catholicism or Orthodoxy. Its main purpose is to unite believers to worship God, to help members and guests of the Church to develop understanding of God's will contained in the Bible; to contribute to their faith, to be an instrument for communication, bearing mutual support, encouragement and joy; to make ceremonies set by the Scripture, to disseminate the sermon of the Gospel, etc.

Being compared to Catholics and Orthodox, Reformation founded different understanding of the nature and role of the church. As a rule, the symbolic understanding of the Eucharist as a spiritual nourishment with the word of God (the Bible) does not give Protestants the rights to consider themselves as a visible, sensual embodiment of God's energies. Thus, a lot of Protestants, considering their confession as the most complete embodiment of truth, do not claim that it is faultless and only one to bring salvation. According to prominent Protestant theologians and philosophers of the 20th century K. Bart and P. Tillich, "Unconditional cannot be identified with any entity, past or future, there is no absolute church in the history, as it cannot be the absolute realm of reason and justice" [10; 222] .

Thus, the visible church, according to the teachings of Protestantism, is not an infallible establishment. A Christian must always be mindful of his spiritual poverty and aspire to more complete knowledge of God, constantly reinforcing his spiritual strength by the Word of God. Herewith, perception of the experience of a Protestant fades into insignificance. Just as the resurrected Jesus having appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus did not begin to show them his wounds or perform miracles, but drew their attention to the testimony of the Holy Writ (Luke 24: 13-32), so the Protestant should check any experience, his spiritual state by the truths contained in the Bible [11; 40-41].

As a result of the Reformation that broke with mysticism and sensuality of Roman Catholicism and turned to the faith of biblical "nominalism", a new aesthetic-anthropological ideal emerged; there appeared a culture that sanctified rational and practical activities, new political and economic relations. All of modern states where the majority of the population are Protestants adhere to the principles of democracy and are economically developed. Protestant version of Christianity, with its idea of religious calling (the task set before a man by God) served as a means of man's professional activity, and contributed to the establishment of political freedom, new capitalist relations based on work, honesty, asceticism throughout the world.

In our opinion, the aesthetics of the Eucharist is the essence of differences between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, on the one hand, and Protestantism, on the other. Christos Yannaras, the Greek Orthodox theologian, explicitly reminds the readers that the

Church is a gathering around the Eucharistic meal [12]. Real, not symbolic presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, postulated by Orthodoxy, leads to the fact that people united by this Eucharistic cup, believe that Christ physically appears in their members. Symeon the New Theologian wrote most vividly about the real, sensual presence of Christ in the human body: “We awaken in Christ’s body as Christ awakens our bodies, and my poor hand is Christ, He enters my foot, and is infinitely me. I move my hand, and wonderfully my hand becomes Christ, becomes all of Him (for God is indivisibly whole, seamless in His Godhood). I move my foot, and at once He appears like a flash of lightning (Hymn. 58) [13; 261].

In our opinion, the aesthetics of the Eucharist, sensory perception of the believers of the Living God has some important for the Orthodox doctrine results. This is the doctrine of man, and the doctrine of theosis (deification), and the teaching on the infallibility of One Holy, Conciliar and Apostolic Church, etc. If the church is a gathering around the Eucharistic meal, then the criterion of trueness and orthodoxy of such meeting appears to be not a formal correspondence to confessional formulae, but the fact and experience of catholicity, embodied in the personalities of the Holy [12]. It is the experience of people united by the Eucharist meal that is the criterion of the truth of faith. Thus, the church representing God’s people who receive the Eucharist is the bearer of the Holy Spirit, so the church in its entirety cannot be wrong. Therefore, according to the Orthodox doctrine, the answers to the challenges of the era, given by the ecumenical (universal) church with its established practice will always be correct.

In this regard, we can say that the formula of “people are always right” is a secular kind of doctrine on the infallibility of God’s people in general. Although Hesychastic teaching on the nature of God and His energies does not allow to equate God and the world, in our opinion, in Orthodoxy the boundary between the transcendent and the immanent, between Holy God and His church is somewhat vague. This intermixture, according to the critics, is particularly evident in the Roman Catholic Church, which cultivates the sensory perception of the sacred. So the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope’s opinion, when he speaks on religion and morality from the pulpit, leads to the fact that the church itself is perceived as a source of the Holy Spirit.

In this connection it is challenging to compare the sensory-emotional, aesthetic tendencies in Catholicism with similar trends occurring within the boundaries of its antipode, Protestantism. The emotion and sensuality are manifested most vividly in Pentecostalism and various charismatic movements. One conspicuous feature of Pentecostalism is dynamic worship that someone might even consider as unsuitably joyful and messy. It includes preaching, singing, praying and speaking in tongues (glossolalia). Critics think that sometimes the Pentecostals give orders to the Holy Spirit, but not follow His will. Such boldness towards God, in our view, derives from the sensual equation of oneself with the energy of the Holy Spirit, the influence of which, according to the Pentecostals, they experience. Pentecostalism seems to be characterized by democracy, not authoritarianism. However, firstly, this movement was born in a country with a long democratic tradition. Secondly, Pentecostalism is

relatively young. Thirdly, Protestantism is generally characterized by a more great individualism than Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Fourthly, the role of the leader in the Pentecostal churches is very big. Thus, within Pentecostalism, sensual identification of oneself with the sacred in terms of individualism leads to continuous emergences of new separate groups of believers.

If the sensory perception of the sacred is one of the attributes but not an accident, if it is an occasional epiphenomenon of the essence, then we may observe the evolution of Pentecostal, Charismatic movements from democracy to authoritarianism, provided that they realize the need of church unity. It is likely that in Pentecostalism the same processes occur as in Hinduism, which is a conglomerate of diverse faiths. The main attention in numerous sects of Hinduism is given to personal experience, not to doctrines. But they all share a belief in the authority of the Vedas.

Thus, through the example of the Eucharist, the interdependence between the degree of sensory perception of the sacred and confidence in implication to it can be traced. In its turn, confidence in implication of any community to the sacred may serve as a source of composition of authoritarian and totalitarian power structures that have consistently demonstrated their affiliation to the sacred, the infallible, which appear for the embodiment of the unity of this community and the mouthpiece of the global truth of existence. Sanctification of the existing social order of religions, on the one hand, ensures social order and legitimacy of power, on the other hand, it can significantly hinder the development of society, as it announces the existing public institutes and the structure of society God-established and unshakable.

Conclusions of the article require further development. What seems important is the study of figurativeness, which is mentioned by such scientists as M.N. Shcherbinin [14] and A.E. Zimbuli [15], of the chronotope and visual connotations of the Eucharist. The biggest part of study of issues related to the role of religion in culture depends on the position taken by the researcher. In this case it is necessary to consider that “this or that way of interrelation of religion and culture can hardly be considered as something universal, given once and forever. Each of them is historical” [16, 44].

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