# The Theology of Ritual and the Russian Old Rite: 'The Art of Christian Living'

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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# Abstract

This thesis is a study of the theology of ritual in the Russian Old Rite; in the characteristic worship and piety of the Russian Church prior to the Nikonian reforms in the mid-seventeenth century which led to the Great Schism in the Russian Church. In the context of the lifting of the anathemas against the Old Rite by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1971, this thesis sets out from the premise of the wholly Orthodox and salvific nature of the pre-Nikonian ritual and rite. It focusses on rite as not merely a specific mode of worship, but as a whole way of life, an existential-experiential phenomena, and it examines the notion of the 'art of Christian living' and the role of the rhythm of the ritual order in the synergistic striving for salvation. It argues that the ritualised and ordered Orthopraxis of the Old Rite represents, in principle, a translation of the notion of *typikon* or *ustav* into the life of the laity, and constitutes a hierotopic creativity with a distinctly salvific goal on both the collective and personal levels. Herein ritual is examined as an iconic mode which recapitulates, in its own fashion, the theological premises of the icon, furnishing a mode of ritual iconicity which can contribute to *theosis* - an argument related to the participatory nature of symbols. This thesis therefore relates ritual to iconicity and symbolicity and, more broadly, to the theology of image in its anthropological dimensions. In the context of the notion of iconicity, ritual is seen as a performative mode which facilitates an inspiriting of embodied action, thus ritual is looked at in a pneumatological way. Through these arguments this thesis contributes to contemporary understandings of the Russian Old Rite and Old Belief and, more generally, to the Orthodox theology of ritual.

# Contents

# Introduction

***1. Setting the Scene: 'Moving the Immovable Landmarks of the Church'. The Nikonian Reforms, a (very) Brief Historical Sketch.[1]***

> We… by the grace given us of the most holy and life-giving Spirit, are bound, following the holy and god-loving fathers, to correct the errors which have been introduced by the ignorance of some, that the order of the holy Eastern Church may be kept firmly and immovably (Patriarch Nikon, Dec. 29th 1655).[2]

> And he, having attained the chair of the primacy, filled all the Church with great confusion and discord, the people with great sufferings and calamities, and all Russia with great alarm and fluctuation, moving the immovable landmarks of the Church, displacing the unchangeable laws of piety… (Semen Denisov, 1788).[3]

On the 11th February 1653 at the outset of Great Lent, the official printing press of the Russian Orthodox Church published a new edition of the psalter. Unlike previous versions this particular edition lacked two well-known features usually found in Russian Orthodox psalters: firstly, the instruction that the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian recited at the services during Great Lent, and really the quintessential Lenten prayer, should be accompanied by sixteen full prostrations – '*poklon do zemli*' (bow to the ground or earth) as the former service books have it; and secondly, the instruction on how to make the Sign of the Cross correctly with two fingers extended and three held together in the palm of the hand (*dvoeperstie*). The sixteen prostrations were to be reduced to four full prostrations and twelve bows to the waist, and the traditional Sign of the Cross authorised as the only legitimate Sign at the *Stoglav* Council (the Council of 100 chapters) of 1551 and thus established as canon law for over a century in Russia, was to be

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[1] This historical sketch is indebted to the detailed historical account set out by Meyendorff in *Russia, Ritual and Reform: The Liturgical Reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press), pp. 37-80.

[2] Nikon's 'Synodal Constitution' in Palmer (ed.) *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1873]), p. 414.

[3] Semen Denisov, 'The History of the Fathers and Martyrs of the Solovetsky' in Palmer (ed.), *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, pp. 439-59, p. 441.

replaced by a conformation of the fingers using three extended rather than two (*troeperstie*). These ritual changes marked, as it were, the official beginning of what came to be known as the Nikonian Reforms. The psalter was one of the most widely read books in Old Russia,[4] an all-round prayer book for monastics, clergy and laity, an instruction in the Orthodox Christian life, and one of the books used to teach children to read.[5] The reforms were begun with not only an emphasis on some of the most basic and yet fundamental elements of Orthodox Christian practice such as the Sign of the Cross, but were filtered through possibly the best loved and most widely known of holy books.

Two weeks after the publication of the new psalter and acting entirely on his own authority in contradiction of the decrees of the *Stoglav*, Nikon, the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia issued his now infamous '*Pamiat*' or 'Instruction' ordering adherence to the new ritual practices.[6] Prior to the fateful publication of the new psalter, there had already been a movement, at times controversial,[7] for the correction of liturgical books, which were seen to contain various inconsistencies and discrepancies,[8] and for more general Church reform. This movement was

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[4] L. Heretz, *Russia on the Eve of Modernity: Popular Religion and Traditional Culture under the Last Tsars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 24.

[5] On literacy in Muscovy see Gary J. Marker, 'Primers and Literacy in Muscovy: A Taxonomic Investigation', *Russian Review*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Jan., 1989), pp. 1-19.

[6] At this stage even the Tsar himself was concerned about the suggested change to the Sign of the Cross. See Zenkovsky, 'The Russian Church Schism: Its Background and Repercussions', *Russian Review*, Vol. 16, No.4 (October 1957), pp. 37-58, p. 41.

[7] See for example the case of the condemnation of Archimandrite Dionisii Zobninovskii recounted by Florovsky in *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. I (Vol. 5 in the 'The Collected works of Georges Florovsky', ed. Richard S. Haugh and Paul Kacher, trans. Robert L. Nichols, Belmont, MASS: Nordland, 1979), pp. 89-90.

[8] On the 'fateful theme' of the correction of books see Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. I, pp. 88-93. The Stoglav Council of 1551 had stressed the importance of correct books, demonstrating an awareness of copyist errors and textual inconsistencies in existing texts. In the deeds of the Council we find, for example, the following instructions: 'If in any churches are found holy books, Gospels, Epistles, Psalters, and others, which are faulty and ill-written, work together to correct those holy books by means of good copies; for the holy rules forbid faulty books and prohibit their introduction into the church or their use for singing.' And again: 'The manuscript copyists in the cities should be ordered to copy from good originals, to correct their completed manuscripts, and then only to sell them. If a copyist sells his book without correcting it, he should be forbidden to do this and severely punished. The man who buys such an uncorrected book should be punished in the same way, so that neither will repeat his offense; and if buyer and seller are caught in such a practice again, let the books be taken from them with no compensation, without any qualms; one corrected, the books will be given to churches that are poor in books and in this manner your diligence will inspire others with fear' (*Life and Thought in Old Russia* [ed. Marthe Blinoff, Clearfield, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania state University Press, 1961], pp. 105-6). The preface to the first book known to be printed in Moscow, *The Acts of the Apostles* (1564), carried a similar note indicating an awareness of copyist error. For this text see ibid, pp. 106-7. For further information on the correction of books prior to the Nikonian reforms, see Jack, V. Honey, *From Italy to Muscovy: The Life and Works of Maxim the Greek* (Wilhelm Fink Verlag: München, 1973).

centred around the self-professed 'zealots of piety' (*revniteli drevnego blogochestiia*) or 'lovers of God' (*Bogoliubts*), an influential group gathered around the person of the Tsar which included, amongst others, the Tsar's confessor, Stefan Vonifatev and the Boyar Fedor Ritschev as well as the Archpriests Avvakum and Neronov - two figures who would later become outspoken critics of the new liturgical order. The zealots, 'Russian Savanarolas', as Zenkovsky describes them, had sought for the reformation of clerical behaviour, the deepening of genuine spiritual life, renewed pastoral instruction, and correct adherence to the liturgical forms and canons of the Church. According to Zenkovsky, they 'preached assistance to the needy and weak, whom they tried to protect from injustice' and in an overarching way, 'wanted to permeate the life of the nation with the teaching of Christ, to realise the idea of an Orthodox tsardom'.[9] As Florovsky observes, all of the objectives of the Lovers of God (which we have insufficient space to adequately address here) 'required corrected books',[10] and therefore book correction and general reform became crucially intertwined.[11]

Correct liturgical books were seen as paramount for deepening the Christian life of the nation. However, when Nikon issued his *Pamiat*, some of the influential members of this circle, particularly Avvakum and Neronov, received it not as a reflection of the spirit of the reform they has envisaged but as a wholly unnecessary and unwarranted tampering with Holy Tradition itself – with the cherished ritual and liturgical practices, not only firmly established by the *Stoglav* Council but lived by a multitude of Russian saints and enshrined in the Russian Church as the bearer of 'authentic' Christian tradition – the Third and final Rome. For these zealots this was not the renewal of Church life nor the tidying up of errors in the printed books, but out and out reform of Orthodox liturgy, custom, and tradition,[12] and what's more, the outright Hellenisation of Russian practice - a dubious objective at best given the perceived apostasy of the Greek Church through the acceptance of the Florentine union in 1439.[13] This was the beginning

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[9] Zenkovsky, *The Russian Church Schism*, p. 39.
[10] Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. I, p. 90.
[11] For Avvakum on the positive importance of the correction of books, see *The Life Written by Himself* (trans. Kenneth N. Brostrom, Michigan: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1979), p. 84.
[12] See Avvakum, *Life*, pp. 92-3.
[13] This was a generally held assumption at the time. Kliuchevsky recounts the words of the Russian Metropolitan Phillip in 1471: 'Think of this, children: Tsargrad [Constantinople] stood impregnable as long as piety shone in it like the sun, but as soon as it abandoned truth and joined

of what Avvakum would refer to as the 'winter of heresy'.[14] Indeed, the reaction of the zealots of piety to the initial steps of Nikon's reforms are expressed in Avvakum's well-known description:

> Having come together we fell to thinking; we saw that winter was on the way – hearts froze and legs began to shake. Neronov… went himself into seclusion at the Čudovskij Monastery; for a week he prayed in a cell. And there a voice from the icon spoke to him during a prayer: "The time of suffering hath begun; it is thy bounden duty to suffer without weakening!"[15]

As Meyendorff recounts, opposition to the new practices amongst Nikon's former fellow zealots led to the convening of the Council of 1654 - not to mention the exile of Avvakum to Siberia and the sending of Neronov to the far north (1653). This Council afforded Nikon the opportunity to elucidate the specific objective of the reform as he envisaged it: in sum, to conform Russian liturgical practices, rituals and customs, to those of the Greek Churches. Thus, *dvoeperstie* was to be replaced by the Greek model of *troeperstie*, the Russian way of reciting the double alleluia verse with the Greek triple alleluia[16] and the spelling of the name of the Lord was to be conformed to the Greek version through the addition of an 'e' to the traditional Slavonic version (in transliteration: from *Isus* to *Iesus*). Monastic attire and vestments were to be changed, the text of the Creed, the Symbol of the Faith altered,[17] the eight pointed cross replaced with the four pointed cross and, overall, the texts and order of the Russian service books brought into line with the (available) Greek versions. In Nikon's opening speech to the Council we get the first glimpse of what would become the official and lasting interpretation of the reforms: that over the years certain divisive and erroneous innovations had crept into Russian practice, compromising Russian adherence to traditional-universal Orthodox norms. The reforms were not in themselves innovations, but the rooting out of former innovations, and the return

the Latins, it fell into the hands of the pagans' (*A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century* [trans. Natalie Duddington, New York & London: Me. E. Sharpe, 1994] p. 312).

[14] Ibid, p. 78.

[15] Ibid, p. 52.

[16] For the theological rationale of the double alleluia from the Old Believer perspective see, for example, 'The Petition of the Solovetsky' in Palmer (ed.), *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, pp. 449-59, specifically pp. 552-3; and Avvakum, *Life*, p. 40.

[17] Meyendorff argues that of all the changes made through the Nikonian reforms, the changing to the wording of the eighth article of the Creed of Nicea-Constantinople is one of the only alterations that can justifiably be seen as a genuine correction (*Russia, Ritual and Reform*, pp. 178-9).

to the ancient tradition of the Fathers and the Ecumenical Councils.[18] This return was to be accomplished by the 'correction' of the Muscovite service books based on 'ancient' Greek and Slavonic versions: the search was for the 'authentic' and original text, a reality seen to be vouchsafed by the principle of textual uniformity.[19] Indeed, 'the notion of "correctness" implied primarily the idea of uniformity',[20] and in this case uniformity led to Greece.[21] By this very objective, sincere in itself, resistance to the reforms was implicitly suggested to be a stubborn adherence to error or out and out ignorance and backwardness.[22] The Tsar and the bishops and clergy present at the Council ratified Nikon's objective and the reform gathered momentum.

It is important to stress here that, as Meyendorff points out, it was well-known before the Nikonian reforms that the Russian books did indeed contain certain mistakes through copyist and translation errors, and were in need of correcting in this sense. However, Nikon's identification of 'innovation' in the Russian practices, innovations enshrined in the books themselves,[23] actually implied 'that the entire Russian faith is tainted',[24] that Russian Orthodoxy was deficient in comparison to the pure faith and practice of the Greeks, and therefore that the Russian Church had, by implication, fallen away in certain aspects from the fullness of Orthodox tradition. This was to all intents and purposes a challenge

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[18] See Nikon's address of 29th December 1655 in Palmer (ed.), *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, pp. 413-14; also Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform*, pp. 42-3.

[19] As Florovsky has pointed out the very notion of 'correction' is a problematic one: 'The concept of a "correct" edition is variously understood and ambiguous. The "ancient exemplar" is also an indeterminate quantity. The antiquity of a text and the age of a copy by no means always coincide, and frequently the original form of a text is discovered in, comparatively recent copies. Even the question of the relationship between a Slavonic and a Greek text is not that simple and cannot be reduced to a problem of an "original" and a "translation." Not every Greek text is older or "more original" than every Slavonic one. The most dangerous thing of all is to trust any single manuscript or edition, even though it may be an "ancient" one' (*Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. I, p. 88).

[20] Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. I, p. 89.

[21] As writers such as Zernov (*The Russians and their Church*, [third ed., Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press], pp. 89-93), Florovsky (*Ways of Russian Theology*), Schmemann (*The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* [trans. Lydia W. Kesich, London: Harvill Press, 1963] pp. 317-30), and Kontzevitch (*The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia*, pp. 248-61) have argued this was to all intents and purposes a time of spiritual crisis and decline in the Church. The pre-occupation with authenticity was intertwined with a degree of cultural chauvinism which betrayed a dearth of spiritual life and self-identity. Originally the movement of the zealots of piety and been concerned precisely with the re-invigoration of the spiritual life of the nation and its Christian people although they were certainly implicated in the chauvinism and xenophobia of their social milieu.

[22] This is eminently clear, for example, in Macarius' account of the events in his 'History of the Russian Schismatics' in Palmer (ed.), *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, pp. 417-36.

[23] See Macarius, 'History of the Russian Schismatics' in Palmer, *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, pp. 418-19.

[24] Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform*, p. 45.

to Russian Orthodox tradition and self-identity, and particularly to the dominant notion of Moscow as the Third Rome[25] - the keeper of untarnished Orthodoxy in the world and the last free Orthodox kingdom, an earthly reflection of the Kingdom to come.[26] If Nikon sought the fulfilment of the Third Rome thesis by cultivating the Muscovite Church as the leading voice in universal Orthodoxy, a task believed to require uniform ritual, his detractors believed that he compromised its existing position as that theocratic kingdom and the unassailable Orthodoxy of its rituals: 'In his zeal for the unity of the universal church he broke up that of his own national church'.[27] In any case, the former rites and books which had nurtured such saints as Sergius of Radonezh (†1392), Paul of Obnora (†1492), Sabbatius (†1435), Nilus of Sora (†1508), Alexander of Svir (†1533), and numerous others, were seen as containing fundamental errors; what is more, all these saints crossed themselves with a Sign now deemed heretical. For the 'Old Believers', those Russian Christians who rejected the Nikonian reforms and cleaved to the pre-Nikonian liturgical norms, this was a questioning not merely of Russian practices but of the Holy Orthodoxy these practices bore witness to and safeguarded.[28] As Avraammi, one of the early Old Believer polemicists, vehemently put it:

> You put forth [*vozlagaete*] a lie and slander against the conciliar church of Christ and against… the earlier… Great Princes and the five patriarchs and the metropolitans and Wonder-workers that they did not hold the true and full [*vsesovershenu*] faith.[29]

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[25] For an overview of this important doctrine see Nicolas Zernov, *Moscow The Third Rome* (London: SPCK; New York: Macmillan, 1937); on the origins of the doctrine, see Dimitri Stremooukhoff, 'Moscow the Third Rome: Sources of the Doctrine,' in *The Structure of Russian History: Interpretive Essays* (ed. Michael Cherniavsky (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 108-25; also relevant is Joel Raba, Moscow – The Third Rome or the New Jerusalem?' *Forshungen zur osteuropaeischen Geschichte* 26 (1979), pp. 263-382; Zernov, *The Russians and their Church*, pp. 103-122; Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity, Vol. 1: The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church* (trans. Basil Bush, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press), pp. 141-66; John Strickland*, The Making of Holy Russia: The Orthodox Church and Russian Nationalism Before the Revolution* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Publications [The Printshop of St. Job of Pochaev], 2013); and relation to the Old Belief: David Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist: Old believers of Alberta* (Canada: Broadview Press Limited, 1991).
Scheffel*, In the Shadow of Antichrist*, pp. 12-54.
[26] Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform*, p. 45.
[27] Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century*, p. 331.
[28] For a more detailed clarification of the terms 'Old Believers', 'Old Belief,' 'Old Rite' and so on, and how these will be used an understood in this thesis, see section 4 below.
[29] Quoted in Crummey, 'The Origins of the Old Believer Cultural Systems: The Works of Avraamii' in *Old Believers in a Changing World* (Illinois: Northern Illinois Press, DeKalb, 2011), pp. 68-84, p. 78.

The Old Believers argued that the Nikonian reforms and the whole 'innovation' argument broke with the traditions of established Russian sanctity, effectively disengendering the Russian Orthodox past.[30] As Alexander Solzhenitsyn rather aptly puts it:

> Even now in Sergiev Posad there proceeds a never-silent service of prayer amid a stream of believers at the relics of St. Sergius of Radonezh – while we have thrown the liturgical books that the saint prayed with into bonfires as if they were devilish things.[31]

Nikon proceeded to seek advice on the content and objectives of the reforms from Eastern patriarchs, notably Patriarch Paisius of Constantinople,[32] as well Patriarch Macarius of Antioch and the Serbian Metropolitan Gabriel - both of whom were present in Moscow during the mid-1650s. It was at this time that Nikon started to instigate a blatant Hellenisation of Russian Church aesthetics. Indeed, if Nikon was sincere in his search for 'authentic tradition', this search nevertheless betrayed an unadulterated adulation of contemporary Greek ceremonial.[33] In 1655 Nikon called another Council to continue the cause of the

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[30] See 'The Petition of the Solovetsky', in Palmer (ed.) *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, pp. 449-59.

[31] Alexander *Solzhenitsyn Address to the Third All-Diaspora Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad [online], (trans. Jeremy Boor),* http//:www.rocorstudies.org/documents/2012/12/12/letter-to-the-third-council-of-the-russian-orthodox-church-abroad/ [accessed 20/03/15].

[32] Paisios actually tried to suggest to Nikon that difference in ritual did not actually compromise the Catholicity of the Church, nor did such differences necessarily indicate erroneous accretions in Orthopraxis. Paisios stressed that the present typikon had developed over time, at least implying the possibility of liturgical development and change, and enjoined Nikon to use 'discretion' in his zeal for reform along the lines of total uniformity with Greek practice. For Paisios' text in English translation, see Palmer, *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, pp. 408-9, and for a more general discussion of the correspondence, Meyendorff, *Russian, Ritual and Reform*, pp. 56-9. This episode is interesting in what it reveals of Nikon's zeal for an authenticity that can only mean standardisation in the minutest of liturgical details and therefore in the divergent understanding of the meaning of 'essentials' between Nikon and Paisios. It is also worth pointing out that Paisios did nevertheless condemn Bishop Paul of Kolomna and Ivan Neronov's actions of keeping to the old books and Sign of the Cross and rejecting the new as 'signs of heresy and schism', and subsequently called for their excommunication if 'they refuse to be corrected' (*The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II. p. 410). One gets the impression from Paisios' text that this judgement is based more on the fact of Paul of Kolomna and Neronov's criticising and rejecting of Patriarchal authority and questioning of the liturgical practices of the church of Constantinople, than it is on the specific liturgical and ritual discrepancies themselves, although overall Paisios seems to advocate the Greek practices and book correction in this vein in Russia. See the excerpts from Paisios' personal letter to Nikon in *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, p. 411.

[33] Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform*, p. 48. Florovsky provides a general overview of Nikon's Grecophilia which is worth bearing in mind when considering the aims of the reforms. In Florovsky's words: 'Nikon had an almost pathological urge to remake and refashion everything in the Greek image similar to Peter the Great's passion for dressing everyone and everything up in the German or Dutch style. Yet Nikon's "Grecophilism" did not signify any broadening of his ecumenical horizons. No few new impressions were present but certainly no new ideas. Imitation of contemporary Greeks could hardly lead to a recovery of lost tradition. Nikon's Grecophilism did

reforms, focussing on other liturgical and ritual discrepancies between the Russian and the Greek practices.[34] Following the Council a new translation of the *Sluzhebnik*[35] containing further changes to Russian practice was issued and distributed across the country. Rather embarrassingly, the new service book contained numerous glaring errors and had to be reprinted several times in quick succession – a fact which only lent support to those who resisted the reforms on liturgical and theological grounds. This awkward situation was further impacted by the fact that rather than being revised according to 'ancient' Slavonic and Greek manuscripts, the new liturgical editions had actually been translated from *modern* Greek editions printed in Roman Catholic Venice, a point well-known to the early Old Believer leaders such as Deacon Fedor and Nikita Dobrynin,[36] as well as a number of bishops. 'From where does truth come', Bishop Alexander of Viatka asked, 'if we must use Greek books published in Venice? We must not accept customs and rules from Greeks living unwillingly among the Latins'.[37] Or in the words of Silvester Medvedev, a corrector working in the Church Printing Office: 'They did not want to agree with the ancient Greek and Russian books, by which our saints have achieved salvation, but they liked the Greek books, newly-printed in foreign lands, and followed them'.[38]

The reform continued such that by 1656, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy no less, the three fingered Sign of the Cross was affirmed by Patriarch Macarius of Antioch before a gathering including the Tsar, Patriarch Nikon and the Metropolitans Gabriel of Serbia and Gregory of Nicea. During the traditional reading of the anathemas Macarius stood up and raising his hand in the three-fingered sign pronounced anathema on any other gesture. The anathema was confirmed by Metropolitans Gabriel and Gregory, and Nikon would later obtain their written condemnations of the old Sign and exclusive affirmation of *troeperstie*: 'those who do otherwise are heretics, to be excommunicated and

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not mark a return to patristic tradition or even serve to revive Byzantinism. He was attracted to the "Greek" service by its great dignity, solemnity, sumptuousness, splendor, and visual magnificence, His reform of ritual took its departure from this "solemn" point of view' (*Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. I, pp. 93-4).

[34] For an account of the Council see Macarius, 'History of the Russian Schismatics' in Palmer (ed.), *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, p. 421.

[35] The service book used by the priest and the deacon for the performance of the Divine Liturgy

[36] See Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform*, pp. 53-5.

[37] Recounted by Meyendorff, ibid, p. 54.

[38] Ibid, p. 55.

anathematised'.[39] The Council explicitly identified the old Sign as heretical, doing so with recourse to Trinitarian and Incarnational theology.  Indeed the old Sign was rejected for what the Council deemed its *theological error*, namely an expression of Arian and Nestorian principles.[40] Even back in 1649, Paisius of Jerusalem had declared to Nikon that the Russian practice marked 'a departure from the order of the Orthodox Eastern Church',[41] and the Council of 1656 only confirmed this mounting condemnation.[42]

The fate of Nikon[43] and his relationship with the Tsar is well documented and does not need recounting here, but suffice to say, if Nikon's own position to the reforms and old liturgical order began to soften in the years preceding his resignation from the Patriarchal throne in 1658, the reforms themselves continued at pace as did resistance to them and the growing persecution of the dissenters, the 'self-willed men, wise in their own deceits' as the *Skrizhal* of 1656 put it.[44] The final blow was struck in the Councils of 1666 and 67.[45] The 1666 Council dealt directly with dissent (as well as other Church issues) trying the

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[39] Palmer, *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, p. 415; See also, Macarius, 'History of The Russian Schismatics', ibid, p. 422, and Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform*, p. 61.

[40] This argument is and has been repeated in numerous ecclesiastical accounts of the Schism. In Macarius' contemporary account, *History of the Russian Schismatics*, for example, it is suggested that the two-fingered Sign is an Armenian custom (i.e. heretical), and suggests that the double alleluia derives from Latin origin and had crept into the Russian service books as an erroneous innovation. Excerpts from Macarius' work are found in Palmer (ed.) *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, pp. 417-36. Macarius appears unaware of Peter of Damaskos' (11th/12th century) explanation of the two-fingered Sign. See *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St.Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth,* vol. III  (ed., and trans., G. E. H. Palmer, P. Sherrard, and K. Ware, New York: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 209.

[41] Macarius, 'History of the Russian Schismatics' in Palmer (ed.), *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, p. 418.

[42] For Nikon's own condemnation of the old Sign (and his critique of St. Theodoret's advocating of it) see Macarius, ibid, p. 423.

[43] On Nikon and his role in the reforms see Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform*, pp. 81-93; Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, 1, pp. 93-7 and Palmer (ed.), *The Patriarch and the Tsar* (6 Vols.), especially vols. I & III. Nikon is a figure who continues to arouse powerful and often impassioned responses. In Russia whilst he is vilified by some, particularly the Old Believers, others have called for his canonisation. For material in English on this latter topic see for example, http://orthodoxengland.org.uk/nikon.htm [accessed 14/04/15].

[44] Palmer, *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, p. 416.

[45] The Councils did not merely deal with dissent and liturgical reform but as Zenkovsky points out, engendered a 'substantial reorganization of Church life', tightening and centralising control over parochial life, creating new Bishoprics, and rescinding some of the more democratic dimensions of parish life and the appointment of local priests. Unsurprisingly, these changes to church life and structure only contributed to Old Believer dissent, as the ways of Old Russia were seen to be replaced by a more centralised autocratic system. 'The decisions of the Councils paved the way for the future reforms of Peter I, who placed Church life entirely under the tutelage of the state' (*The Russian Church Schism*, pp. 43-4). The liturgical and ritual reforms became inextricably intertwined with political and social changes to Russian life and governance, just as Old Believer dissent entailed, to some extent at least, a resistance to both of these interrelated spheres. See in addition, Kliuchesvky, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century.*

known leaders of what would come to be known as the 'Old Belief'.[46] Those like Avvakum, Lazar' and Deacon Fedor who did not recant their rejection of the new liturgical forms (they were not actually asked to condemn the Old Rite itself) and their criticism of the Eastern patriarchs, were defrocked, anathematized and sentenced to imprisonment (and some of them later to mutilation and death).[47] Nevertheless the Council did not explicitly anathematize adherence to the Old Rite as such, this final step was to take place the following year, along with the rescinding of the decisions of the *Stoglav*.[48] The Council's expert on the Old Believers was a Greek Archimandrite, Dionysius of the Iveron monastery on Mount Athos,[49] just as the overseer of the discussion of Nikon and his position was also a Greek, in this case, Bishop Paisios Ligarides. It was, as Meyendorff suggests, 'through the eyes of these Greek consultors that the patriarchs saw the Russian Church, and on the basis of whose judgements they made decisions'.[50] These judgements reiterated the argument we have already noted - that innovation had crept into Russian Church life - only now this innovation was seen to be the consequence of Russia's formal independence from the Great Church of Constantinople in 1589.[51] Dionysius, like the Old Believers themselves, equated ritual and liturgical difference as heresy and thus only one form could be truly Orthodox.[52] The Council ruled in favour of the contemporary Greek practice and, invoking theological and historical reasons, overturned the *Stoglav* Council anathematizing the old rituals:[53]

> Russian Church tradition was judged and condemned as ignorance
> and feigned wisdom or as sophistry and heresy. Under the pretext
> of establishing the fullness of the universal Church, Old Russia was
> replaced by modern Greece. This outlook did not represent the

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[46] For a brief overview of the sessions of the Council see Macarius, 'History of the Russian Schismatics' in Palmer (ed.), *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, pp. 429-31.

[47] Kliuchevsky argues that those who resisted the authority of the patriarch and the Church were not actually excommunicated for their adherence to the Old Rite but for their disobedience (*A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century*, p. 329). In this case, the Schism reveals competing ideas about authority in the Church.

[48] See ibid, pp. 431-2.

[49] Discussing the period of 1655-6, Macarius describes him as 'almost the chief corrector', i.e. of the liturgical books, 'History of the Russian Schismatics' in Palmer (ed.), *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, p. 421.

[50] Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform*, p. 70.

[51] See Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, 1, p. 96.

[52] Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform*, p. 71.

[53] For Avvakum's role in and response to the Council, see the *Life*, pp. 92-4.

opinion of the Greek Church, only the views of some itinerant "Greek" hierarchs. It served as the final act for Nikon's reforms.[54]

Those who clung to the Old Rite and rejected the new were labelled as heretics and the tragedy of the Great Russian Schism became concrete. The rites and more generally the 'old piety' through which Russia had been nurtured were cast aside, and the Old Rite became a source of heresy and division.

There is insufficient time in a thesis of this scope to explore the history and theological development of those dissenting groups which came to be known as Old Believers or Old Ritualists, nor the essential bifurcation of the priestly (*popovtsy*) and priestless (*bezpopovtsy*) groupings: Those who retained priesthood and eventually established an Old Believer hierarchy – the *popovtsy*,[55] and those who, believing that the grace of the sacraments had been removed in the wake of the perceived apostasy of the Russian Church, lived (and continue to live) without priesthood, and thus without the Eucharist and other of the major sacraments – the *bezpopovtsy*.[56] Interestingly, the vast majority of the secondary literature, particularly in Western languages, has tended to focus on the *bezpopovtsy* with its more extreme worldview and its isolated cultural communities, with very little attention being paid to the Old Believer hierarchy. This is perhaps because the *bezpopovtsy* are of more immediate interest to the sociological, anthropological and political approaches which dominate the field. In any case, our focus is not primarily on the historical development of the Old Believers or the Schism itself, but on a certain theological theme which they bring into focus - the theology of ritual. As we will set out in more depth below, our aim is to explore the theology of ritual expressed in the Old Rite, and particularly the relationship between ritual, faith, doctrine and salvation. To commence this task however, we first need to sketch out, albeit in rather broad brushstrokes, the landscape of the current literature on the Old Belief in order to elucidate the

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[54] Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. I, p. 1.
[55] The *popovtsy* comprise of two primary groups, the so-called *beglopopovtsy* or 'fugitive-priestly,' who accepted fugitive convert priests from the official Church and the Belokrinitsa hierarchy, also referred to as the 'Austrian hierarchy' established in 1846 when a deposed Bosnian Bishop, Amvrosii, agreed to shepherd a formerly fugitive-priestly diocese at the monastery of Belai Krinitsa in Bukovina within the Austrian empire. The canonicity of the Belokrinitsa hierarchy has been questioned, particularly due to Amvrosii's single handed consecration of bishops (the canons demand two bishops to consecrate further bishops), nevertheless the Belokrinitsa has become the largest Old Believer organisation and has established full hierarchical and sacramental life.
[56] Principally the Pomortsy, Fedoseevtsy, Filippovtsy, and Spasovtsy concords.

specificity of our own approach. We will consider specific arguments regarding ritual and the Old Rite in the proceeding chapters.

## 2. Interpreting the Old Belief

For those directly involved in the reforms (on all sides) the issues in hand were certainly, although not exclusively, theological, involving questions about Orthopraxis and its doctrinally correct forms. The early explorations of the Schism tended to focus on this liturgical-theological-ritual dimension. As Crummey points out, 'until the mid-nineteenth century, Old Believer apologetics and the polemics of the official Orthodox Church concentrated on the disputed issues of liturgical practice and the canonical and moral implications and consequences of those disputes'.[57] Guarding its claim to legitimacy and Orthodoxy, the official Church tended to present the Schism as the fault of the rebellious dissenters, ignorantly tied to the erroneous old ways: 'Few ventured past the standard view that Old Believers were fanatic adherents of meaningless ritual discrepancies'.[58] Concurrently, the Old Believers criticised the official Church for abandoning the fullness of Orthodoxy, compromising the Russian past and even ushering in the reign of antichrist. At the same time of course, both the events of the Schism and the subsequent polemics related to a host of broader and often intertwined social, political and cultural forces. The author and one time government agent on issues of Old Belief, Melnikov-Pecherskii, once alluded to this tangle of causal factors by suggesting, whether correctly or otherwise, that neither the Old Believers, nor the administration, nor the Russian Orthodox Church or society at large really knew what the essence of the Schism actually was.[59] Various scholars have of course sought to pinpoint such an essence, unravelling the central thread from the tight weave of centuries of polemic and the multiplicity of competing interpretations and ideological standpoints; and notably, this thread has been drawn further and further away from issues of ritual theology and tradition, and toward the prominence of socio-cultural and political factors. In much of the

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[57] Robert O. Crummey, 'Past and Current Interpretations of the Old Belief' in *Old Believers in a Changing World* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011), pp. 5- 16, p. 8.
[58] Roy R. Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russian* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, 1995), p. 4.
[59] See Melnikov's 'Letters on the Schism' (1862), recounted in Krevsky, 'The Scar of the Schism: The Image of Old Believers in Late Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature' (The Canadian Society of Church History, 1999), [online] http://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/historicalpapers/article/view/39396 [accessed 08/03/15], p. 190.

secondary literature the Schism has come to be seen as a primarily sociological-political phenomena.

Krevsky suggests that this shift toward a more socio-cultural interpretation of the Schism and its causes really begins with the work of Afanasii Shchapov in the 1860s. Shchapov brought a nascent sociological perspective to bear on the Schism and Old Believer recalcitrance, perceiving them as both a reflection and a result, of resistance to 'the growing political pressure of the central powers'.[60] This perspective was then taken up and developed by other writers such as V. V. Andreev and N. I. Kostomarov who saw in the Schism not so much authentic piety or even the preservation of Old Russian culture as an entirely new political and sociological phenomenon, one defined by political and social resistance.[61] Such politically and socially minded interpretations lent themselves to the growing liberal and revolutionary consciousness of the Russian intelligentsia in the nineteenth century, and have had a lasting impact. Robert Crummey has provided a summary overview of what he terms the 'populist interpretations' of the Old Belief which emerged in the late 1850s – those readings which, in contrast to the dominant ecclesiastical interpretations, perceived the Old Believer movement as primarily a form of popular social and political protest, a mode of democratic resistance to centralised power and the expression of 'authentic' popular religion over against the institutionalised hierarchy and the intelligentsia. The populist interpretations shifted focus away from liturgical and theological issues to questions of social and political ideology,[62] a focus picked up by the official historiography of the Old Belief of the Soviet period which sought to cast the Old Believer rebellion in Marxist terms.[63] At the same time, toward the end of the Soviet regime, the cultural and anthropological study of the Old Believers flourished under the auspices of the preservation of Russian culture, through the work of the Novosibirsk School.[64]

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[60] Krevsky, 'The Scar of the Schism', p. 191.

[61] Ibid, pp. 191-3.

[62] Although, as Robson points out, the last great proponent of the populist school before the outbreak of the Revolution, A. S. Prugavin, reintroduced the specifically religious element as a factor to be considered in conjunction with cultural and political factors. See Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russian*, p. 5.

[63] Crummey, *Past and Current Interpretations of the Old Belief*, p. 11.

[64] See Crummey, 'The Novosibirsk School of Old Believer Studies', in *Old Believers in a Changing World*, pp. 167-89.

After the edict of toleration of 1905,[65] when Nicholas II granted various religious freedoms to non-Orthodox religious groups in the empire, the Old Believers themselves were given more freedom to publish their own interpretations of the Schism, and works began to emerge which presented the events and consequences of Nikon's reforms in an alternative form to both the dominant ecclesiastical and populist views.[66] V. G. Senatov's *Philosophy of the History of the Old Ritual* (*Filosofia istorii staroobriadchestva*) for example, explored the development of Christianity from an Old Believer perspective, bringing a different focus to bear on the dominant narratives.[67]

Robert Crummey has pointed out that one of the defining and constructive elements of the Western study of the Schism and the Old Believers has been the 'rejection of monocausal explanations'.[68] Focussing on the autobiography of Avvakum, Pierre Pascal has presented the Schism as the expression of a clash of differing Christian interpretations of society and the Church, for Avvakum a view centred around the spiritual and moral regeneration of society, and for Nikon one in which the Church should exert power over particular sectors of social, moral and private life - a clash emerging from the apocalyptic expectations arising out of the Time of Troubles.[69] In his influential work, which draws attention to both ecclesiastical and the populist approaches, Michael Cherniavksy explores the Schism as a radical critique of imperial power and policy: a radical 'politics of the apocalypse', in which theological narratives express a resistance to the centralising of power and the secularisation of the Russian state.[70] For Cherniavksy, the Old Belief is politicised theology. Zenkovsky, an Orthodox scholar who has published in both English and Russian and has been influential for Western scholarship, has looked at how the Old Belief involved a critique of,

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[65] On the Act of Toleration and the Old Believers see Heather J. Coleman, 'Defining Heresy: The Fourth Missionary Congress and the Problem of Cultural Power after 1905 in Russia, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Neue Folge, Bd. 52, H. 1 (2004), pp. 70 – 91; and more generally, Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*; James W. Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope: The Movement for Church Renewal in Russia, 1905-6* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981); Strickland, *The Making of Holy Russia*.

[66] On the Old Believer press see Robson, 'The Old Believer Press: 1905-14', in *Russia's Dissedent Old Believers* (ed. Georg Michels and Robert Nichols, Minneapolis, St. Paul: Minnesota Mediterranean and East European Monographs, 2009), pp. 277-89.

[67] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, pp. 5-6. See also the works of I. A. Kirillov, for example, *Istinnaia tserkov* (Moscow, 1912), and *Pravda staroi very* (Moscow, 1916).

[68] Crummey, 'Past and Current Interpretations of the Old Belief', p. 11.

[69] Pierre Pascal, *Avvakum et les débuts des Raskol* (Paris: Mouton, 1938); Crummey, 'Past and Current Interpretations of the Old Belief', p. 12.

[70] Michael Cherniavsky, 'The Old Believers and the New Religion', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 25, March 1966, pp. 1-39.

and resistance to, the nascent Westernisation and secularisation of society and the centralisation of power in the Church under Nikon.[71] In James Billington's well-known 'interpretive history', the Russian Schism resembles the Protestant Reformation and paves the way for the secularisation of Russian society. Billington's account contains some useful insights but is rather general and sweeping in its approach and perhaps displays an over-reliance on dualism as an heuristic category in its macro approach to the events of the Schism and its consequences.[72] Robert Crummey's own original work has offered a highly useful window into early Old Believer culture, particularly that of the well-known Vyg Monastery, and the work of the Denisov Brothers. Crummey has explored the relation of the priestless Old Believers to the Russian state and the formation of the priestless movement as a specific subculture. Crummey has been pioneering in opening up the world of Old Belief to a Western audience and in countering the engrained perception of the Old Belief as backward and primitive;[73] his work, for example, has shed new light on the works of figures such as Avraami[74] and Andrei Borisov.[75] Crummey's approach is largely historical and whilst he does indeed engage with some of the relevant theological issues, this area is left largely under-developed in his work - a typical feature of the historical-sociological paradigm.

More recently, Georg Michels who is perhaps the most iconoclastic of Old Belief scholars, has with painstaking historical detail sought to deconstruct the notion of the seventeenth century Old Belief as a coherent movement centred around theological-liturgical issues and directly influenced by figures such as Avvakum and Neronov. For Michels, there is no Old Believer movement as such, but merely

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[71] Zenkovsky, *The Russian Church Schism*. See also Zenkovsky's major Russian language work, *Russkoe Staroobradchestvo*, 2. vols. (Moscow, 2006). On Western influence on Russian Church and society, particularly after the Council of 1667 see James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York: Vintage Books [Random House], 1966), pp. 144-62, and specifically on what Billington refers to as Nikon's 'catholizing tendencies' vis-à-vis the position and power of the patriarchal throne, pp. 154-6. For a relevant and related discussion of the centralisation of power and the institutionalisation and standardisation of popular piety in the eighteenth century, see Gregory L. Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety: The Church and Popular Religion, 1750-1850' in *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire* (ed. Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998) pp. 210-49.
[72] Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*.
[73] Crummey, *The Old Believers and the World of Antichrist: The Vyg Community and the Russian State 1694-1855* (Madison, Milwaukee, London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970); *Old Believers in a Changing World*.
[74] Crummey, 'The Works of Avraamii' in *Old Believers in a Changing World*, pp. 68-84.
[75] Crummey, 'The Cultural Worlds of Andrei Borisov', in *Old Believers in a Changing World*, pp.136-56.

a 'series of specific conflicts resulting from particular historical conditions and contexts',[76] conflicts over which the self-professed leaders of liturgical dissent in the capital bore no marked influence. Michels has also sought to unravel what he perceives as the personal political motivations of the early Old Believer leaders, arguing that their resistance to Nikon's reforms were as much motivated by personal enmities as by purely theological-liturgical issues.[77] As Irina Paert rightly observes, Michel's reading, 're-evaluates a traditional representation of the Schism as a ritual controversy over Patriarch Nikon's correction of Church books and services',[78] and in a way, we might add, represents perhaps the strongest current expression of the essentially historical-sociological paradigm, with its emphasis on historical objectivity and the role of socio-political and cultural factors in the psychology, as it were, of historical agents and events. Michels has perhaps gone the furthest amongst recent scholars, in deconstructing the established narratives to present the Schism as a tangle of political, personal, social and current forces with only a tangential relation to liturgical reform and theological issues. However, Michel's study possibly underplays the significance of the early Old Believer leaders in shaping the identity of dissent and does not explore the later formation of a more coherent movement of Old Belief.

Other recent scholarship has explored gender and the Old Belief,[79] and the relationship between Old Belief and the development of industry and commercial enterprise in late imperial Russia.[80] James L. West has provided a highly informative insight into the so-called 'enlightened Old Belief', the progressivism of the Riabushinskii circle and the journal, *Tserkov*,[81] whilst other writers have

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[76] Georg Bernhard Michels, *At War with the Church: Religious Dissent in Seventeenth-Century* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 16.

[77] Michels, 'The First Old Believers in Tradition and Historical Reality', *Jahrbücher für Osteropas Nueu Folge*, Bd. 41, H. 4, Franz Steiner Verlag, (1993), pp. 481-508. Such emphasis on personal motivations – namely resentment – as a definitive causal factor, is also a characteristic of Macarius' understanding of the Schism. See Palmer (ed.) *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, p.426.

[78] Irina Paert, *Old Believers, Religious Dissent and Gender in Russia, 1760-1850* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 4.

[79] Paert, *Old Believers, Religious Dissent and Gender in Russia, 1760-1850;* 'Gender and Salvation: Representations of Difference in Old Believer Writings from the Late Seventeenth Century to the 1820s' in L. Edmondson (ed.), *Gender in Russian History and Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); **'**Regulating Old Believer Marriage: Ritual, Legality, and Conversion in Nicholas I's Russia,' *Slavic Review*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (Autumn, 2004), pp. 555-76.

[80] William L. Blackwell, 'The Old Believers and the Rise of Private Industrial Enterprise in Early Nineteenth Century Russia', *Slavic Review*, vol. 24, no. 3 (1965), pp. 407-24; Anton S. Beliajeff, 'The Economic Power of the Old Believers in Mid-Nineteenth Century Moscow', *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, No. 1 (1979), pp. 35-43.

[81] James L. West, 'The Neo-Old Believers of Moscow: Religious Revival and Nationalist Myth in Late Imperial Russia', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 26, nos. 1-3 (1992), pp. 5-28.

sought to explore the image of the Old Believers in nineteenth century Russian literature, particularly in the works of Leskov and Melnikov-Pecherskii.[82]

Of all the Western authors, Roy R. Robson has perhaps done the most to explore the more theological dimensions of Old Belief, focussing not so much on the Schism itself as on Old Believer culture as an established community of meaning centred on faith and a specific religious culture, history and tradition, firmly rooted in traditional Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Although not in itself an explicit work of theology, Robson's work has focussed on the flourishing of the Old Belief in the period after the act of religious toleration of 1905 and he has made a particular contribution to the exploration of the *lived theology* of the Old Rite. Through his own at once sociological, cultural and historical perspective, Robson has re-emphasised the theological significance of the Old Rite by examining elements of the form of Old Believer religious life and the role and understanding of ritual and symbol within it. Above all he has sought to 'understand the Old Belief as an ongoing relationship between the symbols of pre-Nikonian Orthodoxy and the lives of the old ritualist faithful',[83] pointing out that for the Old Believer faithful, ritual gestures are not so much symbolic modes as experiential ones.[84] If this is a valid point and goes some way in clearing the fog of the Old Believer ritualism equals primitive religion stereotype, Robson does not actually explore in depth the theological meaning of symbols themselves in Orthodoxy and the idea that symbolicity is itself experiential rather than merely representational (although he is clearly aware of this).  These are points we will explore in chapter two. In many ways, Robson's work brings a refreshing approach to a field largely dominated by increasingly secular and secularising perspectives, demonstrating as it does a notable sensitivity to the role of Orthodox theological narratives in the shaping of the Old Belief and its historical development. This, as it were, lived theological dimension has also been taken up in the anthropological study of David Scheffel, whose work on the Old Believers of Alberta offers not only an insight into the daily life of a group of priestless Old Believers living in modern Canada but also explores elements of the theological foundations of this life and offers highly

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[82] Krevsky, 'The Scar of the Schism'; Serge A. Zenkovsky, 'The Old Believer Avvakum: His Role in Russian Literature', *Indiana Slavic Studies*, 1 (1956), pp. 1-51.
[83] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, p. 9.
[84] Ibid.

astute and useful commentaries on the theological dimension of the particularities of priestless experience.[85]

In terms of explicitly Orthodox theology and historiography itself, Georges Florovsky's perspective on the Schism stands out, if only for its influence on other modern Orthodox writers. In his *Ways of Russian Theology*, a rather pessimistic narrative charting what Florovsky describes as the 'pseudomorphosis' of Orthodoxy in Russia, the infiltration of the pure Orthodoxy inherited from Byzantium by Western modes of thought and life – scholasticism, deism, pietism, and idealism, for example. The Schism marks (quite rightly) a tragedy in the unfolding of Russian and Church history. Florovsky reiterates Kostomarov's earlier thesis that the Old Believers represent an entirely new social and spiritual phenomena, that in seeking to preserve the 'authentic' tradition they actually created something entirely new, a spiritual culture diseased by a romantic vision of an unreal past and an unrealisable dream of a theocratic kingdom.[86] Florovsky elucidates his view of 'Old Russian' culture itself in a later article, *The Problem of Old Russian Culture*.[87] We will explore some of Florovsky's arguments in more depth elsewhere in this thesis. Suffice to say, Florovsky's reading raises important questions about the old/new dualism and the construction of the past, although its macro level of analysis lends itself to a rather over-generalised perspective.[88] To offer another modern example, Alexander Schmemann's treatment of the Schism resonates with that of Florovsky: 'The schism was nothing other than the price for Moscow's dream of a consecrated pattern of life and of a complete incarnation in history and on earth of the last kingdom';[89] in other words, the Schism developed out of the social-eschatology which characterised Old Russian culture and self-identity. We find a similar position in Kontzevitch who reiterates Florovsky's general approach.[90] All of these

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[85] Scheffel, *In The Shadow of Antichrist*.

[86] Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology,* vol. I, pp. 97-104.

[87] Florovsky, 'The Problem of Old Russian Culture', *Slavic Review*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Mar., 1962), pp. 1-15.

[88] Fedotov's critical observation is relevant here: 'Florovsky's book [*Ways of Russian Theology*] is less the history of theological ideas than of the religious mind of theologians and the Russian educated society in general. The simple fold are left out of the picture' (G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, *Vol. 1: Kievan Christianity, The Tenth to the Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1946, p. xiii).

[89] Alexander Schmemann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, p. 317.

[90] I. M. Kontzevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia* (trans. Olga Koshansky, Platina, California: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1996), pp. 248-62.

arguments, of course, emphasise the Third-Rome ideology of Muscovy, a theme treated in depth by Nicholas Zernov.[91]

## 3. Orthodoxy and the Old Rite

All of these interpretations, be they ecclesiastic or populist, Orthodox or secular have as their point of departure the *fact* of schism, the fact of a rupture in the fabric of Orthodoxy in Russia and of Russian society and culture. The Council of 1667 fatefully condemned those who refused to part with the Old Rite, making schism concrete and inevitable. That which had been Orthodox was now no longer Orthodox: the old ways were, for the time being, outlawed. The history of the relationship between the official Church and the Old Believers is a tragic one, scarred by persecution and repression, by fanaticism and the ossification of conflict and mistrust. Although some attempts at rapprochement have been made through the centuries, it was not until 1971 that the anathemas against the Old Rite and those who follow it were finally lifted by the Russian Orthodox Church. In its official decree on the issue the patriarchal Church affirmed that 'the salvific importance of rites is not contradicted by the diversity of their external manifestations, which was always inherent in the ancient undivided Christian Church and which did not represent a stumbling block or cause for division'.[92]

Utilising its unique position beyond the range of Soviet power and control, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR), has been particularly vocal in attempting to heal the Schism.[93] In 1974 the ROCOR issued an official decree lifting the anathemas and affirming the wholly Orthodox nature of the Old Rite.[94] In 2000 the ROCOR followed up this affirmation by offering a formal

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[91] Zernov, *Moscow The Third Rome*. See also the references given in fn., 25 above.

[92] 'The Act of the National Council of the Russian Orthodox Church on the Abolishment of the Anathemas against the Old Rite and its Adherents, June 2, 1971', *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 6 (1971), quoted in Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity, Vol. 1,* pp. 165-6.

[93] The relationship between the ROCOR and the Old Believers in the diaspora is a topic in need of sustained scholarly attention, both before and after the consecration of the ROCOR Old Rite Bishop, Daniel of Erie. Some relevant materials are available online at http://www.rocorstudies.org/ [accessed 08/03/15]; see also Robson, 'Recovering Priesthood and the Émigré Experience among Contemporary American *Bespopovtsy* Old Believers' in *Skupiska staroobrzedowców w Eu-ropie, Azji i Ameryce, ich miejsce i tradycje we wspólczesnym swiecie* [Old Believers in Europe, Asia, and America: Their Place and Tradition in Contemporary Society] (ed. Iryda Grek-Pabisowa. Warsaw: Polska Akademia Nauk, Slawistyczny Osrodek Wydawniczy, 1994). There are interesting parallels between the position of the ROCOR and the Old Believers which have not been fully explored historically or theologically, nor, as far as we are aware, has the experience of the Old Rite parish of the Nativity been the subject of serious scholarly attention, excepting Robson's short piece.

[94] The decree resolved 'To consider the ancient liturgical customs and rites contained in the service books of the Russian church before the middle of the 17th century as Orthodox and

apology for the historical persecution of the Old Rite and the Old Believers.[95] The text expresses a sense of culpability which suggests a connection between the contemporary persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church under communism and the Church's own persecution of 'the children of the old ritual', a connection which actually echoes an argument which the writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn had made in September 1974 to the third all-diaspora Council of the ROCOR.[96] Solzhenitsyn had been invited to address the topic of 'how and by what means the free part of the Russian Orthodox Church might help her persecuted and imprisoned part', but he explored this topic by lamenting the dissension of the jurisdictions in the West and upbraiding the Church for its 'unrepented sin' of the persecution of the Old Believers.[97] According to Solzhenitsyn, this sin may well have been one of the contributing factors to the calamity fallen upon the Church in the twentieth century.

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salvific… To consider the interdicts and anathemas imposed in the past Councils of 1656 and 1667, and also by certain individuals who took part in the Councils, because of misunderstandings, as null and void and rescinded AS IF THEY HAD NEVER BEEN ('The Decision of the Council of Bishops of the ROCOR concerning the Old ritual' [1974], [online], HTTP://WWW.ROCORSTUDIES.ORG/DOCUMENTS/2015/02/27/THE-DECISION-OF-THE-COUNCIL-OF-BISHOPS-OF-THE-ROCOR-CONCERNING-THE-OLD-RITUAL[ACCESSED [accessed 08/03/15]).

[95] The text reads as follows: 'despite the fact that, although neither our hierarchy nor our faithful have ever participated in persecutions or acts of violence against Old Ritualists, we wish to take advantage of this present opportunity to ask their forgiveness for those who treated their pious fathers with disdain. In this we would like to follow the example of the holy Emperor Theodosius the Younger, who translated the holy relics of St. John Chrysostom from the remote place of exile to which his parents had mercilessly sent the saint. Taking his words, we cry out to the persecuted ones: "Forgive us, brothers and sisters, for the transgressions committed against you out of hatred. Do not count us as accomplices in the sins of our fathers, do not blame us for the bitterness of their intemperate actions. Although we are the descendants of your persecutors, we are not guilty of the misfortunes which were visited upon you. Forgive the offenses that we may be delivered from the reproach associated with them. We prostrate ourselves before you and commend ourselves to your prayers. Forgive those who have assailed you with wanton violence, for in our mouths they have repented for what they had done to you and ask your forgiveness. In the 20th century new persecutions came down upon the Orthodox Russian Church, this time at the hands of the god-fighting Communist regime. Right before our eyes the vivid image of persecution manifested itself in the craven or even unconscionable cooperation and complicity with the civil authorities on the part of persons who called themselves religious. With sorrow we acknowledge, that the great persecution of our Church over the past decades is in part perhaps a punishment for our predecessors' persecutions of the children of the old ritual' ('An Epistle from the ROCOR Council of Bishops to the Followers of the Old Rituals,' [2000], [online] WWW.ROCORSTUDIES.ORG/DOCUMENTS/2015/02/27/AN-EPISTLE-FROM-THE-SYNOD-OF-THE-ROCOR-TO-THE-FOLLOWERS-OF-THE-OLD-RIITUALS/ [accessed 08/03/15]).

[96] Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *'Address to the Third All-Diaspora Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad' (trans. Jeremy Boor, Pravoslavnaia Rus' no. 18, 1974),* [online] http://www.rocorstudies.org/documents/2012/12/12/letter-to-the-third-council-of-the-russian-orthodox-church-abroad/ [accessed 08/03/15].

[97] For the initial response of the ROCOR to Solzhenitsyn's arguments see Metropolitan Philaret, 'The Reply to Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn,' (September, 1974, originally published in *The Old Calendrist*, Dec., no. 41, 1975), [online] http://www.rocorstudies.org/documents/2012/11/30/the-reply-to-alexander-i-solzhenitsyn/ [accessed 20/03/15].

In any case, repentance is of course the prerequisite for all healing, just as it is the necessary condition for true prayer and worship: 'Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift'.[98] The lifting of the anathemas and more forcibly, the repentance and apology noted are significant steps forward, although there is insufficient space here to fully explore their practical results, or to look at the Old Believer response. Importantly, the crucial point of departure for this step forward is not merely the Schism and the persecutions - engendering the call for repentance and forgiveness - but on a more immediately positive note, the affirmation of the Orthodoxy of the Old Rite itself. If this explicit affirmation has taken centuries to be formally established by the Church and has only come after centuries of repression and outright persecution, its significance should not therefore be understated, for it marks the possibility of a thaw and a possibility which, in theological terms we would suggest, calls for a reconsideration of the positive contribution of the traditions of the Old Rite to universal Orthodoxy.

This thesis sets out from this starting point, from the presupposition of the *Orthodoxy* of the Old Rite: that the Old Rite is indeed both salvific and Orthodox. In this context and without any wish to delve into either condemnations or apologetics, our aim is to explore a particular aspect associated with the Old Rite although, by degree, wholly applicable to Orthodoxy as such: the theology of ritual and its role in the Christian life. This issue was thrown into sharp relief by the Schism itself and is certainly one of the central concerns of those Christians variously referred to as Old Believers and Old Ritualists. Nevertheless this topic has not received adequate attention and exploration in the contemporary scholarship.[99] The sociological-historical paradigm, whilst it has certainly provided fresh insights into the characteristics, development and socio-political causality of the Schism and the history and culture of the Old Believers, has nevertheless left certain of the theological questions which the Schism raises, unanswered or indeed unasked. As Scheffel suggests:

> The connection between Old Orthodox ritual and dogma has never
> been adequately examined in western or Russian scholarship. This

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[98] Mat. 5: 23-4.
[99] Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, p. 210.

fundamental gap is perhaps less remarkable than it appears, for the postulated blind ritualism of the Old Believers seems to account for the willingness of millions to suffer persecution for the sake of clinging to a few ritual details. Yet any serious analysis of Old Orthodox ritualism must take into account its Greek Orthodox roots and the substantial evidence demonstrating a tangible link between ritual and dogma, orthopraxy and orthodoxy in Byzantine Christianity.[100]

We cannot hope to plug this 'fundamental gap' in the space the scope of this thesis provides, our more modest aim is to offer a contribution to this task by considering two interrelated themes which help shed light on the theology of ritual in the Old Rite, and thus on the problem Scheffel raises. The first of these themes revolves around rite as an existential phenomena, a life-form as it were, what Nicholas Zernov has described as 'the art of Christian living'. [101] Specifically we are interested in exploring the focus on a lived theology, a theology expressed and realised as an existential-aesthetic mode through ritual symbolicity and piety, in the totality of daily circumstances, characteristic of Old Russia and of the Old Belief.  This will then provide us with a context for the consideration of our second theme: the iconic quality of rituality itself, what, with something of a different emphasis, Scheffel has described as the 'iconic principle': the 'insistence on regarding the major symbols of orthodoxy as faithful copies of divine prototypes'.[102]  As an ideal type, the iconic principle is immensely useful for helping to elucidate the theology of ritual embedded in the ritualism of the Old Rite, and yet it has not received adequate exploration in the secondary literature - at least not in its theological parameters and foundations. Scheffel's approach to the issue is largely cultural. We want to build explicitly on the foundations laid by Scheffel, but we want to unfold Scheffel's point in a specifically theological manner, and consider the grounding of this notion of the iconic quality of rituality, in patristic Orthodoxy. As Robson has suggested, '[b]ecause symbols and rituals are *experienced* by the faithful, not simply understood in an intellectual way, scholars need to break down the distinction between the "signs" of the old ritual

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[100] Ibid.
[101] Zernov, *The Russians and Their Church*, p. 50.
[102] Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist,* pp. 142-3.

and the "real" issues at stake in the Old Belief'.[103] In our focus on these two specified themes, we aim to respond to Robson's point, but with a mind to broader Orthodox theology.

In this vein, our consideration of the art of the Christian living and the iconic principle have another point of reference: the Orthodox understanding of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God. To understand both the idea of the art of Christian living and the iconic nature of ritual in their Old Rite manifestations, not to mention the Orthodox foundations for these manifestations, we must first consider the essential locus of both of these themes, namely: the embodied human person, his nature and destiny; a task which requires a brief consideration of some of the central threads of patristic anthropology and, most importantly the Scriptural notion of the creation of man in the image and likeness of God. Indeed, the theology of image will be a fundamental context for our more specific discussion of rituality.

### 4. Terminological Clarifications

Above we have referred more or less indiscriminately to the 'Old Rite', the 'Old Belief' and the 'Old Believers,' and the 'Old Ritual' and the 'Old Ritualists.' A note on terminological clarification is therefore required. Starting with the notion of the Old Rite, the first point to stress is that on one hand the phrase simply refers to the liturgical rites, rituals and church customs, of the Russian Orthodox Church prior to the Nikonian reforms in the mid seventeenth century, and is not therefore something exclusive to those groups or individuals who, rejecting the reforms went into schism from the official Church and came to be variously known as 'Old Believers' and 'Old Ritualists' or by the more derogatory title of *raskolniki* (schismatics). At the same time, we want to suggest that the notion of rite involves rather more than merely a collection of specific rubrics, rites and rituals, that it involves something lived - a point we will pause to consider shortly.

The now officially defunct term of *raskolniki* is particularly problematic, since it has tended to be used indiscriminately to describe any and all dissenting groups, irrespective of their specific relation to the Old Rite itself and to patristic Orthodoxy, to say nothing of its derogatory character for the Old Believers themselves. Michels has stressed that the notion of *raskol* and thus *raskolniki*

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[103] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, p. 7

needs to be distinguished from the Old Belief and the Old Believers, referring as it does to a whole host of social, political, cultural and religious dissent in the seventeenth century and beyond which may or may not have a direct connection to the content of Nikon's reforms.[104] When the words *raskol* or schism are used in our discussion, they should be taken to refer specifically and exclusively to the liturgically centred dissent consequent of the Nikonian reforms – we are not generally interested in the wider dissent of the period. Thus, taking on board Michel's critique of terminological conflation, we have retained the word but limited its meaning as a general heuristic tool.

What then of the 'Old Belief' and the 'Old Believers'? We want to use the term Old Belief (*staraia vera*) to denote, quite literally, the belief system and way of life associated with the Old Rite. Following this usage, the Old Belief can refer to both the beliefs and way of life of Old Believer groups after the Schism or, more generally, to the piety of pre-Nikonian Russian Orthodoxy – although this does not mean that we automatically pre-suppose that the two are always identical. When the term is used to refer specifically to contemporary Old Believer groups, we will endeavour to make this clear. The term 'Old Believers' will be used to refer specifically to those groups of Christians who, grounded in Orthodoxy, rejected the reforms of patriarch Nikon and continued to cleave to the old books and the Old Rite,[105] whether *popovtsy* and *bezpopovtsy*. In a sense the *edinovertsy* ('one-faith') set up in the 1800s can also be included here, although they are clearly distinct from both the *popovtsy* and the *bezpopovtsy*.[106] We are well aware that given the multiplicity of Old Believer groups, particularly amongst the multiple *soglasiia* or 'concords' of the *bezpopovtsy*,[107] this is a rather sweeping usage but when specific distinctions are necessary we will strive to identify them as we have need.

Of course, all these references to 'old': the Old Rite, the Old Belief, the Old Ritual, the Old Piety, or simply Old Orthodoxy, are immediately suggestive of a dualism,

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[104] This is one of the defining methodological themes of Michels' *At War with the Church*.

[105] Crummey and Robson provide something of a balance to Michel's deconstruction of the notion of a coherent Old Believer movement by emphasising the emergence of a more stable social and religious movement in the nineteenth century (Crummey, *The Old Believers and the World of Antichrist*) and twentieth century (Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*).

[106] The *edinoverie* was the officially Church sponsored Old Rite organisation which continued the use of the Old Rite but under the wing of the Russian Orthodox Church.

[107] For a comprehensive and concise overview of Old Believer organisations and structures see Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, pp. 24-39.

the old *versus* the new. In one sense this dualism reflects the self-identity of the Old Believers who argue that the Nikonian reforms represent a break in the history of the Russian Church and of Russian culture and society – thus the critical notion of the 'new religion' which haunts Old Believer polemic. According to this understanding 'old' is synonymous with Orthodox Tradition and 'new' - the 'Nikonian' - represents the real innovation. At the same time, although with a rather different semantic sense, this tacit duality also reflects the perspective on the Old Believers presented through the correction argument and the early ecclesiastical defence of the reforms by the official Church: the idea that the Old Believers represent something stagnant and backward looking and thus, as it were, 'old' in this more pejorative sense. As Pobedonostev once put it: 'the characteristic lines of the contemporary schism *in its mass* appear as before – dark, careless and coarse stagnation in thought'.[108] Naturally, the Russian Orthodox Church of the reformed rite does not perceive itself as 'new' over against the 'old' ways but perceives a unity and continuation of tradition from which the 'old' believers have to some extent dropped away. In whatever way we look at this however, the dualistic implication terminology has stuck, even if only as an implication of the application of the word 'old'. In any case, there seems to be a general consensus amongst historians that the Nikonian reforms do indeed represent a kind of watershed in Russian history, church and society and the dualism remains useful in this heuristic sense. It is this reasoning which allows us to use the term Old Belief in reference to pre-Nikonian Russian culture as well as the more common reference to the Old Believers – we are not trying to un-critically suggest that the Old Believers are the exclusive bearers of the spirit of medieval Russian Orthodoxy.[109] In the context of these terminological clarifications, what it remains for us to stress is that ours is not so much a study of the Old Believers as it is of the Old Rite and the Old Belief.

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[108] 'Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora Sviateishego sinoda K. Pobedonsteva po vedomstvu pravoslavnogo ispovedaniia za 1890 i 1891 gody' (St Petersburg, 1893), p. 172, quoted in Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, p. 4.

[109] The question of 'claims to the past' is a complicated one and, as John Strickland has shown, in the fin-de-siècle period both the Russian Orthodox Church and the Old Believers used models from the medieval past to define the nature and destiny of Russia and Russian Orthodoxy. See Strickland, *The Making of Holy Russia* and the conclusion to this thesis.

## 5. On the Nature of 'Rite'

In the terms set about above we can say that the Old Rite pre-supposes the Old Belief. As we have already noted, both Scheffel and Robson have emphasised the notion of the Old Rite as lived theology, lived belief, and, taking this idea, our goal is to explore its Orthodox theological foundations. Ours is not then a study of 'liturgical theology' in the sense of a purely textual analysis of the ritual of the 'old books' themselves, but is rather an exploration of the theology of the particular understanding of ritual which we find in the Old Rite as an at once textual and lived phenomenon. For indeed, a rite is not exclusively or primarily textual - a set of forms and rules for the practicing of Christianity - but refers instead to a *way* of practicing shaped by and expressed in and through such rules, to Orthopraxis in an holistic existential sense, to *being* and becoming an Orthodox Christian. This is the environment as it were, the world, which is 'rite'. Understood in this way, the service books of the Church are not merely 'instruction manuals', guides for how services should be conducted, although they do of course fulfil this crucial function. Rather, these books provide the forms and shape for the 'right worship' Orthodoxy is, and this glorification is intrinsically total in its existential parameters. That is, it involves the whole of a person's life, moulding that life God-ward. The books, services, modes of worship facilitate the living of the Tradition they express and belong to, as elements of the existential hermeneutic, as it were, of the life in Christ within the Church.  To put this more prosaically, a rite involves and refers to a way of life; a way not primarily dictated by rituals and rubrics but manifest in them, guided by an inter-connected web of symbolicity at once crystallised from, and recapitulating, Holy Tradition.[110]

From a theological perspective, the idea that we can speak of an 'Old Belief' separate to this lived dimension of rite – as though it were some kind of *sui generis* 'religious' system, or even cultural system, is an intellectual abstraction. Rite and belief go together. Rite is to an extent supra-personal, or more precisely, supra-*individual*, but if it is perceived only on this level then it becomes drained of its essential life, objectified and ossified. Rite finds its meaning, its energy and dynamic, as a lived phenomenon, and something integrated into the totality of a

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[110] In this general sense, we take a rather different approach to the understanding of rite than that expressed in Schmemann's *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (London: Faith Press, 1966), where rite is seen in essentially positivist terms as the product of cultural and historical circumstances more or less at the expense of its experiential meaning.

person's and a community's life - embedding that life in the at once personal and supra-person realm of the Tradition of the Church, grafting the person into the body. The energy of rite is in its activation in the life of the people as right worship and glorification, as embodied and performed faith. As a way of life rite is indeed cultural, in the sense that it is shaped by the spirit, to use a rather Hegelian phrase here, of a particular culture and nation, but it is not *primarily* cultural in the sense of it being reducible to culture. Rather, this way of life, if it is authentic, is primarily Christian;[111] as we will explore in the following chapters, it is concerned with the becoming of likeness or with 'theosis'

The undeniable xenophobia of the early Old Believers obscures the more positive content of the Old Belief itself and, as one Old Believer living in modern America convincingly argues, such xenophobia is entirely inexcusable in the face of the modern global communication which, if it had existed in the seventeenth century would have informed both Avvakum and Nikon that many faithful of the Greek Church were becoming martyrs under the Turkish yoke, witnessing and dying for their faith,[112] rather than languishing in 'apostasy' as was widely assumed. Indeed, if there is something to be learned from the 'Old Believers' in this *positive* sense, then it is precisely this understanding of rite as something total and existential, an 'art of Christian living' as we will consider in the first chapter. As a *popovtsy* Metropolitan once put in when asked why the Old Believers held so tenaciously to the Old Rites: 'We maintain not just the rite, but the virtues that go along with it'.[113] 'The virtues that go along with it': a rite is a symbolic nexus for living, a language, as it were, from within which a word is spoken, not an end in itself but a world, a *habitus*, for that end: likeness-Christ-life. And just as a language is not absolutely reducible to words nor words to language as a system,

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[111] One important (and for some potentially controversial) point here is that as 'Russian' as the Old Rite is, it is more importantly and prominently *Orthodox*, a point stressed by Archpriest Pimen Simon of the Old Rite parish of the Nativity of Christ in Erie Pennsylvania, a former Pomorian priestless Old Believer community which accepted the priesthood from the ROCOR. See the interview with Archpriest Pimen, 'There is More to Our Mission' (23 June, 2010), [online] http://www.rocorstudies.org/interviews/2010/06/23/erie-pa-june-23-2010-archpriest-pimen-simon-there-is-more-to-our-mission/ [accessed 14/04/15]. It is also relevant to note here the existence of Belokrinitsa Old Believer communities amongst the local indigenous population in places such as Uganda. See http://rpsc.ru/news/hirotoniya-staroobryadcheskogo-svyashhennika-dlya-ugandy/ [accessed 17/10/15].

[112] Silvestre Valihov, 'Letter to Old Believer Pastors' (trans. John Hudanish, 2011), [online] HTTP://WWW.ROCORSTUDIES.ORG/DOCUMENTS/2015/03/02/LETTER-TO-OLD-BELIEVER-PASTOR/ [accessed 08/03/15].

[113] '2005 Interview with Metropolitan Andrian (1951-2005)', in *Sobornosti: Essays on the Old Faith* (ed. & trans. Matthew-Raphael Johnson, Deipara press, 2008), pp.65-75, p. 66.

we might say that the Christian life involves a dialogic interplay of its symbolical modes, an interplay within which, as we will argue in chapter two, symbols are themselves forms of participation. This interplay constitutes what we have called the existential hermeneutic of rite.

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The first chapter will introduce what we can refer to as anthropological preliminaries: the broader theological-anthropological thematics within which we want to situate the theology of ritual, namely the creation of man in the image and likeness of God and thus the iconic nature of human being, and praxis as a facet of the Christian life. In this context, chapter one will then examine rite as a way of life, exploring the aesthetic character of the art of Christian living characteristic of the Old Belief and the role of the idea, the principle, of *typikon* or *ustav*. Herein, we will focus on a number of key texts, perhaps most importantly the seventeenth century work, *A Son of the Church*. Chapter two will then explore the theology of ritual expressed in the art of the Christian living, focussing particularly on the relationship between rituality and iconicity – the 'iconic principle'. This will also provide an occasion to reflect on the performative nature of ritual in its relation to iconicity, as well as the meaning of the symbolical as a form of participation, and the sacramentality of Christian materialism in its relation to the worldview of the Old Rite. We will then finish with a concluding chapter, looking particularly at the pneumatological dimension of ritual.

If our rather 'philosophical' approach runs the risk of a certain level of theoretical abstraction, it nevertheless encourages a specific focus on the broader theological issues which the Schism engenders vis-à-vis the theology of ritual. Our intent is certainly not to ignore historical, cultural and sociological currents and circumstances, but to draw from these a focussed theological discussion of particular points of continuing relevance for Orthodoxy. This is in no sense intended as an apology for the Schism nor, it must be stressed, does it engender a romanticisation of the Old Belief in its ideal-theological or cultural features. Rather, our aim is simply to offer a theological snapshot, as it were, of particular facets of its worldview which, to all intents and purposes, have been under exposed to date, particularly in English language scholarship. Building on the work of Robson and Scheffel particularly, we hope to offer a theological contribution to the ongoing interpretation of Old Orthodoxy.

# 1 'The Art of Christian Living'

## 1. Anthropological Preliminaries: In the Image and Likeness of God - Iconic Ontology

We want to begin our exploration with a brief consideration of relevant thematics within Orthodox anthropology, particularly the notion of the creation of man in the image and likeness of God and thus the iconic dimension of human being, as well as the notion of *praxis* in the Christian life. As previously stated, these anthropological preliminaries furnish us with the necessary theological context and foundation for the unfolding of our more specific concerns, which we will develop in this and the following chapter.

In the patristic literature the meaning of creation in the image and likeness of God is given with slightly differing forms, different aspects of image and likeness being emphasised for different exegetical, didactic and liturgical situations and purposes, and different aspects pointing to different theological slants and needs. Nevertheless, image and likeness are taken as the fundamental signposts,[1] as it were, of what it is to be a created human person and of the place and vocation of man in the cosmic order.[2] Following the Genesis account, where the preceding creation emerges in the unity of will, command and word ('Let the…'), the creation of man on the sixth day emerges through an inter-Trinitarian counsel ('Let us…'):

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[1] The wealth of patristic literature on the theme of image and likeness is vast and inevitably our very brief discussion must be limited. Our attention will be driven thematically, but it will focus primarily upon patristic authorities of the fourth century, especially Gregory of Nyssa, Basil the Great, and Athanasius - all teachers to whom the Orthodox understanding of the human person, as indeed Orthodox theology more generally, is fundamentally indebted. We will also look back to Irenaeus in the second century. The fourth century saw the emergence of a great wealth of patristic anthropology and at the risk of a certain partiality, our intention is to focus our discussion, stopping before the great Christological debates of the fifth century, remembering that that Chalcedonian Fathers themselves saw themselves as building on the fourth century fathers.

[2] For a very brief overview of different patristic slants on what it is in man that corresponds to the divine image, see Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (trans. by the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius. Cambridge and London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd, 1957), pp.115-6.

He did not say, as with the others, "Let there be a human being." Learn well your dignity. He did not cast forth your origin by a commandment, but there was counsel in God to consider how to bring the dignified living creature into life. "Let us make."[3]

Created *ex nihilo* all creation is held in being by God and therefore has its being in relationship to God, but in a different sense, humanity has its being in relationship *with* God. Human being is being from God and is being in relationship, in communion.[4] The whole being of man is ontologically oriented toward God;[5] man is, as it were, ontologically God-ward. This privilege of man – made in the image and likeness of God – corresponds with his vocation of stewardship: 'As soon as you are made', Basil writes, 'you are also made ruler';[6] 'where the power to rule is, there is the image of God'.[7] This responsibility of stewardship, of ruling, is not to exercise tyrannical power over, to consume and abuse, but to mediate creation unto God. [8] But importantly for us, this God-wardness is not only the natural teleology of man, but is also a reflective, iconic, capacity. Put more precisely, it is an *iconic teleology*. Human ontology is rooted in God (out of nothingness, non-being) but it also reveals God, as Gregory of Nyssa argues. Indeed, for Gregory, the human person created in the image and likeness of God, images God in his being, reflecting within himself, in the totality

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[3] St. Basil the Great, 'On the Origin of Humanity, Discourse 1' in *On the Human Condition* (trans. Nonna Verna Harrison, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), 3, p. 33. Chrysostom emphasises the point, interpreting the 'Let us' as specifically a dialogue between Father and Son, emphasising their equality against the Arian claims (*Homilies on Genesis, 1-17* [Fathers of the Church, Vol. 74, trans. Robert C. Hill. Washington, D. C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986], 8, 8, p. 109).

[4] This sense of communion is particularly strong in the theological anthropology of Athanasius where it is nothing less than a 'standard, an expression of God's purpose in creating humanity, which sin undermines and the incarnation repairs' (Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of his Thought* [London, New York: Routledge, 1998], p. 57).

[5] To be clear, this orientation is not automatic but immanent, it is a facet of human being but it does not compromise human freedom, a fundamental aspect of the 'in the image' and a sign of the dignity of man. The human person can choose to turn away from God and deny the desire written into his own being; he can deny his very nature but not extinguish it. On this topic see Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (trans. Ian and Ihita Kesarcodi-Watson, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), pp. 72-3.

[6] Basil, 'On the Origin of Humanity', 1, 8, p. 36.

[7] Ibid, 1, 8, p. 37.

[8] On this topic see, for example, Fr. Michael Butler and Andrew P. Morriss, *Creation and the Herat of Man: An Orthodox Christian Perspective on Environmentalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Action Institute, 2013). Chrysostom, following the order of the Genesis text, interprets 'image' precisely in terms of mans' stewardship and control (*Homilies on Genesis,* 8, 5, p. 107): image 'refers to the matter of control… God created the human being as having control of everything on earth, and nothing on earth is greater than the human being, under whose authority everything falls' (ibid). For Chrysostom, image indicates a certain 'similitude of command' with God, whereas likeness indicates the relational quality of becoming which man is endowed with as potentiality, that is, to grow in likeness to God.

of body and soul, the mystery-beauty which God is, like a prism through which light is refracted.[9] The teleological directionality of being - being *for* God, toward God - thus coincides with the imaging *of* God. Later on we will explore the relation of ritual to this iconic teleology, our task here is merely to sketch it out.

Of all the fathers, it is particularly Gregory of Nyssa who orients image-anthropology to beauty, pointing out that the beautiful is always Godly and that humanity itself is illumined by the very beauty of God and energised by a holy desire or longing for that beauty. For Gregory, this is part of the meaning of creation in the image and likeness of God: man bears within himself and therefore images something of the Beauty-Goodness God is, that which is revealed in the 'image of the invisible God',[10] Jesus Christ, the active power, the *logos* of creation: 'He created and made all things by His Word'[11] as Irenaeus affirms. Indeed, according to numerous Fathers including for example, Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa, creation in the 'image' of God is creation in, according to, the Image-Christ.[12] Human being is iconically Christo-centric; human being images the Image, 'the unchanging Image of His own Father'[13] as Athanasius puts it. Human being, in which creation finds its created centre,[14] is being as image and in image and is therefore fundamentally iconic, bearing within itself the ontological capacity (iconicity) to reflect-image the radiance of God. And it is in this context that we encounter the distinction between image and likeness. To use something of a philosophical abstraction here, ontology and teleology coincide in the notion and capacity of image, for image is at once given and yet its fullness is a potentiality, and it is the latter dynamic aspect which patristic anthropology often relates to the scriptural notion of 'likeness'.

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[9] See for example, Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* in, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (NPNF) Series II, Vol. 5 (ed. P. Schaff), [online] Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf205, 5, 1, p. 746 [390], [accessed 24/02/15].
 5, 1, p. 746 [390].
[10] Col 1: 15-17
[11] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, *Ante Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1 (ed. Philip Schaff, [online] Christian Classics Ethereal Library, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.pdf), 2, 2, 4, p. 942 [361]), [accessed 24/02/15]. Naturally the key text here is the prologue to St John's Gospel.
[12] Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: The Nature of the Human Person* (trans. Normal Russell, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), p. 24.
[13] Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, NPNF, 2, 4 [online] http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204, 3, 41, p. 238 [25], [accessed 21/02/15].
[14] M. C. Steenberg*, Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2009), p.1. See also, for example, Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, 8, 5, p. 107.

Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, 5, 6. 1) seems to have been the first Christian writer to make a distinction between the two terms.[15] As Thunberg explains, for Irenaeus:

> the image is related to human nature as such – and to both body and soul – and cannot be lost, while likeness is something added to man, given to Adam but lost through his fall, and restored by Christ. And this likeness consists of the presence of the Spirit in the soul.[16]

The distinction is also present in St. Clement of Alexandria and finds a more developed expression in Origen. According to Origen 'man has received the dignity of image from the beginning but will gain likeness to God in the end, proportionate to his own efforts in the imitation of God'.[17] Where image refers to the existent nature of man, likeness is eschatological, it is associated with the age to come. For Irenaeus, Clement and Origen, in their varying ways, this conceptual distinction is a way of formulating the dynamic potentiality of the human person in relationship with God: the term likeness is used to suggest the assimilation-realisation, vis-à-vis the exercise of human free-will and effort, of the fullness of what is already given in image as an ontological foundation. Likeness suggests the dynamic property of being, vis-à-vis God. The point here is not that something is lacking in the human person created in the image of the Image, rather, this distinction is ultimately about relationship and communion. Man is created to share in the life of God, to be like unto Him;  created by God, created with freedom and autonomy, the fullness of who and what the person is (and humanity as such) is realised and maintained only in the intimacy of a relationship-encounter freely chosen and developed.[18] This is, as it were, the eschatological *telos* of hypostatic human being.

In this context then, we can say that the relationship between image and likeness resides in or at least expresses, iconicity as an ontological capacity and potentiality, a potency as it were integral to human being - and this is really the central theme we want to draw out here. Conceptually speaking, iconicity

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[15] For a brief overview of the history and development of the distinction see Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Lund: Håkan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1965)*,* pp. 28-33.
[16] Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, p. 128.
[17] Ibid, p. 129.
[18] See Basil, 'On the Origins of Humanity', 1, 16, pp. 43-4.

characterises image and likeness as a dynamic potentiality and energy, which simultaneously relates them in proper configuration: the ontological *telos* of man as such - *theosis* or 'deification' (which we will clarify below). Thus the very 'beauty-goodness' (*καλόν*) of creation and human being above all, reveals the iconic faculty of the created order and in a privileged sense of the human hypostasis but, it is crucial to stress, in the fullness of *embodied* life. For indeed, in the patristic tradition, the image of God in man is taken to refer to the unified totality of material and spiritual subsistence, although the mind or *nous* is usually perceived as the ruling power.

Image is embodied and thus the body itself participates in the potentiality of image as a task and thus as the hesychast tradition fundamentally witnesses, in prayer. For the Old Belief, as we will see below, ritual functions within this general context. The task of realising the potentiality of image in its fullness involves the 'psychosomatic totality', [19] the 'beauty' the human person is: 'The natural man is correctly said to be neither soul without body nor conversely body without soul, but the single form of beauty constituted from the combination of soul and body'.[20] According to Basil this task, which he sees as being synonymous with the Christian life, is nothing other than the work, the craft or art, of cultivating likeness; in our own terms: realising iconicity in and through iconic potentiality. 'In giving us the power to become like God', Basil writes, 'he let us be *artisans* of the likeness of God, so that the reward for the work might be ours'.[21] This connection between the cultivation or assimilation of likeness and craft-art – a connection perhaps already evident in the very words 'image' and 'likeness' – is a theme that will concern us later on, for now it suffices to merely highlight this aesthetic-iconic dimension. In any case, for Basil this artistic or craft-like task is the essence of life in the Church; the Church is the space for its actualisation, providing the necessary means for the task: the practice of the virtues, life through the Sacraments, the ascetic struggle in all its forms, and so on: 'I have that which is according to the image in being a rational being, but I become according to the likeness in becoming Christian'.[22]

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[19] Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, *The Power of the Name: The Jesus Prayer in Orthodox Spirituality* (Oxford: SLG Press, 1986) [online] http://www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk/lectures/18-power-of-the-name.pdf, p. 12 [accessed 09/07/15].
[20] Epiphanios of Salamis, *Panarion* 64, 18, quoted in Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, p. 46.
[21] Basil, 'On the Origins of Humanity', 1, 16, p. 44 [emphasis added].
[22] Ibid, 1, 16, p. 44.

However this process is envisaged it is of course given as a possibility in the Church by virtue of the Incarnation, by virtue of the revelation of the Image to the image - now sullied and dirtied (unlike) by the fall. Through the Incarnation, as Irenaeus explains, Christ is 'united to his own workmanship',[23] so that through this mediating unity - 'presenting man to God and revealing God to man'[24] - salvation might come to all, 'that what we had lost in Adam - namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God - that we might recover in Christ Jesus'.[25] For Irenaeus, the Incarnation facilitates the re-imaging of the image in the Image: the 'recapitulation' of man in Christ.[26] Athanasius arguably has a somewhat similar process in mind when he speaks of the 're-creation' of humanity through the Incarnation. Put succinctly, in Athanasius' well known words: 'he was incarnate that we might be made god';[27] or as Irenaeus puts it: He 'become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself'.[28] This, briefly, is the essence of the patristic notion of *theosis* which we noted above.

Such a re-imaging of the image in the Image marks the re-orientation of the human being – personal and collective – consequent of the dis-orientation affected by the Fall; that is, the re-unification, as it were, of ontology and teleology in the image-likeness dynamic, given their fragmentation in the sin of the first created ones and the inversion of the natural teleology of being through the emergence of decay and death: 'the wages of sin'.[29] The Incarnation does not simply save humanity from sin in the negative sense of the 'from' – but facilitates the re-orienting of humanity God-ward, allowing the assimilation of likeness which as we have already seen is the ontological *telos* of human life: the realisation of the fullness of image-beauty. Thus we see that iconicity underwrites or coincides with *theosis,* and is revealed in the light of the Incarnation as a soteriological capacity.

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[23] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3, 18, 1, p. 1124 [445].
[24] Ibid, 3, 18, 7, p. 2234 [446].
[25] Ibid.
[26] On the complex and nuanced idea of recapitulation in Irenaeus, see Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge, New York, Oakleigh, Madrid, Cape Town: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 97-140; also John Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Matthew Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation: The Cosmic Christ and the Saga of Redemption* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) and *Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2009).
[27] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (Greek-English text, trans. John Behr, Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 54, p. 167.
[28] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5, 'Preface', p. 1300 [526].
[29] Rom 6: 23

## 2. Synergy and Praxis

Created in the image and likeness of God, the life of man on the personal and collective levels is, as we have suggested above, a task. This fact is indicated in the Orthodox theological notion of 'synergy' (*synergeia*): 'Each one', the Apostle writes, 'will receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are God's fellow workers (*συνεργοί*)'.[30] The creation of man in the image and likeness of God establishes human being as a relational quality, as communicative-relational being, and this fact is manifest in the faculty of free will which the loving Father gives to his creatures as the very potentiality love involves. Activising iconic potential demands the exercise of free will; this faculty may be clouded by the Fall but it is nevertheless an inalienable quality of the image of God in man and allows for an interaction with the workings of grace. Orthodox theology tends to reject the dualism of nature and external grace,[31] arguing instead that grace is ever present in the human person in the soul, such that 'the latter is capable of receiving and assimilating this deifying energy'.[32] In the Orthodox understanding, the person has to *seek* grace, seek to 'acquire the Holy Spirit' as Seraphim of Sarov put it.[33] In the fallen condition, grace operates in conjunction, in communion, with human free will. As Kallistos (Timothy) Ware explains:

> If we are to achieve full fellowship with God, we cannot do so without God's help, yet we must also play our own part: we humans as well as God must make our contribution to the common work, although what God does is of immeasurably greater importance than what we do… the Orthodox teaching is very straightforward. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in' (Revelation iii, 20). God knocks, but waits for us to open the door – He does not break it down. The grace of God invites all but compels none.[34]

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[30] 1 Cor 3: 8-9 (NKJV, *The Orthodox Study Bible* [OSB]).
[31] See Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, pp. 134-5.
[32] Ibid, p. 130.
[33] *Little Russian Philokalia, Vol. 1: St. Seraphim* (translated by Fr. Seraphim Rose, Platina CA: SY. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1996), pp. 78-9.
[34] Timothy Ware [Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia], *The Orthodox Church* (London, New York, Camberwell, Toronto, New Delhi, Albany, Rosebank: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 222.

To be clear, this does not mean that man is 'saved by works' - saved by his own efforts - but rather that he must contribute his own action to be met by the grace of God. He must become a 'fellow-worker' (*συνεργοί*) with God. This task takes form in the totality of what is often referred to as *praxis* – the practical following of the Christian way moulded by the Tradition of the Church. *Praxis* denotes the active dimension of the Christian life, encompassing the keeping of Christ's commandments and the ascetic struggle in all its dimensions, and is generally held as the precondition for true theology or *theoria* – the contemplation and experiential knowing of God. *Praxis* is inseparable from life in the body, it is inseparable from the embodiment which defines human creatureliness (in contrast to the angels). *Praxis* relates to the spiritual struggle as such, but as we have already stressed, the spiritual struggle takes place in and with the psychosomatic totality the person is. Indeed, from the Orthodox perspective, any kind of 'spirituality' which wholly rejects physical life or indeed seeks to neglect embodiment as such is really a blasphemous negation of the goodness-beauty of creation in the image and likeness of God. We live, we pray, we love, we seek for God *in* our bodies.

*Praxis*, guided by the Tradition of the Church then, represents the shaping and directing of the task of the assimilation of likeness, and in general terms ritual can be situated in this context. Ritual is a facet of synergistic *praxis*, but as we will see, one that shares in the iconic quality of human being as such. An understanding of ritual in the Old Rite needs to be grounded in an appreciation of these broader tenets of Orthodox anthropology which here we have sketched out only in very broad terms. Understanding the iconic quality of human being, and what we have described as the intersection of ontology and teleology in the nature of image, will help us to explore the iconic dimension of rituality itself and the role ritual plays in the Christian life and task. Before we address these points more directly however, we need to introduce Old Russian tradition itself and consider some of the general characteristics of Russian Christianity.

### 3. Beauty, Ritual and Russian Christianity

Old Russia stood in a very definite cultural succession. She was in no sense isolated in the cultural world. She entered the commonwealth of civilized nations when she was christened by the Byzantine. She received then, together with the Christian faith, an

impressive cultural dowry - a complex of cultural values, habits, and concerns.

(George Florovsky) [35]

Russia received Christianity at the end of the tenth century (988) under the rule of Prince Vladimir of Kiev, a man of formerly debauched and brutal life who through the genuine piety and zeal of his conversion, would become one of Russia's best loved saints. The Russian *Primary Chronicle* provides a revealing and much quoted depiction of the event preceding the 'Baptism of Rus'. Under pressure from various foreign missionaries, Vladimir found himself 'faced with the need to choose a religion for his state'[36] and vacillating between Islam, Judaism, Latin Christianity and Eastern Orthodox Christianity, sent out emissaries to examine these faiths. Central to this this whole investigation was a consideration of 'the ritual of each and how he worships God' and, following the *Primary Chronicle*, what Vladimir's emissaries found in Byzantium was precisely a ritual mode of worship which, infused with profound beauty, immediately struck the emissaries as exactly what Russia sought. On their return Vladimir's emissaries recounted their journey and the fruits of their investigation, and having found the worship, ceremony and ritual of all the other faiths inadequate for one reason or another they spoke of the Greeks:

> Then we went on to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the edifices
> where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were
> in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendour or
> such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only
> that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than
> the ceremonies of other nations.[37]

The 'conversion of Russia' was a profound historical turning point in the history of the nation and, as Van Den Bercken has shown, in the wider history of Europe.[38] The overturning of the pagan past, symbolically represented by the

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[35] Georges Florovsky, 'The Problem of Old Russian Culture', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Mar., 1962), pp. 1-15, p. 6.

[36] 'Vladimir Christianizes Russia' [The Russian Primary Chronicle] in *Medieval Russian's Epics, Chronicles and Tales* (ed., and trans., Serge A. Zenkovsky, revised and enlarged edition, New York, London, Victoria, Markham, Auckland: Meridian, 1963), p. 66.

[37] Ibid, p. 67.

[38] Wil Van Den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe: East and West in the Religious Ideology of Russia* (trans. John Bowden, London: SCM Press, 1999), particularly p. 28. Van Den Bercken offers an insightful critical analysis of the rise of Russian nationalism, focussing on the

drowning of the idols of the pagan god Perun in Dnieper, and the subsequent Christian acculturation of Russia did not, of course, occur instantaneously, and according to some writers pagan residues remained in Russia alongside Christianity well into the modern period.[39] However, the process of acculturation was itself aided by the aesthetics of Byzantine Christian practice and the beauty which Vladimir's emissaries had experienced. As Sinyavsky suggests, beauty played an integral role in Christianising Russia.[40] The idols of Perun were replaced with icons, and Russia soon developed its own renowned iconography, expressing its own contribution to universal Orthodoxy.

According to the author of the *Chronicle*, for Vladimir's emissaries, it is very clearly the experience of beauty rather than words or ideas that reveals the face of God in Christian worship, the presence of God; it is beauty which touches and elevates the heart. As Van Den Bercken observes in his critical analysis of the conversion account, 'for the Russians the aesthetic argument became the deciding factor in the choice of a new faith',[41] a fact which tells us as much about the medieval self-identity of Russian Christianity as it does about the historical circumstances of the actual conversion. According to Van Den Bercken:

> The elaboration of the aesthetic argument in the Russian conversion story is a literary imagination on the part of the chronicler, which as such is also an aesthetic act. But the predilection for liturgical splendour would remain a typical characteristic of Russian Orthodoxy.[42]

The 'aesthetic act' of the narrative then, already indicates the primacy of the aesthetic emphasis in the self-understanding of Russian Orthodoxy, although Van Den Bercken's implied reduction of the aesthetic instance in the conversion story to contemporary aesthetic self-consciousness might be overly cynical. Moreover, we would suggest that it is not merely the immediate aesthetic beauty,

conversion of Russia and its presentation and reception, and his critical discussion of the conversion accounts, particularly the comparison with other European national conversion stories is useful. However, we have approached his conclusions and method critically; his approach to the subject matter betrays what we might call an ideologically ecumenical stance which colours not only his thesis, but his understanding of Russian Orthodoxy which at times he seems to contrast with 'Christianity' as such.

[39] See fn. 67 below.
[40] Sinyavsky, *Ivan the Fool*, p. 172.
[41] Van Den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, p. 16.
[42] Ibid, pp. 16-17.

the 'appearance' as it were, of the Orthodox Liturgy that is referred to in the chronicler's account, but the experiential-existential beauty of worship itself, of *participation* in the mystery of God in beauty – a dimension Van Den Bercken's account does not satisfactorily consider. At least, this would be a more accurate representation of the Orthodox understanding of the meaning of beauty and 'liturgical splendour' which finds an 'ideological' expression in the conversion account as a contemporary medieval confession of faith,[43] as well as of the aesthetic dimension of Byzantine worship itself. As the great Muscovite theologian, Maxim the Greek once put it, 'We were created on earth in order to be the beneficiaries of immortal beauty and to be participants in God's mysterious conversation'[44] – such is, perhaps, what Vladimir's emissaries glimpsed at *Hagia Sophia*. For the Orthodox beauty is not mere adornment, but as we have seen above with St. Gregory, revelation and communion, indeed when beauty comes to be limited to mere adornment, to externals, something fundamental is lost.

The medieval account points us to a cultural sensibility which placed a significant emphasis on the aesthetic-experiential dimension of the Christian faith. Although Russia retained elements of its pagan past and, to the eyes of some foreign travellers even in the sixteenth century remained a 'rude and barbarous kingdom',[45] this sense of the beautiful penetrated deeply into the core of Russian Christianity, becoming one of its primary characteristics, both objectively as regards its cultural forms and as Van Den Bercken has shown, in its self-understanding. As Tarasov has explained, the idea emerged that Russia was itself a 'Great Icon', a sacred space beautified by divine image and imaging in which heaven and earth meet.[46] The unique forms of Russian iconography, expressive as they are of classic Byzantine hesychasm, the works of, for example Theophanes the Greek, Andrei Rublev and Master Dionysius,[47] and the

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[43] On the medieval sources as confessional documents, see ibid, pp. 21-5.
[44] Quoted in Jack, V. Honey, *From Italy to Muscovy: The Life and Works of Maxim the Greek* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1973), p. 147.
[45] See Lloyd E. Berry & Robert O. Crummey (ed.), *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).
[46] See Oleg Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion: Sacred Spaces in Imperial Russia* (trans. & ed. Robin Milner-Gulland, London: Reaktion Books, 2002), pp. 37-84 for a detailed exploration of this theme.
[47] Theophanes was of course Greek but as Kontzevitch suggests, his work 'belongs to Russia, where he spent the best years of his life'. Kontzevitch emphasises the way in which the iconography of ancient Russia expressed classic Byzantine hesychasm. See *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia*, pp. 241-8.

distinctively 'mystical' church architecture of Old Russia,[48] the countless churches which so dazzled European travellers, are a testament to the Russian Christian emphasis on the sacralisation and beautification of space. Alexei Lidov and others, have sought to explore this phenomenon – the creation of sacred space – in both Byzantium and Old Russia using the term 'hierotopy', a word which designates both the concept of the creation of sacred space as well as a methodology for the study of it.[49] According to Lidov, hierotopic environments open up the opportunity for what Eliade refers to as 'hierophany': the becoming present or manifestation of God in space.[50] Both Vladimir Petrukhin and Milena Rozhdestvenskaya have analysed the creation of sacred space in and through the Russian medieval chronicles, research which only emphasises the 'aesthetic' emphasis of the Russian Orthodox tradition we have already highlighted.[51] The 'aesthetic act' noted by Van Den Bercken then, illustrates hierotopic creativity; as well as providing an historical account it also features in the writing, as it were, of Russia as icon.

The hierotopic quality of Russian culture however, also included a distinctly existential dimension: the *way of life* of Russian Christianity of which sacred art and architecture are similarly an integral expression. A good deal of the hierotopy project has looked at the interaction of ritual, space, environment and object.[52] The 'Great Icon' of the Russian land was created not only by image as a quality of icon and architecture but by word and gesture as ritual modes, by what we will explore below as 'the art of Christian living': a kind of existential iconicity or, put differently, a language of Christian life. As Tarasov writes, 'The "word" and the "ritual" were an indissoluble whole. They constituted the language of everyday

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[48] On the 'mystical' quality of Old Russian architecture see Vladimir V. Sedov, 'The Sacred Space of the Medieval Russian Church: The Architectural Aspect' in, *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (ed. Alexei Lidov, Moscow: Progress-Tradition, 2006), [online] http://hierotopy.ru/contents/CreationOfSacralSpaces_24_Sedov_SacredSpaceRussianChurches_2006_RusEng.pdf, pp. 556-78, p. 574 [accessed 07/06/15].
[49] The best introduction to the topic is Alexi Lidov, 'Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and Subject of Cultural History' in, Lidov ed., *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces*, pp. 32-58.
[50] M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, 1959); Lidov, 'Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity', p. 34.
[51] Vladimir Petrukhin, 'Hierotopy of the Russian Land and the Primary Chronicle' in, Lidov (ed.), *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces*, pp. 480-90; Milena Rozhdestvenskaya, 'The Creation of Sacred Space in Medieval Russian Literature: Apocrypha and Chronicles' in, Lidov (ed.), *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces*, pp. 525-33.
[52] Lidov et al [online], http://hierotopy.ru/en/?page_id=288 [accessed 06/06/15].

religious culture, and to the believer they were God-inspired'.[53] From the early days of Russian Christianity word, ritual, sacralisation and beautification were seen as crucially interrelated facets of an iconic vision, an iconic cosmology. Indeed, Lidov has rightly pointed out that the creation of sacred space *is* an iconic act, sharing in the fundamental presuppositions of icons.[54] By the time we reach the seventeenth century - the century of Schism - Russia as icon, as hierotopy, was to be maintained on an individual and collective level through a ritual beautification of everyday life ordered and safeguarded by a rule of piety - a theme we will explore in more depth below. This rule subsisted within and as a part of an interactive nexus of sacred space.

Quite correctly, we tend to think of what ritual is in largely liturgical terms – the forms of symbolic and ritual practice characteristic of the liturgical life of the Church and, most directly, of the Divine Liturgy itself.[55] However, ritual practices and forms are integral elements of every aspect of life in the Church for Orthodox Christians, from the ritual which envelops the 'Mysteries' or 'Sacraments' of the Church to the simple act of the prayers and bows made when entering or leaving a Christian home. Indeed, one of the first things a child will be taught is how to make the Sign of the Cross correctly. As Scheffel recounts in his study of the Old Believers of modern Alberta, 'As soon as a child has learned to exercise some control over his or her body, he or she is introduced to the correct signing of the cross, a gesture performed on a countless number of occasions'. [56] The point applies equally to pious Orthodox, ancient and modern. Ritual is not something confined to the church building or even to the 'beautiful corner' in the Christian home, but, we suggest, accompanies the Christian in their day to day activities as a *praxis* of anamnesis, of the remembrance of God, and thus as a *praxis* of reorientation. Ritual is not about enchanting a disenchanted world as a kind of magic of transformation, and it is not confined to mere representative symbolism but involves the revealing of the presence of God in the normality of daily life,

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[53] Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion*, p. 57.
[54] Lidov, 'Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a form of Creativity', p. 37, 40.
[55] There is of course a vast amount of material on ritual from sociological, anthropological and psychological perspectives, the field of 'ritual studies'. Useful as this approach may be, the theological meaning of rituality gets lost in a largely reductive socio-cultural emphasis. For an introduction to this field see Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[56] Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, p. 140.

orienting the person in their daily life to His presence through actions which embody and manifest the faith.

Of course, Byzantium itself was deeply and even rigorously ritualistic in its material and symbolic culture. As Pentcheva has shown, the liturgical culture of Byzantine Orthodoxy was deeply 'synesthetic', and ritual formed a crucial part of the phenomenal world of Orthodox life.[57] Pentcheva's work has sought to bring the phenomenological dimension of Byzantine ritual into focus in a scholarly field which, she argues, has tended to stress the spiritual at the cost of certain dematerialisation.[58] As any modern person entering an Orthodox Church, whether Greek, Russian, or any other national or ethnic delineation will immediately notice, this synesthetic quality remains a definitive element of Orthodox worship, and Old Russia was far from an exception. Despite the persistence of elements of pagan culture, Russia took its Christian ritual forms from Orthodox Byzantium:[59] 'Russia was under the favourable spiritual influence of Byzantium from the very beginning of its historical existence'.[60] Byzantium provided Russian society with the Christian norms which allowed it to develop as an Orthodox culture, as what Kliuchevsky refers to as a 'spiritually integrated whole',[61] and both before and after the Mongol conquest, 'the church alone united all Russian believers in a single community.'[62]

However, Russia received from Byzantine Orthodoxy in an active rather than merely passive fashion; thus, as Van Den Bercken reminds us, the medieval accounts strongly emphasise the idea that Russia consciously *chose* to adopt

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[57] As Pentcheva writes defining her use of this term: 'The term synaesthesia as employed in modern art theory and psychology refers to concomitant sensation: the experience of one sense through the stimulation of another, such as colour experienced as sound. I will use the word *synesthesis* (*syn-*, together, plus *aesthesis*, sensual apprehension) to focus attention on consonant sensation: the simultaneity of senses. This *synesthetic* experience is very characteristic of Byzantium. Yet it is barely discussed in medieval studies' (Bisssera V. Pentcheva, 'The Performative Icon', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 88, No. 4 [Dec., 2006], pp. 631-655, p. 631). On the synesthetic character of Byzantium see also Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania state University Press, 2010). We will consider Pentcheva's arguments in more depth in the next chapter.
[58] Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon*, p. 2.
[59] See Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform*.
[60] Kontzevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia*, p. 184. For a detailed exploration of the relationship between Byzantium and Russia see John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia: A Study of Byzantino-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, vol. I.
[61] V. O. Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century* (trans. Natalie Duddington, New York, London: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), p. 278.
[62] Robert O. Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy, 1304-1613* (London, New York: Longman, 1987), p. 117.

Orthodox Christianity.[63] According to Ivan Kireevsky, whilst Russia received Orthodoxy from Byzantium, Russian Orthodox culture did not develop as a mere imitation of Byzantine culture; instead, the 'natural physiognomy' of Russia came to be 'illuminated with a higher consciousness'[64] such that the life of the nation in its cultural particularity came to be assimilated to, and re-configured through, Orthodox Tradition. Irrespective of the Slavic 'romanticism' that might be critically associated with Kireevsky and the Slavophile movement, the point remains that in receiving Byzantine Orthodoxy Russia nevertheless stamped its own cultural life onto the religious culture it received, leading to the 'flowering of a distinctively Russian form of Orthodox Christianity',[65] as Strickland puts it in his at once more 'objective' account. In sociological terms, this is a typical characteristic of Orthodox acculturation, but it also helps make sense of the particularism which would develop as a feature of Russian Orthodox self-consciousness, a particularism which, according to Strickland would not always rest comfortably with the more fundamental universalism of the Gospels.[66]

A strong sense of ritual piety was one of the hallmarks of this 'distinctively Russian form of Christianity', an imbuing of the ritual and order of Christian life with what we might describe as a deeply immediate and holistic character - the essence of the 'folk piety' explored, for example, by Sinyavsky and others.[67]

[63] Van Den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, pp. 7-41.

[64] Ivan Kireevsky, *On the Nature of European Culture and on Its Relationship to Russian Culture* in, On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader (trans., & ed., Boris Jakim & Robert Bird, Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books), pp. 187-232, p. 196. Kireevsky argues that Orthodoxy therefore permits and indeed cherishes national difference and expression, as long as this remains within the parameters of the doctrinal and spiritual union (*sobornost*) of World Orthodoxy. Schism emerges when local particularity asserts itself against World Orthodoxy, rupturing the spiritual union which binds the national churches and resulting in the emergence of a certain one-sidedness and disharmony in the particular national church itself. This is how Kireevsky interprets the Old Believer schism. He suggests that the former harmony of Russian Orthodox culture came to be compromised by the preponderance of ritual formalism in the 17th Century and the stubborn adherence to what he believes to be erroneous liturgical accretions. See *On the Nature of European Culture and on Its Relationship to Russian Culture*, pp. 229-31. It is worth noting that Kireevsky more or less uncritically recapitulates the established correction view of the schism typical of his day, although this view does not sit entirely comfortably within his argument. On this note see, Abbot Gleason, *European and Muscovite: Ivan Kireevsky and the Origins of Slavophilism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 255-7.

[65] Strickland, *The Making of Holy Russia*, p. 4.

[66] The tension between the particular and the universal in Russian Orthodox self-identify is one of the major themes of Strickland's work in *The Making of Holy Russia*. See also Van Den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*.

[67] Andrei Sinyavsky, *Ivan the Fool: Russian Folk Belief, A Cultural History* (trans. Joanne Turnbull and Nikolai Formozov, Moscow: Glas, 2007). There is a wealth of material on folk or popular religion in Russia. See for example, Pierre Pascal, *The Religion of the Russian People* (trans. Rowan Williams, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976) and Leonid Heretz, *Russia on the Eve of Modernity: Popular Religion and Traditional Culture under the Last Tsars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Where Byzantine Orthodoxy excelled in the philosophical articulation of the faith, Russia received the faith and the theology of the faith with an existential immediacy and simplicity marked by an emphasis on doing and being, thus receiving and expressing the theology of the Church in immediate existential forms, that is to say, in a total way of life - a kind of spiritual and corporeal existential aesthetic. This character was not lacking in Byzantium, but it found a particular expression, as it were, in Russian society, shaped by its own cultural history and psychological features.[68] Boris Uspensky has argued that where medieval Russia lacked 'theology' in the usual sense of the word, it, as it were, substituted this with an iconic perception of rites which determined the religious life of the people.[69] Ritual and rite became the iconic mode for theology, a theme we will explore in more depth in the following chapter.

To a certain extent, this 'existential' characteristic of Russian Orthodoxy reflects the spiritual and cultural conditions of ancient Russia which, unlike Greece, had no foundations in classical learning. This fact has contributed to the familiar tendency in surveys of ancient Russian culture and Christianity to associate Russia's lack of intellectual culture with a 'primitive' and 'backward' form of Christianity,  compared for example to Orthodox Byzantium and the West, a primitivism expressed particularly in its ritualism.[70]  In other words, there is a

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[68] Although some caution should be used here, so as not to oversimplify and over generalise the differences between the Byzantine and Russian Orthodox traditions, as a basic sociological fact we can nevertheless highlight differing 'accents' coloured by the cultural, social and historical particularities of these lands and their historical circumstances.

[69] Boris Uspensky, '"The Movement Following the Sun" and the Structure of the Sacred Space in Moscovy' in Lidov (ed.), *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces*, pp. 534-55.

[70] Florovsky has emphasised the paradigmatic tendency in historiography to divide Russian history, identifying Old Russia as essentially stagnant, primitive, and backward, and the New Russia which emerges with the 'enlightened' tsar, Peter the Great, as cultured, modern and enlightened – a caricature which reflects the secularising bias of Western European enlightenment ideals. As Florovsky summarises, 'By this [enlightenment] criterion the whole history of Old Russia was summarily discredited in advance. Indeed, the major charge that has been raised against Old Russia is that its life was dominated by religion, enslaved in the dogmatic and ritual forms' ('The Problem of Old Russian Culture', p. 4). In *On the Nature of European Culture and on Its Relationship to Russian Culture*, Ivan Kireevsky discusses in depth how Western rationalist and enlightenment ideals infiltrated Russian intellectual consciousness and became the measuring stick for the approach to and understanding of Old Russian culture. According to Kireevsky, this infiltration led to a wholly caricatured picture of pre-Petrine Russia as backward, primitive and barbarous amongst the intelligentsia: 'their strong bias toward Western civilization and their unconscious prejudice against Russian barbarism had made it impossible for them to understand Russia. Perhaps they themselves, under the sway of the same prejudices, had in the past helped to spread the same delusion' (ibid, p. 195).  Kireevsky argues that it was only really in his own day the this view began to be challenged, and not least because of the growing consciousness in the West itself of the limits of rationalism and the enlightenment project [the kind of dialectic of reason we find in, for example, the works of Georg Simmel and Max Weber] the growing sense of the stifling of human culture and values by cold rationalism and a calculating mentality: 'the predominance of superficial rationality over the inner essence of things'

tendency to perceive Old Russian ritualism and concern with the ordered life, as denoting a lack of a more sophisticated and spiritual Orthodox culture. This view might not be wholly without validity in certain historical moments and circumstances, but as an historical generalisation it reflects the ideological prejudice of the more-or-less post-Enlightenment rationalist view of religion (although it dates further back to Scholasticism in the West) which tends to posit a spiritual inner kernel - the real meaning of religiosity - and the essentially disposable outer ritual shell, rendering the whole issue in dualistic terms. We find a typical expression of the ritualism-primitivism argument in Fedotov's well-known readings of ancient Russian Christianity: 'Russia, in fact did not receive, together with Greek Christianity, the classical culture of Greece. Byzantium itself still possessed the ancient treasures, it did not transmit them to Russia, or rather, Russia did not care to receive them'.[71] The treasures Fedotov has in mind here, refer to the philosophical and literary learning of Greece, the fruits of classical culture, and whilst Fedotov does indeed praise elements of ancient Russian Christianity, he nevertheless presents it as lacking an enlightened culture. Fedotov is but one example of a writer who, as Florovsky points out, falls into the somewhat weary paradigm of criticising Old Russian culture precisely for its religiosity, it's almost exclusively religious culture and therefore its 'unenlightened' religious simplicity.[72] In contrast, according to Kireevsky, Russian 'simplicity' is not actually emblematic of any lack relative to the civilizations of Byzantium and the West, it is not primarily something negative, but instead reflects the holism of Orthodox culture, an integral harmony manifest in the totality of an evangelical form of life on the individual and collective levels.[73] Kireevsky perceives Russian 'primitivism' in terms of spiritual and cultural unity - *sobornost*.

In any case, however we envisage this simplicity, we can agree with Zernov that it facilitated a particular sensibility in Old Russia whereby 'Christianity was understood by Russian people neither as a system of doctrines nor as an

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(ibid, p. 200). For Kireevsky, this Russian awakening, as it were, was leading to a return and renewal of the indigenous Orthodox culture of Russia and a re-consideration of it Byzantine-patristic inheritance, an inheritance Kireevsky encountered first hand in the Optina *pustyn* monastery and its famous *startzy*, not least Elder Macarius with whom Kireevsky collaborated in the publication of classic Orthodox texts on hesychasm and the spiritual life. On the whole however, Kireevsky does not explore the relationship between the Old Belief and pre-Western rationalist cultural and psychological forms.

[71] Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, vol. I, p. 38.
[72] Florovsky, 'The Problem of Old Russian Culture', pp. 8-10.
[73] Kireevsky, *On the Nature of European Culture and on Its Relationship to Russian Culture*, p. 225.

institution, but primarily *as a way of life*' [emphasis added].[74] If Russia did not receive the treasures of Greek learning it nevertheless did receive the fullness of Orthodox Tradition[75] and the primary idea that the Gospel, in its simplicity, is something to be lived: this is abundantly clear in the outpouring of sanctity in ancient Russia,[76] and the spiritual culture evidenced in its art and architecture – even if the notion of a 'Christian peasant nation' has been romantically over-emphasised.[77] As Grigorieff observes, 'Russian religious experience and mind were expressed considerably more in iconography and church architecture than in written theological works'.[78] Russia's lack of intellectual culture may well have stunted its development and, as Kontzevitch argues, lent strength to the Westernisation which took place with the break from Byzantium after the Union of Florence,[79] and the ascendancy of the Petrine reforms. Nevertheless, this same dearth of intellectual culture lent to Russian Christianity a certain evangelical simplicity and immediacy and therefore the emphasis of Russian Christianity was directed down a decidedly existential-aesthetic route. This fact has been the source of both the romanticisation and idealisation of Old Russian culture, and of its intellectual critique - in any case, such an aesthetic-experiential orientation is the very essence of what is meant by the 'old piety'.

## 4. 'The Art of Christian Living'

Much has been said about the idea emerging in the fifteenth century of Moscow as the 'Third Rome', succeeding the First Rome fallen into heresy with the Great Schism of 1054 and the Second Rome, Constantinople, now overrun by the Muslims (1453), understood by the Russians as the fruit of  its 'heresy' through the Florentine Union (1439).[80] The Third Rome doctrine is a statement of Russian

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[74] Zernov, *The Russians and Their Church*, p. 9.

[75] Kireevsky seems to suggest that the general intellectual culture of ancient Russian was actually much higher than is usually assumed. See *On the Nature of European Culture and on Its Relationship to Russian Culture*, pp. 215-16.

[76] For an overview of some of the lives and deeds of a number of the major saints of Old Russia see Kontzevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia*, and, *The Northern Thebaid: Russian Saints of the Monastic North* (Platina, California: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1995).

[77] The phrase comes from Anton Kartasev, *Vossozdanie Sviatoi Rusi* (Paris, 1956), p. 31 , quoted in Van Den Bercken, *Holy Russian and Christian Europe*, p. 77. See Van Den Bercken's critique, ibid.

[78] Fr. Dmitry Grigorieff, 'Russian Orthodox Theology and Icons, 1600 -1900' in *Russian Copper Icons and Crosses from the Kunz Collection: Castings of Faith* (ed. Richard E. Ahlborn and Vera Beaver-Bricken Espinola, Washington D. C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), pp. 5-7, pp. 5-6.

[79] Kontzevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia*, pp. 215-18, 253.

[80] For references for the Third Rome doctrine see the 'Introduction' above, fn. 25.

Orthodox self-identity and mission, although it is important to remember here that this title was also applied to the Russian Church and Nation by non-Russian hierarchs at the granting of autocephaly to the Russian Church. It is at once a cultural, political, theocratic and eschatological ideal, with a nuanced genesis and a continuing cultural and political resonance. There is insufficient space here to offer a full critical exploration of this important ideology, beside which our concern is not with the doctrine itself, but with the inner cultural characteristics of Orthodox Muscovite Culture, with the piety and, more generally, with the hierotopy of the 'Third Rome'.

Drawing on the approach of Lidov and others, Gasper-Hulvat has recently emphasised and explored the 'performative' dimension of the Third Rome ideology in sixteenth century Russia, and has highlighted the process of the iconic appropriation of ritual and ceremonial from Constantinopolitan models through which Moscow was performatively conceived as the iconic inheritor of the Great City. [81] In her work as well as that of Lidov and the hierotopy project generally, the theological relationship between ritual and icon is not the primary concern and is thus left somewhat under-developed, nevertheless, we can glean from Gasper-Hulvat's emphasis on the performative dimension of elements of sixteenth century Russian Orthodox culture, the crucial significance of the existential-performativity of the faith in shaping the contours of Russian Christianity. Indeed, according to Zernov, if Moscow was the Third-Rome then its quintessential contribution was precisely its conception of 'the art of Christian living':

> Rome bequeathed to mankind the idea of law, discipline and order,
> and these elements of her civilisation were later incorporated in the
> imposing system of the Roman Catholic Church. Constantinople
> introduced into the life of the Christendom the unique intellectual
> and artistic achievements of Greece; and the gift of the second
> Rome was the formulation of Christian doctrine. Moscow could not
> compete in either of these spheres with her great predecessors.
> Her special domain was the art of the Christian living; the

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[81] Marie E. Gasper-Hulvat, 'The Icon as Performer and as Performative Utterance: The sixteenth-Century Vladimir Mother of God in the Moscow Dormition Cathedral', *Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 57/58 (Spring/Autumn 2010), pp. 174-185.

application of Christianity to the corporate daily life of the people. And here her contribution was of the first importance.[82]

There may well be some romantic over-simplification in Zernov's account here, nevertheless the notion of defining cultural-civilisational contributions is, on the macro historical level at least, a wholly valid one. For us, what is important in this is the notion of the art of Christian living as a defining cultural-spiritual orientation of Russian Orthodoxy. Kireevsky quite rightly points out that Orthodoxy is characterised by an emphasis on inner equilibrium, the harmonious inner union of the faculties of the human person,[83] and it was just such equilibrium, we would argue, that the Russian tradition sought both to cultivate and express in the totality of a way of life embodying Orthodox Tradition; a way of life at once more artistic than intellectual. [84] In other words, the task of Christian becoming, the assimilation or realising of likeness, synonymous here with beautification, was perceived in cultural as well as personal terms: it was seen as a cultural-aesthetic task realised in the practice and piety of each person as a part of an organic whole. This was the idealism of Old Russian culture and Old Russian piety: a theologically performative articulation and constant re-articulation of Holy Tradition in ritual repetition in hierotopic context. Sinyavsky speaks of 'the Russian accent on the aesthetic aspect of faith'[85] – we have already seen as much with the medieval conversion accounts. An intuitive emphasis on beauty coupled with an acute liturgical consciousness[86] led to a rhythmic form of life, a kind of lived liturgical poetic as it were, in which (in ideal terms at least) ritual action imbued everyday circumstances with the theological meaning hidden within them, circumnavigating the rationalist distinction between subject and object, content and form, inner and outer, typical of Western thought

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[82] Zernov, *The Russians and their Church*, p. 50.

[83] Kireevsky, *On the Nature of European Culture and on Its Relationship to Russian Culture*, pp. 213-14. Kireevsky contrasts this inner harmony, which is essentially the spirit of hesychasm, with the desire for external conceptual harmony which he takes to be characteristic of Western Christianity since the Great Schism of 1054 and consequent of the predominance of rationality.

[84] See Zernov, *The Russians and their Church*, pp. 50-1.

[85] Sinyavsky, *Ivan the Fool*, p. 172.

[86] Of course, much of the doctrine and theology of Orthodoxy was received in Russian Christianity through the Liturgy itself and through the other services of the Church: 'Through Liturgical prayer in the Slavonic idiom, the Greek religious mind and feeling made tremendous impact on the Russian soul. And today it maintains its effectiveness in the same way as it did in the time of Vladimir' (Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, Vol. I., p. 51; see pp. 50-7). The *typikon* of everyday life discussed above should be understood as being liturgical at its heart.

(a point we will explore in depth in the next chapter), and therein both contributing to and maintaining the hierotopic character of Old Russian culture.

Ritual and the truth of the Gospel became dialectically related in the living of Christianity. In Old Russian culture, ritual provided a theological-existential way of ordering everyday life and centring that life in Christ - a kind of *praxis* of anamnesis as we mentioned earlier - and at the same time, a way of revealing the implicit presence of God-Beauty in that life, of God in creation. At least, such was the cultural-religious ideal: the formation of a truly Christian kingdom in the Christian shaping of the everyday, in word, action, appearance and soul. In the Old Russian tradition, as amongst contemporary Old Believers, ritual is not understood in a primarily intellectual-representative way, but is something *experienced* by the faithful, something pre-eminently experiential, and therein something embodying of Christian truth.[87]

In this way, and in the context of the Sacramental life of the Church and the broader hierotopy of Old Russian culture, ritualism functioned as a *praxis* of reorientation. If in a largely illiterate culture,[88] the Russian peasant in the pre-Nikonian period could not elaborate the intricacies of Christology he nevertheless knew that the two fingers with which he made the Sign of the Cross (*dvoeperstie*) witnessed to the very being of the God-Man, and invoked his loving protection and the power of 'the most precious and life-giving Cross of the Lord', as the familiar prayer has it.[89] More than this, he knew that the Sign of the Cross, though no magic talisman,[90] was somehow involved in how to be and become a true

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[87] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russian*, p. 7. Although not in specific reference to the Old Believers, Andreopoulos clarifies this experiential dimension: 'The system of signs, gestures, prostrations, and veneration of icons and relics in the church has an impressive scope, a far-reaching vista. It does not always make a lot of sense from the outside, it's true. And while it is possible to talk at length about the symbolism, the origins, and the aesthetics of this sign and gesture system, the person who has never taken part in it will not fully understand and appreciate its power' (Andreas Andreopoulos, *The Sign of the Cross*: *The Gesture, The Mystery, the History* [Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2006], p. 59).

[88] The low level of education in Muscovy, for example, was a real problem extending to the clergy themselves. After the Schism, the Old Believers prided themselves on their literacy which was rather higher than the general Orthodox population.

[89] An often repeated phrase in Orthodox prayers. For a quintessential example see the 'Prayer to the Precious Cross' which concludes the prayers before sleep found in the Old Rite (see, for example, the night prayers found in the *Azbuka*) and in the reformed rite.

[90] The issue of so-called 'double-faith' emerges here. This refers to the idea that whilst Christianity abounded in ancient Russia it was coupled with pre-existing pagan beliefs and rituals and that these latter persisted in the lives of the simple folk alongside their Christianity, thus creating kind of double-faith. This idea has played some role in the misunderstanding of Russian ritualism, where the latter is seen to be a characteristic of an essentially pagan cosmology clothed in Christian forms. Thus, as Brostrom writes in his introduction to the life of the Archpriest Avvakum: 'For most Russians, religion was simply magic' ('Introduction' in, Archpriest Avvakum, *The Life*

Christian, that it embodied theological truth - an 'inner significance' handed down by the 'holy fathers'[91] as Peter Damascene puts it in his explanation of *dvoeperstie*, a text much referenced by the Old Believers. Rituals were perceived as a part of the sacramental nexus of life, 'teaching us how to know a mystery' as we read in the Old Rite psalter printed under Patriarch Joseph.[92] In this way (the Sign of the Cross is but one example) his life was contextualised and ordered through 'performatively uttered'[93] existential-theological symbols, understood to be replete with the mysteries, the meaning, they embodied in an immediate spontaneous form; rituals and symbols which as it were manifested and embodied Holy Tradition and thus safeguarded Orthodoxy in the simultaneity of individual and collective life. As Andreopoulos remarks, '[t]he sign, as an act, however small it may be, expresses the impetus of crossing the threshold between thinking in theological terms and *practising* the Christian life' [emphasis added].[94] Such ritual practice is a typical feature of Orthodox Christianity, but in Old Russia it acquired an emphasised significance, still evident amongst the Old Believers who claim that they have retained and continue to live the traditions of medieval Rus. For the Old Believers as for the medieval Russian Church, rituality took the form of a *typikon*, an *ustav*, of everyday life. Such is 'the art of Christian living'.

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*Written by Himself*, [trans. Kenneth N. Brostrom, Michigan: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1979], pp. 1-33, p. 17). There is of course, evidence to support the presence of double-faith, nevertheless, as Pascal points out, this argument has been rather over-emphasised in the interpretation of Russian religion and tends to obscure the reality of the 'pure Christianity', as he puts it, present in Old Russia. Whilst not ignoring the lingering presence of paganism, Pascal argues that those elements of Russian religion often seen to be associated with double-faith, for example a reverence for the earth and ritualism, are in fact expressive of a cosmic vision of Christianity, a vision which takes a more immediate and popular rather than intellectual and theological form. Interestingly, Pascal suggests that it is this same cosmic vision or cosmic intuition, that later finds expression in the highly sophisticated and controversial theological system of sophiology in the works of Sergei Bulgakov, only here it loses its existential immediacy and spontaneity. See Pascal, *The Religion of the Russian People*, pp. 8-15. Although there is an undoubted tendency to idealisation in Pascal's account, a point Pascal is himself aware of, his emphasis on the cosmic nature of Russian piety is arguably an important one in what it emphasises of the Orthodox nature of Old Russian practices and, for us, its implicit critique of the now stereotypical view of ritualism as a primitive religious form. For a more recent critical discussion of double faith in Russia, see Stella Rock, *Popular Religion in Russia: 'Double-Belief' and the Making of an Academic Myth* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009).
[91] St. Peter of Damaskos, *The Philokalia*, vol. III, p. 209.
[92] Quoted in, *Old Orthodox Prayer Book*, p. 335. The text emphasises the sacramental nature of the Sign through a comparison with Baptism (ibid, pp. 334-5). For this sacramental emphasis see also Theodoret's instruction on how to make the Sign of the Cross (ibid, pp. 336-7).
[93] The phrase comes from Gasper Hulvat, 'The Icon as Performer and Performative Utterance'.
[94] Andreopoulos, *The Sign of the Cross*, p. 111.

## 5. Typikon as a Way of life

In the pre-Nikonian period, books establishing the rules and rituals of Church life and daily Orthopraxis were common and have been faithfully preserved amongst the Old Believers who, even in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, had disproportionately high levels of literacy in comparison with the general population. These texts, ranging from *typicons* intended for daily use and collections of Church canons, to more pietistic instructional works, codified ritual practice and piety. Despite the circulation of the overly legalistic texts Fedotov refers to as the 'bad nomocanons', [95] on the whole these books were intended to provide the foundation for proper and ordered Christian practice in the totality of daily circumstances, much like a monastic rule.  They were source texts, as it were, for the art of Christian living, extending, we want to argue, the notion of the monastic *typikon* or *ustav* to the life of the lay Christian - something typical of the Old Rite which tends to draw a less rigorous distinction between the clergy, monastics and the laity. These old books are a testament to the love of ritual order, and the dogmatic importance placed on Orthodox rituality which characterises the Old Belief, and they are a window into the ancient rhythmic piety (*drevletserkovnoe blagochestie*) of Orthodox Russia.

In monasticism itself the meaning of the *typikon* resides not merely in the liturgical book codifying the rules and rituals of the Church which bears this title, but in the very notion of an ordered life established by a particular monastery and which has as its purpose not primarily the adherence to rules, but the cultivation of an harmonious life, a life of calm, of *hesychia* for the brotherhood as a whole and for the individual monk. Broadly speaking, the meaning of *typikon* is to provide a framework, a hierotopic structure as it were, for freedom and the becoming of likeness. As Archimandrite Vasileios explains:

> This framework, this order and tolerance, which provides possibilities for personal particularity, for each to achieve consciously his personal maturity and stillness; for him to be able to find himself, to find his own rhythm; to say "Lord have mercy" consciously, to pronounce one word that comes from him personally, to speak his own language, and so to communicate

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[95] Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, vol. I, pp. 179-201.

with the One Word who is imparted through the words of other people and created things… This framework, this world, this environment is prepared by the *typikon* of the Church – a structure crafted from life, an ordered regime and created things – which has room for each person, with his own name, and at every stage of his life and his journey toward maturity. It is not a rigid mould which produces identical artefacts, but a living womb which creates personal beings with their own character, calling and "destiny".[96]

This ideal posits an order, guided by tradition, and specifically by the rituals and the liturgical cycle of the Church, as the space for the re-shaping, the re-orientation of a life lived in and for Christ. To a certain extent it is something fragile, requiring a balance which tips neither one way nor the other, but retains a certain inner equality between external order and the inner life - although obedience to and thus the necessity of rule is the initial and dominant moulding force. The rule sets out the ritual order, but in recapitulating Holy Tradition and the attested ways of the Church, it provides the home, as it were, for the Christian life. The rule speaks of and provides for an holistic life-world, an holistic culture;[97] it is pre-eminently an integrative force which maintains and recapitulates what we might call an 'integral environment': a world of interlinking symbolic meaning at once personal and collective which reveals theological truths in the immediate and the ordinary and guides life in reference to them. As Kliuchevsky suggests, focussing on the social and psychological dimension of this phenomena:

Truth must be embodied in forms, in ritual, in a whole organization, which by providing a continuous stream of the right impressions will shape our thoughts, moods, and feelings, pound and soften our rough will, and through constant exercise transform the moral imperative into a spontaneous requirement of our own nature.[98]

This integral environment - 'a whole organization' - is the world of what we have previously spoken of as the existential hermeneutic of rite; it constitutes a kind of internal and interactionally referential, semiotic system, within a broader

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[96] Archimandrite Vasileios, 'The Essential Contribution of the Typikon in Monastic Life' in, *The Meaning of Typikon* (trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff, Alexander Press: Montréal, Québec, Canada: Alexander Press, 1997), pp. pp. 8-16, p. 9.
[97] This point ties in with the more generally holistic nature of traditional Russian peasant culture as a sociological phenomenon. On this topic see Heretz, *Russia on the Eve of Modernity*.
[98] Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century*, p. 310.

hierotopy - understood here as the sacred space of the monastery or, in our case, Old Russian and Old Believer culture. The role of rule can be perceived in terms of a sociological functionality, providing a form of 'communicative action' and an interactive and integrating consensus, as Robson implies,[99] and it might similarly be seen as a feature of what Crummey, following Geertz, refers to as a 'cultural system': 'clusters of symbolic expressions, including religious rituals, which help men and women explain and make sense of their lives.'[100] But it also needs to be considered in its theological parameters, although perhaps in a rather similar albeit less socio-centric way. For the rule, on a personal and collective level, is *theologically* integrative in the sense that it articulates a symbolic language facilitating a participation in the truths of the faith in and through ritual symbolicity and the rhythm of order, providing a relational mode for Christian experience - a point we will explore in more depth in the following chapter. Indeed, it is worth stressing that for the theologian, cultural systems themselves, or more precisely, the very notion of a cultural system, needs to be considered in term of its own theological meaning – but there is insufficient space here to explore this further.

Arseniev has described what we have referred to as this integral environment as one the quintessential elements of 'Russian piety', a simultaneity of inner spiritual discipline and outer conduct and way of life, for which ritual is an integrative point of reference. According to Arseniev this environment or 'framework' reveals an

> ideal developed out of a spiritual discipline influencing both the soul and also outward behaviour. This ideal found its expression in such words as *blagolepie, istovost, blago-obrazie*, words that are difficult to translate but which signify a penetration of the entire being by a spiritual order imparting a *religious beauty* to the whole of one's conduct and manner of life, a quality that is humble and at the same time full of a sense of religious responsibility and interior dignity.[101]

Arseniev's connection between beauty and ritual order is, we would suggest, absolutely crucial for forming a proper appreciation of the *ustav* of everyday life and of Old Rite 'ritualism' as such, and it is a connection which is

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[99] See Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, p. 12 and pp. 41-52.
[100] Robert O. Crummey, 'The Origin of the Old Believer Cultural Systems: The Works of Avraamii', in *Old Believers in a Changing World* (Illinois: Northern Illinois Press, DeKalb, 2011), pp. 68-84, p. 68.
[101] Nicholas Arseniev, *Russian Piety* (trans. Ashleigh Moorhouse, London: the Faith Press; Clayton, Wisconsin: American Orthodox Press, 1980), p. 48.

rather neglected in treatments of the topic which tend to view ritualism and rule in more or less negative terms.[102] Lidov's hierotopy project is noteworthy here since, as we have already stressed, it has begun to explore the role of ritual in the formation of sacred environments in Old Russia. The ritual order is a mode of beautification-sacralisation, an existentially hierotopic performativity, which unfolds the spiritual beauty of the immediate and the material, acting therein as a communicative mode, a form of relationship between man – the created order – God. As Tarasov observes, in his journals Paul of Aleppo describes a seventeenth century Moscow replete with icons: not only in churches and houses, but on doorposts and gates, distributed amongst the wealthy and the simple peasant villages. The ubiquity of icons, of images revealing divine beauty, represents the sacralisation of the world[103] and in a sense we might say that the ritualisation of life sought the same sacralisation-beautification: the transfiguration of the mundane, the opening of the temporal to the eternal in the repeated ritual moment. The ritual order displays a will to transfiguration similarly expressed in iconography: a desire to realise beauty in the created order and in the fullness of human life and experience, and herein lies its 'ideal' quality, its idealism; yet it is also profoundly grounded, profoundly 'realistic' in its practical integration into the most ordinary of daily tasks. Actually, ritualism, understood in this sense, can be understood as a practical form, a *praxis*, an art, for the unification or the harmonisation to use a musical metaphor, of the material and spiritual (as indeed the real and the ideal) in human life: it is a kind of mediation reflective of the iconic constitution of human being.

The role of such rule, understood in these broad theological terms, can be evidenced in the Old Believer text commonly known as the *Rule of Domestic Prayer* (*Ustav Domashnii Molitvi*), often referred to simply as the *ustav*. This text has been lovingly passed down in Old Believer circles; it is quite literally a *typikon* intended for everyday use in the home, a kind of distillation of rules and guidelines to shape daily life in accordance with the life of the Church, following pre-Nikonian Orthodox traditions. The book is split into three major sections: firstly, a section

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[102] Maloney is typical of this view identifying the role of *ustav* with a depleted externalised form of Christianity vis-à-vis the Nil/Iosif juxtaposition. In his treatment of *ustav* he reifies the dualism of ritual/inner prayer and tends to misunderstand the potentially organic mutual inter-penetration of the two. See George, A., Maloney, *Russian Hesychasm: The Spirituality of Nil Sorsky* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1973), p. 23.

[103] Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion*, p. 38.

on the fasts of the Church and a detailed overview of the rules governing the fasting periods; secondly, a church calendar and the various ranking of the feast days; and thirdly a section on prayer and rules of prayer throughout the year, as well as instructions on daily prayers to be recited. As far as we are aware, there is not really a comparable text in contemporary Russian Orthodox practice, at least not one that is generally circulated and widely used amongst the laity. In the modern service books and devotional manuals, the rules tend to be distributed in a variety of places but not in one single volume codifying ritual observance and piety. Perhaps if anything, this suggests the premium placed on ritual order in the pre-Nikonian tradition, the emphasis on *ustav* itself as an essential facet of the Christian life. Certainly the text points to a quasi-monastic ordering of daily life, the kind of ideal sought by the 'lovers of piety'. If this order is indeed prescriptive, it is so in a manner similar to the *typikon* which guides the lives of the monastic community, outlining the *praxis* of tradition, as it were, which provides the shaping, indeed hierotopic, context within which one lives out one's life.

The seventeenth century Russian text, *A Son of the Church* (*Syn tserkovnyi*), a kind of primer on the pious life, gives us perhaps an even clearer example of the ideal of *typikon* for the laity, translating the meaning of *ustav* as it stands in the monastic context into everyday life. To date there has been insufficient study of this important little book[104] and its dating (1664?), authorship and genesis have not been firmly established. As the editors of the English translation of the text explain:

> It is difficult to state categorically exactly when and by whom this instructional treatise was composed. To the best of our ability we have surmised that it was written by a Russian man who had been Orthodox all his life to a new convert to Orthodox Christianity. The tone and the fact that it has been part of Old Believer tradition seems to suggest that it was composed early in the 17th Century – certainly before the Great Schism in the Russian Church which began in the 1650's.[105]

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[104] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, pp. 131-2.
[105] Fr. Pimen Simon and Fr. Theodore Jurewicz, 'Editors' Preface', *A Son of the Church* (trans. Hieromonk German Ciuba, Erie, Pennsylvania: Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity, 2001) [no page number given].

We cannot hope to study this text in-depth here, but it is worth pausing to consider it as a kind of case study in our theme. The text is 'beloved by the Old Believers' as Robson describes it,[106] but unlike the specifically 'Old Believer' texts which emerged in the wake of the Schism, the tone of *A Son of the Church* is not at all polemical. Rather, the whole work exudes a quiet and solid assurance of tradition, and a contemplative piety that is at once eminently practical, down to earth and humble. The text provides instruction on the details of living a pious Orthodox life, keeping the commandments of the Lord and living according to the teachings of Holy Tradition. Indeed, the text is really a distillation of elements of tradition intended to help integrate the new believer into the world of the Church: 'Since you are newly baptized, you will not be able to understand all these things unless you hear them in the words of a speaker. For this reason I have now written you a little about Christian custom, that you be faithful to God'.[107] Moreover, its marked stress on the doing of rituality clearly emphasises the performative character of the lived theology which defines the hierotopy of the Old Rite; the newly baptised is encouraged not so much to read theology as to do it, to form their own life into a sacred space through the following of Christ's commandments in ritual observance.

The work is a part of, and simultaneously gives voice to, the world of the Church, but in a much less rigorously rule-oriented manner than the *Rule of Domestic Prayer* which is more strictly speaking a *typikon* proper. There is nothing legalistic about this text and it is worth pointing out that, contra certain modern prejudices, strictness in practice and observance does not, *ipso facto*, equal legalism; its instructions on correct practice are properly speaking instruction in Orthodoxy understood as 'right glorification', and very soundly, it pre-supposes that the spiritual life begins with the basics, with *praxis*. The work addresses such topics as Baptism, the Sign of the Cross, the meaning of the hours of prayer, how to behave in church, how to pray before the icons and numerous other topics, enjoining correct adherence to Church norms in the totality of daily life. But it fundamentally presupposes a link between correct, as it were, 'external' practice and the inner life, the health of the soul in its relationship with God: 'let your promise [at Baptism] be carried out in your actions. Then God will come close to

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[106] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, p. 47.
[107] *A Son of the Church*, XXVI, pp. 9-10.

you, and you will be His'.[108] This link, this pre-supposition of an organic connection between what is usually perceived as inner/outer spells out the implicit rationale of the *Domestic Rule* considered above. *A Son of the Church* offers instruction on pre-eminently practical aspects of daily piety and yet always with a mind to their, as it were, inner content and efficacy, placing particular emphasis on the Sign of the Cross and the Jesus prayer - 'which ought to be said everywhere'[109] – as ritual reference points tying together the fabric of daily rituality and orienting the person God-ward. 'Understand this well: You should say the Jesus prayer frequently, at all times, and protect yourself with the life-bearing Cross.'[110]

Whilst the text encourages personal commitment to the spiritual life, it does so within the context of the Christian community and the hierotopic ritual nexus, thus in some sense combining elements of both traditions often seen to characterise Old Russia, that of Nil Sorsky (Byzantine hesychasm) on the one hand and Iosif Volotsky (Muscovite ritual order) on the other - although it needs stressing that the very juxtaposition of these 'paradigms' has tended to be somewhat over-stated in the secondary literature.[111] Crummey has observed this same pattern as a characteristic of the spiritual life of the well-known *Vygovskaia pustyn',* the semi-monastic centre of priestless Old Belief in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, although he argues that more explicit stress was placed on the communality of liturgical and devotional practice than on the individual spiritual life,[112] a characteristic similarly typical of Iosif's sixteenth century

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[108] Ibid, X, p. 4.
[109] Ibid, LXXXVI, p. 34
[110] Ibid, LXXXVII, p. 35.
[111] On both the nature of this paradigm and its over-exaggeration, see the work of David M. Goldfrank: 'Old and New Perspectives on Iosif Volotsky's Monastic Rules', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Jun., 1975), pp. 279-301; 'Recentering Nil Sorskii: The Evidence from the Sources', *Russian Review*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (Jul., 2007), pp. 359-376; 'The Literary Nil Sorskii', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1/4, Rus' writ large: Languages, Histories, Cultures: Essays Presented in Honor of Michael S. Flier on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday (2006), pp. 429-439.
[112] Robert O. Crummey, 'The Spirituality of the Vyg Fathers', in *Old Believers in a Changing World*, pp. 119-28, p. 123; 127-8. The question of the presence of classical hesychast prayer and tradition amongst the Old Believers is a topic in need of future research, especially as it bears on the external ritualism stereotype. Irina Paert's brief treatment of the topic referring to the nineteenth century covers some initial ground: 'Hesychastic practices such as the Jesus prayer were popular amongst… Old Believers… Old Believers had a vested interest in the legacy of the Desert Fathers, collecting and reproducing their writings and modelling their communities on the sketes and hermitages of Egypt and the Middle East. The writings of Syriac authors such as Abba Dorotheus, Isaac, and Ephrem appealed to Old Believers because of their mystical interpretation of church sacraments' (*Spiritual Elders: Charisma and Tradition in Russian Orthodoxy* [Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, 2010, p. 45). Paert also raises interesting connections between the well-known hesychastic text *The Way of the Pilgrim* and the Old Believers,

monastic rule. Robson has also stressed this emphasis on communal liturgical devotion in the modern Old Belief, exploring how it is expressed in the services and material culture of Old Believers, and suggesting that it both maintains and reinforces a soteriological perspective that is essentially communal, providing a traditionally Orthodox model of salvation over against Protestant individualism.[113] As is typical of Orthodox spirituality, the communal emphasis and herein the *ustav*, offers an orienting context for the members' own spiritual lives.

To say nothing of its sociological functionality, *A Son of the Church* very clearly establishes correct rituality as a re-orienting force in both the personal and the collective sense, identifying the ritually ordered life as a form of praxis-ascesis in its own right, an integrating order as regards Holy Tradition, and a modality for the synergy through which the everyday comes to be sanctified and offered up to God.[114] The rule, the *ustav*, is seen as the lived context for the movement of the person to God as a theocentrically integrating force, the web of traditional ritual order serving as the context for 'personal' spirituality, and obedience to it providing the approved means for *ascesis*. As the author writes toward the end of the work in a chapter simply entitled 'Christianity':

> Therefore, I have now demonstrated to you the law of brotherly love, and in this little work I have told you all about Christian customs. You ought to take soft food eagerly, like a young child and accustom yourself to these things completely, though they are expressed in these meagre words. By obedience you will be able to gain new wisdom for the perfect blessedness of the radiance of

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suggesting that the text may have been written by an Old Believer convert to Orthodoxy, Archimandrite Mikhail Kozlov, and intended as a missionary tool amongst the Old Believers (ibid, pp. 136-8). In a rather different context, both Robson (*Old Believers in Modern Russia*, p. 104) and Scheffel have suggested that amongst some Old Believer communities silent prayer was held in suspicion given the emphasis on communal practice and identity (*In the Shadow of Antichrist*, p. 138).

[113] See Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, pp. 41-74.

[114] To offer but one example here: 'When you begin to do anything, whether you are going to pray, to get up, to lie down, to eat or drink, to pick something up or put it down, to strain something or to pour something, to break something into pieces or to divide it up, or to open something, or when you are about to perform any action whatsoever, at any time or in any place, always say before every task: *Bless, Father*, and then then the Jesus Prayer. By doing so, even if you combine it with your food and drink you will thereby make them sweeter and more fulfilling. Now that you have heard these things, remember them, and do not forget them' (*A Son of the Church*, XCIV, p. 39).

divine light; you will attain the beauty of prayer; and in all these things you will be able to be called a perfect Christian.[115]

In discussing this theme of *typikon*, we cannot pass-over the well-known and somewhat maligned[116] sixteenth century text dedicated to the governing of wealthy household and family life – *The Domostroi*. This text is of an essentially different order to *A Son of the Church*, referring to a much broader spectrum of daily life and tasks and more rigorous in its tone. Any yet, for all its undeniable legalism, the *Domostroi* nevertheless advocates the integration of Christian faith and practice into every aspect of daily life with the intention of firmly grounding even the most mundane of activities in Orthodoxy. In other words, it shares something of the ideal of *typikon*, even if not in as pure a fashion as *A Son of the Church*. The very notion of 'household management' held a spiritual dimension in Old Russian culture since, as Tarasov points out, the house was seen as one of the major symbolic manifestation of Sophia, the Wisdom of God. House ordering was seen in sophianic terms as a microcosm for an ordered universe, protected from chaos.[117] The Russian land itself was sometimes known as the '"House of the Mother of God" – in which is seen too the main function of Sophia, Holy Wisdom, with her embodied aim of saving the people: 'house-management' ('economy')'.[118] The association between house-management and Sophia reiterates the ancient association of Sophia and the Incarnation, based in Proverbs 9:1.[119] The ritual (sophianic) ordering of the home and nation was characteristically hierotopic: it represented the preparing of a space for the presence of the Word by the activity of the Spirit, and thus held an eschatological as well as immediately practical significance, a point which bears more generally on the eschatological dimension of *typikon* as a principle.

The *Domostroi* is usually regarded critically, often being seen as a symbol of decay and spiritual crisis, representing a will to codify in a culture bereft of spiritual orientation, 'a sign of the profound spiritual illness, the genuine crisis, concealed

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[115] Ibid, XCIV, p. 39.

[116] As Karlinsky observes: 'After the work was rediscovered and studied in the nineteenth century, the very word *Domostroi* became synonymous with everything reactionary, backward, and tyrannical' (Simon Karlinsky, 'Domostroi as Literature', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3 [Sep., 1965], pp. 497-502, p. 497).

[117] Tarasov*, Icon and Devotion*, p. 38. Our use of the term 'sophianic' above should not be read to suggest an expression of the 'sophiology' of Fr. Sergei Bulgakov.

[118] Ibid: 106-7. On this topic see also, Sergei Bulgakov*, The Philosophy of Economy: The World as Household* (trans. Catherine Evtuhov, Yale University Press, 2014).

[119] See Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon,* pp. 51-4.

under the outward splendour and harmony of Church life in Moscow'.[120] In Florovsky's assessment the work is a testament to the construction of a cultural utopia, one governed by order, pattern and rule but lacking in genuine spiritual life[121] - a quintessential product of the dominance of the Josephian model of external ritualist Orthodoxy.[122] Moreover, attention is invariably drawn to the brutality of the corporal punishments the texts enjoins in certain situations.[123] Nevertheless, and not ignoring these critical points, Arseniev is arguably quite correct in identifying something altogether more edifying and salutary in the work. The world of the *Domostroi* is an ideal rather than an historical representation of sixteenth century family life, a kind of model *typikon* for a domestic hierotopy[124] (this renders it qualitatively different to the historically later text, *A Son of the Church*); but this is an ideal which exudes a reverent fear of God, and the Christian values of honesty, meekness, forgiveness, prayer and repentance and aid to the needy – even if it also advocates the use of beatings. According to Arseniev the spirit of the work is not primarily 'sullen and misanthropic… full of an intolerant and gloomy fanaticism', as it has been presented 'in Russian literary circles in the last hundred years', rather:

> It is imbued in fact with a feeling of the fear of God, of moral
> responsibility toward God and neighbour, with a sense of moral
> discipline which must be expressed in the whole external structure
> of life, and above all it is inspired by a call for active charity toward
> all afflicted and distressed people.[125]

We are inclined to agree with Arseniev's assessment here. In her introduction to the *Domostroi*, Pouncy makes a number of points which indirectly reinforce the more positive evaluation we find in Arseniev. She stresses that the theology present in the work, as well as the admonition for active Christian service

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[120] Alexander Schmemann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, p. 317.

[121] *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. I, p. 28.

[122] The idea that the dominance of the Josephian school led to a dry and petrified ritual Orthodoxy and that in this lay the origins of the Schism is a well-established argument. See for example, Kontzevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 187-9. Unfortunately, there is insufficient space here to adequately explore the Nil/Iosif theme and its relation to the Old Belief. As far as we are aware this has not been fully explored in the English language literature and should be a subject for future research.

[123] See for example, Schmemann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, pp. 316-17.

[124] Carolyn Johnston Pouncy (ed. & trans.), 'Introduction', *The Domostroi: Rules for Russian Households in the Time of Ivan the Terrible* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 50-1. In Florovsky's words: 'the book is didactic not descriptive. It sketches out a theoretical ideal, but it does not depict daily reality' (*Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. I, p. 28).

[125] Arseniev, *Russian Piety*, pp. 55-6.

to others which the text enjoins, is not itself legalistically ritualistic,[126] even if the book does indeed lean toward a stringently codified and disciplined, or even disciplinarian, form of life. The sections of the text dealing explicitly with prayer and the Christian life encourage high levels of dedication and a quasi-monastic ordering of daily life and worship,[127] but certainly not one of purely 'external' ritual correctness: 'the theology is simplistic, without discussions of dogma or theoretical exegeses, but it does take precedence over purely ritualistic concerns'.[128] Although in this assessment Pouncy takes for granted the dualism of ritual/theology, a dualism which the sixteenth century readers of the *Domostroi* may not have recognised, her point nevertheless stands: the text deals with fundamental Christian values and basic theology, enjoining a simple commitment to both. In other words, within the work the 'essence' of the Gospel is not wholly subordinated to a legalistic regimen. The ordered vision of the Christian life found in the *Domostroi* is certainly one which values ritual discipline in all aspects of life and may well be accused of an over-bearing formalisation of daily life, of a certain 'narrowness and rigidity',[129] but it is not in-itself a vision of a super-correct Orthopraxis in which Gospel values are relegated to a wholly external ritual formalism. Overall, the book situates the particularities of mundane life in the context of prayer and the Christian commandments, perceiving the latter as integrally and organically connected to the former. It is also worth noting that for all its discussions of pots, pans, etiquette and the like, the text similarly encourages the constant remembrance of God in a traditionally Orthodox form:

> Every Christian should always have his rosary in his hands, and
> the Jesus prayer perpetually on his lips. In the church, at home, in
> the marketplace, walking, standing, or sitting, anywhere said the
> prophet Daniel, "…in every place where he has dominion, Bless
> the Lord, my soul." [Psalm 103:22].[130]

And again:

> Also, say this 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me,
> a sinner.' Say this prayer six hundred times. For the seventh

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[126] Pouncy 'Introduction', *The Domostroi,* p. 49.
[127] See chapters, 1-15, but especially, 3, 4, 8, 12, and 13.
[128] Ibid, p. 49.
[129] Arseniev, *Russian Piety*, p. 54.
[130] *The Domostroi*, 13, p. 88.

hundred, pray to the Immaculate Virgin: 'My Lady, Most Holy Mother of God, intercede for me, a sinner.' Then go back to the beginning, and repeat this continually. If someone says these prayers, needing Her help, just as breath comes from the nostrils, so at the end of the first year Jesus, Son of God, will rejoice in him. After the second year, the Holy Ghost will enter him. At the end of the third year, the Father will come to him, and having entered into him, will make the Holy Trinity. Prayer will devour his heart, and his heart will devour the prayer. If he says this prayer unceasingly, day and night, he will be free of all the Devil's snares.[131]

Florovsky has these passages in mind when he rather caustically suggests that 'the average mid-sixteenth century Muscovite's spiritual household no longer had room for the contemplative life',[132] perceiving in the instructions of the *Domostroi* a 'degeneration of the Jesus prayer'.[133] Certainly the text above simplifies and generalises patristic-ascetic teaching on the practice and action of the prayer and in more general terms Florovsky is far from alone in seeing the mid sixteenth-seventeenth century as a period of decline in the spiritual life.[134] Be this as it may, the essential point of the text – albeit couched in a rather simple and even mechanistic way – is that the continual practice of the prayer opens the heart to receive the in-dwelling of the Holy Trinity and that the prayer fends off the attacks of the Devil, two points entirely concordant with the more sophisticated and contemplative expositions of the prayer. The *Domostroi* is in no sense contemplative in nature, and it lacks the quiet and steady piety of *A Son of the Church*, but its regimen, the 'utopian project' it constructs, as Florovsky possibly quite rightly perceives it, is nevertheless one which includes genuine Christian repentance and prayer, and it does apparently point to some Orthodox practices common in Muscovy. It is interesting to note, for example, that Paul of Aleppo observed the practice of 'rising at midnight for devotion',[135] which the *Domostroi* encourages in chapter

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[131] Ibid, p. 89.
[132] Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. I, p. 27.
[133] Ibid, fn. 102, p. 283.
[134] See for example, Kontzevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russian*, pp. 215-61; also Crummey, *The Spirituality of the Vyg Fathers*, p. 128.
[135] Paul of Aleppo, 'The Travels of Metropolitan Macarius of Antioch' in, Palmer (ed.), *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, p. 64.

12. In conclusion, we can agree with Arseniev that whilst the book may be a theoretical - constructed ideal,

> we know, from many ancient sources as well as from more recent evidence how much a pious ritualism (especially among the Old Believers) could influence the course of Russian life, both individual and corporate, and to what extent there existed in Russia – alongside moral laxity and a frequent lack of discipline – an area of life that was regulated and inspired by an inner discipline, illuminated by liturgical beauty, and strengthened by the influence of *the rites of the Church*.[136]

## 6. Order, Regime and Ritual – Love of Harmony

The tragedy of the Schism with all its polemic and bitterness may well be evidence that this ideal was not always realised - that to some extent the *typikon* had become and end in itself - but the ideal remains as a standard and, arguably, as the spiritual purpose and meaning of ritual and the ordered life so important to Old Russian tradition and indeed to Orthodoxy as such.[137] Herein, we learn that the order of daily ritual and fidelity to it, is in itself a way of shaping *praxis-ascesis*, a way of directing the Christian in their every task and movement in a manner that facilitates the freedom or, more precisely the becoming of freedom, of reorientation:

> A typikon has the task of restraining and organising the energy and superabundance of dynamism contained within God's creation…
> For this reason, the typikon and the daily regime are not experienced as a mechanical organising process, which ignores life and the character of life and imposes unwarranted restrictions. Rather, we accept it as a rule of ascesis, a careful pruning which respects life and prepares the way for the fruitfulness of the Spirit. It reveals what is in us, and what is beyond: freedom… So typikons

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[136] Arseniev, *Russian Piety*, p. 58 (emphasis in the original).

[137] We are aware that our emphasis above on texts only (and a limited number at that) runs the risk of a certain degree of abstraction, and that normative statements vis-à-vis a way of life, something *lived*, based on texts alone, are potentially problematic. A much fuller study of this topic would require further textual analysis, perhaps coupled with fieldwork amongst contemporary Old Ritualists in the continued use of such texts. Nevertheless, for a project of this scope, the texts at least offer a glimpse into the ritual world we have been exploring and suggest the application of the idea of *typikon* with which we are chiefly concerned.

are essential: they serve the essence. They have not been developed in order to stifle man's life and spontaneity, but to purify him, to test him and show worth, guiding him naturally in the right direction which leads to quiescence.[138]

Order, regime, rule, ritual: these things are not antithetical to the life of the spirit, to the freedom of man, to true prayer – so long as they do not become oppressive and over-bearing - but are perhaps its very condition and safeguard. Tarasov has explored 'strictness' as a quality of Russian piety, particularly in the seventeenth century: 'Strictness,' he writes, is an important word for anyone who has been in contact with Russian religious life, but this 'strictness' is hard to describe and is best left to eye-witnesses'.[139] Thus, Tarasov turns to, amongst others, the accounts of Deacon Paul of Aleppo who was at once impressed and alarmed by the strict ritual order of seventeenth century Russian life. Impressed by the reverence and seriousness, the devotion and authenticity of the ritual order, but alarmed by its, for him, extremity and possible excessiveness.[140] The ambiguity of the capacity of ritual order is undeniable, reminding us of the possibility of an imbalance in the application of the principle of *ustav*, but this should not lead to a flight from ritual and a blind anti-ritualism, anti-rule sensibility.

In suggesting, as we have, that Old Russia applied this essentially monastic principle to the life of the laity we should not however pre-suppose a super-imposition of a monastic culture and ethos onto lay society[141] - this would be a more or less false dichotomy. For both the monastic ideal and the *ustav* in lay society have the same essential spiritual foundation and hierotopic function, each representing a shoot from the same trunk. For the Orthodox monasticism is normative for the spiritual life of the laity,[142] but precisely because it represents a

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[138] Ibid, p. 11.

[139] Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion*, p. 58.

[140] See ibid, pp. 57-85.

[141] On this topic see Schmemann's argument in *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (trans. Ashleigh E. Moorhouse, London: The Faith Press Ltd, 1966). Incidentally, Schmemann is highly critical of Old Believer notions of a fixed ritual and liturgical order in his advocating of liturgical development and adaptation, although it needs to be remembered here that priestless liturgical rites do indeed show adaptation to the new circumstances of priestless life.

[142] As Mantzarides observes: 'In the old days, the monastic coenobium formed the prototype for secular society too. The traditional parish had the church as its centre. The typikon for services in the monasteries was used up to a point in the outside world. Help for one another, solidarity and a communal spirit existed in secular society as well. Day to day life would run counter to this spirit time and time again, of course, but the prototype kept that perspective open. With secularisation, however, and the marginalisation of the religious life, this perspective has been

distilling of Orthopraxis and experience, not as an alien system to which the laity must conform their lives in some way. As a principle *typikon* has a 'spiritual basis and spiritual purpose'[143] - we have seen as much with *A Son of the Church*. As Panayiotis Nellas writes, discussing the rubrics of the Great Canon:

> The rubrics define the conditions under which prayer can be real, effective and fruitful, that is, the setting within which a person can concentrate all the aspects of his existence – intellect, will, conscience, emotions, senses, body – on God, and by adhering to Him constantly and laboriously, can purify them, integrate and illuminate them, and so offer them to God and unite them with Him.[144]

Understood in this way, we might suggest that those modern or indeed postmodern forms of Christianity which preach the ultimate plasticity of worship and life perhaps only cage the human person in their falleness, locking the person into an illusory vision of the very meaning of freedom and thus contributing to their state of disorientation: 'Hence come lives careless and disorderly, labours without profit, darkening of the soul and diabolical delusion', to quote the Old Rite psalter.[145] Genuine freedom-becoming presupposes *praxis-ascesis*, and the principle of *typikon* as well as the actual text, is a way of ordering these in a manner which subjects the person to something greater than their own self, their own immanent narcissism, and yet which opens them gradually to the essence of their true self as image: One experiences 'the regime and the order in the church community as a way of not getting lost in the confusion and disorder of self-love; of not drowning finally in the flood of life, but being part of a whole'.[146] If, for example, the *Domostroi* and other texts take this too far, we should not therefore lose sight of the spiritual purpose of this characteristic of the Old Rite.

In the Old Rite, this 'being part of a whole' is expressed in a love of harmony and right order in life and especially in worship, the assembled faithful, though unique persons, acting as one united community. In ideal terms this is established not

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swept aside' (Georgios Mantzarides, 'The Spirit of the Monastic Typikon' in, *The Meaning of Typikon*, pp. 17-28, p. 28).

[143] Ibid, p. 19.

[144] Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, pp. 163-4.

[145] From the instructional material of the psalter printed under the Patriarchate of Patriarch Joseph of Moscow, in *Old Orthodox Prayer Book*, p. 343.

[146] Archimandrite Vasileios, 'The Essential Contribution of the Typikon in Monastic Life', p. 15.

by an externally imposed regimen - which would of course produce a regimented order rather than a harmonious integral order - but by the integration of the individual into a community which in itself recapitulates tradition in its life and worship. The strictness of the rules vis-à-vis bows, prostrations and other ritual actions during the services[147] forbids individualistic piety - in the sense, of making bows, moving around to light candles and venerate icons, and so forth, at will[148] - thus guarding against vainglory, individualism, emotionalism and pharisaic show, and maintaining harmonious worship in hierotopic communality; the faithful quite literally present and acting as one body.[149] In the Old Rite psalter we find the following admonition:

> Other bows than these prescribed bows we dare not do, lest we cause scandal to people; rather, we stand with fear and trembling and with the Prayer of Jesus during the holy chanting… Some people make bows and prostrations other than those ordered by the Typicon during the Holy Liturgy and other services, but they do so not according to the tradition of the holy fathers and not unto their salvation, but rather unto sin. For it behooves Christians at church services in common to keep the appointed order handed down by the holy fathers.[150]

Contemporary accounts of seventeenth century Russia give us an interesting insight into the extent to which Orthodox Christianity had penetrated into every aspect of Russian cultural life, how *ustav* had become integrated into the forms of Russian social existence. This is particularly clear in the journals of the deacon Paul of Aleppo recounting the travels of his father Patriarch Macarius of Antioch. We read in these accounts, as in those of Adam Olearius of

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[147] For an overview of these rules see the *Rule of Domestic Prayer* and the *Psalter*, elements of which are found in translation in the instructional material in the *Old Orthodox Prayer Book*, pp. 333-57. *A Son of the Church* also covers prescribed rituals.

[148] Robson is quite right when he points out that the reformed Russian rite also prescribes bows and other ritual actions at specific points during the service, although he claims that 'by the turn of the nineteenth century this rule was rarely followed' (*Old Believers in Modern Russia*, p. 50). For a brief overview of the rules of piety in the reformed rite see the *Prayer Book* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 2011, pp. 388-95).

[149] See Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia,* pp. 41-52. The sense of community and harmony emphasised by Robson might however be cross-referenced with the arguments developed by Tarasov, who suggests that amongst the priestless Old Believers, in the vacuum left by full sacramental life, a more 'individualistic' ethics of salvation may be observed. See Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion*, pp. 158-9.

[150] From the psalter printed under the Patriarchate of Patriarch Joseph of Moscow, in *Old Orthodox Prayerbook*, p. 348; Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russian*, p. 50.

xenophobia, brutality, ignorance, over-bearing control, and other various ills, and yet we are also introduced to an everyday life-world governed by Orthodox rituality and order. Indeed, Paul of Aleppo is repeatedly amazed at what he sees as the sanctity of everyday Russians with their round of prayers and agonisingly long church services, their veneration of icons and respectful bows to one another. 'Undoubtedly', he writes with enthusiasm and a good deal of shock, 'all these Russians are saints, surpassing in devotion the hermits of the deserts'.[151]

### 7. The Typikon is Salvation?

We have spoken above of the ritual order, of *ustav* as a way of life, as a form of mediation, a *praxis* involving the unification, as it were, of the material and the spiritual, unfolding the beauty of the latter immanent in the former. This, we might say, represents the theological ideality of the ritual order of *ustav* and it is certainly an ideality which finds real and practical expression in Orthodox cultural and spiritual values. At the same time, it is evident that there is a certain ambiguity to this ideal, an inner danger. As we have seen, *typikon* requires a balance and this balance can all too easily falter, lending to the ritual order an absolute and petrified quality. As Sinyavsky explains:

> Ritual has the advantage of appealing directly to a believer's religious feelings, bypassing his mind and acting on his heart. The weakness of ritual is that, in the absence of a deep spiritual life, it quickly becomes a dead form and as such a hindrance to both life and religion. An exclusive attachment to ritual deprives the Church and the worshiper of religion's other aspects. Thus a terrible sinner may consider himself a true Christian only because he observes the ritual and mechanically recites the words of a prayer, without reflecting on what these words mean. In the end, form becomes an obstacle on the path of thought and morality.[152]

This is the danger, the risk, of the art of the Christian living. There is a temptation to seek an absolute security through the absolutisation of the rule and the ritual order attaching a *sui-generis* efficacy to it. Muscovite xenophobia and the assurance of the Third Rome thesis helped contribute to such a position in

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[151] Paul of Aleppo, 'Travels of Patriarch Macarius of Antioch', in Palmer (ed.) *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, p. 253.
[152] Sinyavsky, *Ivan the Fool*, p. 270.

ancient Russia, particularly in the seventeenth century, as Kliuchevsky has shown.[153] 'The organic vice', he writes, 'of the church people of ancient Russia was to consider themselves the only true believers in the world, and their conception of God the only correct one'.[154] Under these circumstances, the ritual order becomes objectified and ossified, what Arseniev refers to as 'extreme ritualism', a situation which he suggests the Russian people have been prone to and not least because of the lack of theological education in Old Russia.[155] As Leskov once wrote, '"Rus" was baptized but not instructed'.[156] If, as we have argued, the lack of intellectual-theological culture facilitated the emergence of the ideal of ritual life as a positive phenomenon, then perhaps it also provided for the danger of the ossification of that life, and a focus on a healthy simplicity should not lead us into a naïve 'folk' romanticism. Kliuchevsky has described the outright anti-intellectualism of Muscovite culture and how, in his estimation, this contributed to an exclusive claim to Orthodoxy at the expense of the universal Church. Be this as it may, we must not fall into the opposite position of uncritically accepting the 'correction' argument - as Kliuchevsky himself does. Not without cause, the Old Believers genuinely believed that they were defending the traditions of their fathers synonymous with Holy Orthodoxy and combatting 'innovations' which they felt threatened the faith, although their argument was certainly bogged down in Muscovite chauvinism. Theirs was not a 'blind ritualism' as popular stereotypes would have it, but ossification had certainly set in on a variety of levels: social, theological, ecclesiological, and a somewhat narrow model of Orthodox ritual purity may well have come to dominate their vision of Christianity, the human person, and the Church, possibly at the expense of 'the hidden man of the heart'.[157]

Exploring the Schism and the theological narratives of the seventeenth century, Florovsky has suggested that *ustav* had come to be understood not merely as a way of life facilitating salvation, but salvation itself: 'Salvation is the *Typikon*' – a consequence of the Josephian tendency in the Russian Church and Russian

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[153] Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century*, pp. 302-20. See also Florovsky, *The Problem of Old Russian Culture*, p. 13.
[154] Ibid, p. 317.
[155] Arseniev, *Russian Piety*, p. 61. See also Kontzevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia*, p. 248-61 – although Kontzevitch essentially reiterates Florovsky's critique.
[156] Nikolai Leskov, quoted in Van Den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, p. 77.
[157] 1 Pet 3: 4.

culture.[158] 'This religious design', he writes 'supplies the basic assumption and source for the Old Believer's disenchantment'[159] with the reformed Church and the new order. However, if it is true that the early Old Believers rejected the new rituals believing that they compromised the path to salvation, it is worth remembering that the same basic position, at least in the early stages of the Schism, was maintained by the 'Nikonians' in the other direction: this was a crucial facet of the whole rationale of the 'correction' argument, and both sides appealed to patristic tradition to witness to the dogmatic nature of 'correct' rituality. Florovsky certainly has a point, and yet it is perhaps a point somewhat over-stressed. As Florovsky's own emphasis on the role of the antichrist in the Schism polemics clearly suggests, an absolutist attachment to ritual does not go far enough in explaining the emergence of the Old Believers as a social movement, and moreover, Florovsky tends to perceive the whole notion of the art of Christian living from within the narrative of decline which characterises his broader thesis.

At the risk of generalisation, we might tentatively suggest that where present amongst modern Old Believers, such absolutism is arguably more typical of the priestless than the priestly groups, a point which ties in with the exaggerated emphasis placed on purity prohibitions characteristic (though not exclusively) of the *bezpopovtsy* and magnified by their sectarian self-identity, their self-definition as the last and only 'true' Orthodox Christians. In his study of the priestless Old Believers of Alberta, Scheffel has convincingly argued that the more law-like aspects of Old Believer life which exaggerate traditional Orthodox norms, especially the quasi-Levitical purity laws, function as a kind of surrogate for the sacraments now seen to be unavailable; they represent an attempt to fill the vacuum left by the removal of sacramental life.[160] Following Scheffel's 'sacramental deprivation' thesis, the priestless petrification of Christian tradition as law - a kind of 'phariseeism' as Scheffel describes it[161] - may be understood as a sublimation of sacramentality and, importantly, as something emerging *out* of the conditions of the Schism itself, although tied to Byzantine norms and the

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[158] See also Zernov, *Moscow, the Third Rome*, pp. 54-76.
[159] Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. I, p. 99.
[160] See also Robson's discussion of priestly/priestless attitudes to icons in *Old Believers in Modern Russian*, pp. 87-8.
[161] Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, p. 202.

traditions of medieval Russia.[162] Robson has also emphasised ideas of ritual purity and apartheid as expressions of the experience of the Old Believers as a persecuted group.[163] The Levitical sensibility of the priestless was actually something noted by the priestly Old Believers themselves, and in the latter half of the nineteenth century the Belokrinitsa hierarchy lifted many of the purity regulations which had emerged in the wake of the Schism.[164]

From the theological perspective we have sketched out, the exaggerated emphasis on law, cultural apartheid and purity distorts the idea of *typikon* not only in the manner of sacramental sublimation Scheffel identifies, but in so far as it came to be self-consciously utilised to mark out the separateness of the priestless[165] from the 'apostate' world, understood to be given over to the rule of antichrist. In this apocalyptic context, there has arisen amongst some of the priestless Old Believers a variety of practices which exaggerate and deviate from Orthodox norms, and these practices perhaps tell us more about the historical and cultural consequences of the Schism itself than they do about the Old Rite - although to reiterate, they certainly represent exaggerations of tendencies embedded in Old Russian Orthodox culture. Scheffel's sacramental deprivation theory is a convincing hypothesis for explaining the cultivation of a more Levitical model of Christianity amongst the priestless, but it is not without criticism, and Robson is quite right in pointing out that whilst Scheffel's conclusion might be valid in reference to the Old Believers of Alberta this does not render them, or the hypothesis, universally representative of priestless Old Belief.[166]

In conclusion, our intention above is not to play down this absolutist temptation, nor its presence in Old Russian culture and the Old Belief, but move discussion beyond the ritual-absolutism-primitivism paradigm.[167] Such petrification is a danger and a reality to which, as Arseniev rightly suggests, 'we ought not close

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[162] Ibid, p. 203

[163] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, pp. 96-115, particularly p. 98.

[164] Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, pp. 204-5. Scheffel makes this point to evidence the sacramental deprivation thesis, however, this argument has been questioned by Robson who suggests that the Belokrinitsa hierarchy, who he describes as 'the most liberal of all old ritualists', may have rescinded the prohibitions to affect a closer integration into contemporary Russian society, and moreover that the fact that the Belokrinitsa hierarchy did not actually do this until 1910 testifies to the longevity of the purity norms, and to changing attitudes amongst the priestly (Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, p. 101).

[165] See Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, pp. 96-102.

[166] Ibid, p. 99.

[167] See Fedotov's chapter on the 'Ritualism of the Russian Clergy' in *The Russian Religious Mind*, vol. I.

our eyes',[168] and yet this situation represents an exaggeration, an 'extreme' as Arseniev's earlier phrase suggests. The seventeenth century saw the 'morbid fanaticism', as Kliuchevsky puts it, which represents the extreme of this Russian tendency.[169] The association of such extremism with the Old Believers is not at all unwarranted, it resonates strongly with the apocalyptic apoplexy of the mid to late seventeenth century,[170] still manifest in a residual form in some priestless groups, but it does not therefore define the Old Belief as a static phenomenon, and the common assumption that old belief = ritual absolutism = primitivism and backwardness, is an over-simplification; one only need consider the Riabushinskii circle and its innovative activities in the early twentieth century.[171]

We can certainly think of the Old Believers as a 'textual community', as Crummey has suggested;[172] that is, a group self-identified by their adherence to the service books of pre-Nikonian Russia. But as Michels has shown, this does not mean that we can reify the Old Belief as a wholly coherent and homogeneous movement,[173] and there remain significant differences between the priestly and the priestless. The official Church hierarchy expressed this in its own way when, in the period before the First World War, it embarked on the task of internal renewal and began preparing for the all-Russian Church Council, which would actually be postponed until 1917-18. During the pre-conciliar sessions, the issue of relations with the Old Believers was of prime importance and some churchmen like Metropolitan Antonii Khrapovitskii would fight strenuously for a re-consideration of the position of the Old Belief, particularly as the Belokrinitsa hierarchy was increasingly competing with the official Church as the representative of the Russian people. In any case, whilst recognising the grounding of both the *popovtsy* and the *bezpopovtsy* in traditional Orthodoxy, it

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[168] Arseniev, *Russian Piety*, p. 61.

[169] Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century*, p. 335.

[170] Especially when considering the mass suicides which spread across Russia in the wake of the Nikonian reforms. For a balanced approach to this topic see Crummey, *The Old Believers and the World of Antichrist*, pp. 39-57.

[171] See James L. West, 'The Neo-Old Believers of Moscow: Religious Revival and Nationalist Myth in Late Imperial Russia', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 26, nos. 1-3 (1992), pp. 5-28. That extreme ritualism led to the Schism as the definitive factor is also an over simplification of the nexus of historical causality. Contemporary scholarship on the Old Belief has largely moved away from this traditional position, some recent scholars attaching only a secondary importance to ritual debates in the turmoil of the seventeenth century. See Michels, *At War with the Church*.

[172] This concept is used across Crummey's work. See particularly, 'Old Belief as Popular Religion' (pp. 17-27), 'Ecclesiastical Elites and Popular Belief and Practice', (pp. 31-51) and 'The Origins of the Old Believer Cultural Systems' (pp. 68-84), in *Old Believers in a changing World*.

[173] This thesis runs throughout Michels', *At War with the Church*. For a quintessential expression of the argument see, for example, p. 16.

was held that whilst the *popovtsy* were Orthodox in their beliefs and practice, the *bezpopovtsy* were not – at least not altogether. Those like Metropolitan Antonii who longed to see the Old Believers re-united with the Russian Church and regretted the excommunications of the seventeenth century, nevertheless recognised that the priestless groups had deviated in some ways from traditional Orthodox norms.[174]

## 8. Conclusion: Pravda and the Art of Christian Living

[T]he slightest disturbance of the tradition of the Church that has held sway from the beginning is no small matter, that tradition made known by our forefathers, whose conduct we should look to and whose faith we should imitate. (John of Damascus) [175]

We, your servants in the Lord, dare in no way to alter the tradition of the Apostles and Holy Fathers, since we stand in awe of the King of Kings and his terrible interdict. We wish to end our days in that old faith in which, following the Lord's will, your sovereign fathers and other pious tsars and princes spent theirs: for, Tsar, that old Christian faith of ours in known to all of us as being agreeable to the Lord; it has pleased God and the saints… (The Third Solovki Petition)[176]

As Scheffel has suggested, Russian history is marked out by 'a strong national preoccupation with *truth*', with truth as an immutable standard given and unchanging:[177] 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and to the ages'.[178] When Russia received Orthodoxy it received the truth of the Gospel and it clung to this revealed truth as its very life. Thus, the tradition of Orthodoxy furnished

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[174] See James W. Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope: The Movement for Church Renewal in Russia, 1905-6* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), pp. 200-1, 300-2.

[175] St. John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images* (trans. Andrew Louth, Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), I, 2, p. 20.

[176] From the third 'Petition of the Faith' of the monks of Solovki to the Tsar, 1667, in *Life and thought in Old Russia*, pp. 97-8, p. 9. There is a wealth of material on the Solovki uprising dating back to Semen Denisov's hagiographical depiction of the events, 'The History of the Fathers and Martyrs of Solovetskii', in Palmer (ed.) *The Patriarch and the Tsar,* vol. II*,* pp. 437-59. For a more recent consideration see Roy R. Robson, *Solovki: The Story of Russia Told Through its Most Remarkable Islands* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), and for a more critical exploration:  G. Michels, 'The Solovki Uprising: Religion and Revolt in Northern Russia', *Russian Review*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Jan., 1992), pp. 1-15.

[177] Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, p. 21.

[178] Heb 13: 8 (*The Orthodox New Testament* [Holy Apostles Convent: Buena Vista, Colorado, 2004]).

the faithful in Russia as in all Orthodox countries with a standard of how to live in the truth, how to live the truth – *pravda*. The art of Christian living which developed in Old Russia gave ritual form to the truth, it provided an immediate and spontaneous language for articulating Christian doctrine and ideals in the formation and maintaining of the hierotopic quality of Old Russian culture. The life of the Christian did not therefore involve a restless searching for the truth but a humble and faithful living of it, a recapitulation of living tradition and thus a preservation of Orthodoxy, of right worship and life. If such an understanding contained the seeds of exclusivism, xenophobia and ossification, it also provided for a stable form of Christian life and practice, giving form to the task of the becoming of likeness, the realisation of image. This is the developmental narrative, the dynamic as it were, embedded in texts such as *A Son of the Church*, the same narrative which finds symbolic expression in the form of the Old Russian prayer rope: the *lestovka* or 'little ladder', with its rungs from 'earth' to 'heaven'.

Emphasis on the importance of ritual details, and therefore resistance to change, is in no sense alien to Patristic Orthodoxy, and the early Old Believer tracts made a point of emphasising the fact.[179] What perhaps marks out the Old Believers themselves is the *central* emphasis they place on this.[180] In any case, for the Old Belief (ancient and modern) ritual both contextualises and shapes the Christian life. As Andreopoulos observes of Orthodoxy more generally, 'symbols and rituals are, more than anything else, a way to follow one's faith'.[181] Here, salvation is not understood as primarily a question of morals or some kind of intellectual exercise - we have already noted the anti-intellectual tendency in Old Russian culture, something often recapitulated amongst some priestless groups - but as we have previously suggested, as a total way of life, a lived theological aesthetic, and something which involves cleaving to the attested ways of the Fathers. When

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[179] See Crummey, *The Origins of the Old Believer Cultural Systems: The Works of Avraamii*. In the history of the Church, ritual correctness in sign, word, liturgy and so on, has been understood as a hall mark and safeguard of Orthodoxy. This is clear from the whole *filioque* dispute (see, Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, p. 211), a point not wasted on some of the early Old Believer polemicists such as Avvakum and Deacon Fedor. Among the well-known early Old Believer texts, the clearest and perhaps most authoritative and theologically competent defence of the doctrinal nature of ritual is to be found in the *Pomorskie Otvety* (1723) of Andrei Denisov. On the work of the Denisov brothers see Robert O. Crummey, *The Old Believers and the World of Antichrist: The Vyg Community and the Russian State, 1694-1855* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970) and 'The Spirituality of the Vyg Fathers', and 'The Historical Framework of the Vyg Fathers', both in *Old Believers in a Changing World*, pp. 119-35 [inclusive].
[180] Crummey, *The Origins of the Old Believer Cultural Systems: The Works of Avraamii*, p. 77.
[181] Andreopoulos, *The Sign of the Cross*, p. 62.

Semen Denisov accused Nikon of 'moving the immoveable landmarks of the Church',[182] he was accusing the patriarch of tampering with received tradition and with the world of the Church in which and through which this tradition was lived and had been lived by the Russian saints: the accusation was a grave one since this world was for the Muscovites seemingly inseparable from the path to salvation. The assimilation of likeness involved the iconic process of recapitulating and reflecting Holy Tradition[183] – not (ideally at least) as an end itself but as the synergistic *praxis* of salvation. In the context of such an understanding, changes to the ritual order 'could not be taken lightly since they represented revisions in the faith itself',[184] something like a change in tone which distorts the melody, a re-daubing in a new colour of a well-loved and well-known canvas, altering the experience of the picture, the translating of a Shakespeare play into modern English. As we will explore in the next chapter, for the Old Belief, the art of Christian living is essentially iconic, it involves the imaging of tradition in the struggle for salvation.

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[182] Semen Denisov, 'The History of the Fathers and Martyrs of the Solovetsky', in Palmer (ed.) *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. II, pp. 439-59, p. 441. This is almost certainly a reference to Prov 22: 28 - 'Do not remove the ancient borders which your fathers set up'. Avvakum uses the same reference in his critique of the reforms. See the *Life*, p.100.

[183] Billington points out that the very word in Russian for education – *obrazovaie* – literally means the process of copying a model or example from the past. The word *obraz* designates a figure, model or prototype but, as Scheffel points out it is a word that can also be used in reference to icons, relevant here since icons were used in Old Russia to authenticate contemporary ways of life. See Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*, p. 38, and Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, p. 21.

[184] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, p. 42.

# 2 The Iconic Principle

## 1. *Introduction: Obriadoverie*

It is often suggested that the Great Schism in the Russian Church was a schism over ritual but not over doctrine,[1] in other words, that on the theological side at least, it was a schism revolving around the 'external' practices of Orthodoxy but not over the essential 'inner' content of Orthodoxy, and indeed, that those who clung to ritual did so with a certain ignorance of the 'more important' doctrinal issues.[2] This essentially dualistic explanation contributed to the widely accepted idea that, as Robson pits it, 'Old Believer *obriadoverie* (belief in ritual)…. contrasted with the Russian Orthodox church's more enlightened differentiation between symbol and belief'.[3] Such interpretations, common in the 1600s and down to our own day, lend themselves to the common-place idea of the primitivism, simplicity and even backwardness of Russian Orthodox culture prior to its 'enlightenment' under Peter I.[4] In a certain sense, it is quite correct to affirm that the Schism did not explicitly refer to any doctrinal controversy,[5] nevertheless,

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[1] As Kliuchevsky puts it: '"Old Believers" in the strict sense of the words do not differ from us [the Orthodox] in a single dogma of faith, in a single fundamental doctrine of religion' (*A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century*, p. 305).

[2] For a critical account of this view see, for example, Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, pp. 206-7 and Robson*, Old Believers in Modern Russia*, pp. 3-7. Fedotov, although he praises elements of Old Russian culture, is typical of this argument.

[3] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, p. 3.

[4] According to Scheffel, this is reflected in the very terminology used to refer to those who clung to the old ways: 'As late as 1745, state officials refused to permit the term *starovertsy* (Old Believers)… and when finally the despised name *raskolniki* was dropped from the official documents in 1790, the term *staroobriadtsy* (Old Ritualists) appeared as its substitute…. It expressed succinctly the official refusal to recognize Old Orthodoxy as a genuine rival of the reformed church. By playing up the modern bias against ritualism, late eighteenth-century Russian church and state condemned the Old Ritualists to the status of a relic and denied them the right to a separate set of beliefs and doctrines' (*In the Shadow of Antichrist*, pp. 207-8).

[5] Boris A. Uspensky has brought a new dimension to this debate by exploring the semiotic dimensions of the Schism, arguing that the conflict between the Old Believers and the reformed church was not based in any doctrinal controversy, but rather 'had semiotic and philological foundations'. Uspensky views the Schism as a conflict of cultural and semiotic systems – East/West. See Uspensky, 'The Schism and Cultural Conflict in the Seventeenth Century' (trans. Stephen K. Batalden) in *Seeking God: The Recovery of Religious Identity in Orthodox Russia, Ukraine and Georgia* (ed. Stephen K. Batalden, Northern Illinois University Press: Illinois, 1993), pp. 106-43. We would argue that the semiotic dimension needs to be considered in relation to the theological-doctrinal aspect; in other words that semiotics itself needs to be considered theologically.

to suggest that the Schism was in no way about doctrine is to misconstrue the Old Orthodox understanding of the relationship between doctrine and ritual – an understanding evident in the contemporary arguments of both those in support of the reforms and those against them. Moreover, the interpretation of those who adhered to the old ways as simply backward and ignorant has been widely discredited, particularly for example by writers such as Crummey who have explored the cultural richness and spiritual life of the early Old Believers.[6]

Scheffel perceives this backwardness-primitivism narrative to be reflective of what Mary Douglas has described as the modern 'anti-ritualist prejudice': 'This prejudice consists of the same two components which make themselves felt in official and scholarly attitudes to Old Orthodoxy, namely the assumption that interest in ritual goes hand in hand with disinterest in doctrine, and therefore that ritualism is a somewhat deficient expression of religious devotion'.[7] Herein, whilst ritual is seen to play some role in religious practice, it is perceived to be of a different and wholly inferior order to the 'true spiritual meaning' of religion, and moreover, that the essence of the ritual gesture, its fundamental element, is the a-priori meaning and/or conviction which it expresses.  Of course, the dualism of the internal meaning of religion and external manifestations has foundations in the Gospels and the Lord's critique of the empty ritual practices of some of the Pharisees, the hypocrisy of outward piety devoid of inner content: but this does not mean that *all* ritual is empty; this does not seem to have been the Lord's point and Orthodoxy certainly esteems ritual in its worship and as an integral feature of daily Orthopraxis. It is also needs to be remembered that, from an Orthodox theological standpoint, Christian ritualism is qualitatively different to all other 'religious' ritual in its pneumatological content; its meaning resides in the nature of Christian worship as an eschatological expectation infused with the Holy Spirit, and its essential resonance derives from the sacramentality given in and through the Incarnation – a point we will consider below. The sociological-anthropological reduction in which true Christian ritual is perceived as merely another species of the ideal type of 'human ritual' as such, obscures this pneumatological quality and the broader theological significance of rituality.

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[6] See, for example the essays in Crummey, *Old Believers in a Changing World.*
[7] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 60-1; Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, p. 208.

It has been argued that the Great Russian Schism engendered a clash of theological and semiotic perspectives. The Nikonian reforms and the schism as such marked a shift from a view which posits a form of identity between 'symbol and belief', to use Robson's phrase,[8] to a view which allows their separation, a view characteristic of a more rationalist-dualistic understanding of Orthopraxis, and perhaps of the human person. According to Scheffel, the whole idea of the separation between ritual and meaning, external and internal, represents the *real* innovation in the whole Schism debate, the new idea which really took hold in the 18th century. Since for the older perspective, not only is ritual an essential element in the living of the Christian life as Orthopraxis - the art of Christian living - but it is also a performative embodying rather than a mere expression of truth and therefore, in a sense, inherently doctrinal.[9] As Scheffel recounts, by the 1740s, in one of the landmark texts in the Schism polemic, the whole question of ritual Orthodoxy could be brushed aside as a mere convention of outward religion used only to foster group belonging and cohesion.  In Archbishop Feofliakt Lopatinskii's *Exposure of Schismatic Falsehood* (*Oblichenie nepravdy raskolnicheskiia*), rituals are seen to be 'not dogmas of the apostolic orthodox faith but outward acts [*vnieishnya chiny*] and rituals [*obriady*] of church conduct; not ordained by Christ, not by the apostles, not by ecumenical councils, but by shepherds desiring unity for their congregations'.[10] Here, ritual is reduced to a kind of social function, it is essentially divorced from the Tradition of the Church proper[11] and is devoid of any integral doctrinal content or significance – a point at odds with the premium placed on correct rituality in the pre-Nikonian service books. The emergent

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[8] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russian*, p. 3.

[9] As we explored in the introduction, when the Schism actually took root, both sides considered the issues in hand to refer to the question of correctness: who had the authentic Orthodox tradition, the Russian or the Greeks? The reforms emerged in the context of the 'correction' of liturgical books and the issue of correctness – in the sense of ritual Orthodoxy – was the leitmotif of the early polemics: 'Under Nikon and his immediate successors, the battle between the two parties separated by the schism was fought according to a shared set of rules, which derived from the belief that the search for ritual authenticity was meaningful and necessary' (Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, p. 52). The importance of correctness is indirectly expressed in the Russian language where the very word for 'error' is derived from the word for 'sin'. See Uspensky, *The Schism and Cultural Conflict in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 112. On the issue of liturgical correctness and historicity see Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform*.

[10] Archbishop Feofliakt Lopatinskii, 'Exposure of Schismatic Falsehood' [*Oblichenie nepravdy raskolnicheskiia*], (St. Petersburg, 1745, p. 2), quoted in Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, pp. 52-3.

[11] Lopatinskii's point suggests that rituals do not in fact belong to the unwritten, non-scriptural component of Tradition identified by St. Basil as equally legitimate and important as the scriptural element. See Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* (trans. Stephen Hildrebrand: Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 27, pp. 103-8, particularly, 27, 66, p. 104; also 29, 71, p. 111.

understanding not only altered the text of the books, but for the Old Believers, it altered the very understanding of the practice of the faith to which these books bore witness.

If we accept the idea of this shift and clash, then what was the 'old' theology and how did it understand ritual?  In modern understanding, particularly under the influence of enlightenment rationalism, the general tendency is to perceive a ritual act as an outward expression of an inner disposition, the form, as it were, that is given to a particular content; the objectified expression of a subjective - 'spiritual' - meaning or disposition, the 'symbol' or 'sign' which represents a meaning or belief.[12] There may well be a correct doctrinal form for a given ritual, but this form is nevertheless detached from the doctrine it expresses in the sense that it operates as a mode of expression for that doctrine. Thus, in semiotic terms, ritual actions constitute signs which express but are nevertheless distanced from that which they signify. The connection is indeed present and clear, but it is a connection of expression, the sign or signifier expresses and represents the signified.[13]  It then follows, at least by implication, that the same meaning, subject or content can be expressed in a plethora of forms, objects and symbols: the stamp of authenticity is the subjective disposition rather than the ritual expression

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[12] This view is epitomised by the sociological and anthropological approaches to religion which emerged in the West after the 'enlightenment' and which have made their way into the *Weltanschauung* of modernity. Durkheim's highly influential and consciously positivist interpretation of religious life and practice gives us a clear sense of this rationalist and dualistic approach: 'Religious phenomena are naturally arranged in two fundamental categories: beliefs and rites. The first are states of opinion and consistent in representations; the second are determined modes of action. Between these two classes of facts there is all the difference which separates thought from action' (*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* [trans. Joseph Ward Swain, York: Free Press, 1965] p. 51; Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russian*, p. 8). As Robson points out (p. 8), if such an approach were applied to the Old Belief then it would entirely misconstrue the relationship between symbols, ritual, and humanity, precisely the kind of dualistic approach which characterises many appraisals of the Old Rite and the Schism. However, we would add to this basic point the broader fact that such an approach to religion embodies an ideology which is definitively secularising, based as it is in the positivism of Comte. Not only does it misconstrue the nature of ritual action as a facet of religious life - where religion itself becomes a reductive sociological category suggestive of the pluralism and relativism of 'belief systems' - but it also embodies an entirely erroneous understanding of the human person from the Orthodox perspective:  the essentially materialistic and atheistic vision of human life and being typical of positivist sociology and scientism.

[13] Naturally, these observations are the tip of a semiotic ice-burg; the differing understandings of ritual we are looking at here reflect different philosophies of language, its nature and content, and a much fuller exploration of the theology of ritual would demand a much more detailed and sustained exploration of semiotics and the philosophy of language. Whilst we are aware of this broader context and thus the rather limited nature of our own commentary, the scope of this thesis dictates that a more in-depth analysis of this topic must be postponed for further study. Suffice to say, the rationalist approach mentioned above resonates with a more Aristotelian perspective, where the word/sign is perceived as a kind of label, as in 'conventional' understandings of language.

– the whole issue being understood in a rather dualistic fashion.[14] So to, ritual acts like the Sign of the Cross, a bow or a prostration, may become primarily devotional acts and therefore somewhat individualistic in their role in Christian life, even if practiced in the collective. This devotional reinterpretation lends itself to a certain flexibility of practice – ritual gestures are used when the person feels moved, rather than having a specific doctrinal location, as it were, in everyday Christian life as well as in the Services and the Liturgy. Whether correct or otherwise, this is a critique the Old Believers often make of the reformed practice.[15]

Of course, it is self-evident for any Christian that the inner disposition for any action is of paramount importance and we are again reminded of Christ's condemnation of the formal religion of the Pharisees.  To reiterate our point above, it is abundantly clear that there is indeed such a thing as empty ritual or ritual for show – 'having a form of piety, but denying the power of it'[16] - and yet it is important to remember that ritual is not itself inherently or necessarily phariseeistic in the Gospel sense. Christ's critique is not of ritual itself but of a legalism and ossified literalism or formalism which stifles a reception of the Gospel. Orthodoxy is a religion of the heart, and yet as patristic anthropology fundamentally attests, the heart, the centre of the human person, is not an abstraction but subsists in embodied being, indeed, is embodied being - and it is in this sense of embodiment that the positive theological and existential contribution of the Old Rite perhaps comes into focus.

According to the worldview of the Old Belief, the distinction between inner and outer, content and form, subject and object, the signified and the signifier, or the symbol, is not as clear cut as dualist conceptual distinctions would make it seem. A ritual act like the Sign of the Cross for example, is not simply the outward expression of a particular meaning or devotional disposition, the physical sign as it were, of a spiritual content, but is an integral devotional-theological act thoroughly permeated by meaning: an act which embodies rather than expresses

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[14]Thus certain forms of Protestantism tend to reject ritual and rite almost entirely, focussing all their attention on 'individual' inner disposition and subjective feeling.

[15] There is a classic expression of this critique in the encounter of the 'pilgrim' with an Old Believer in, *The Way of A Pilgrim* (trans. Helen Bacovcin, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Image Books [Doubleday], 1978), pp. 111-12. See also Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russian*, pp. 49-51.

[16] 2 Tim 3: 5 (*Orthodox New Testament*).

meaning and which therefore is inherently and integrally meaningful. In this act there is a kind of identity between the signified and the signifier, not to be sure an absolute equality, an absolute or literal identity, but a kind of interpenetration, as it were – like a sponge soaked in water. The sponge is at once substantially different to the water and when it is soaked it does not become the water or the water the sponge, but it is nevertheless integrally permeated by the water. There is of course no question of 'transubstantiation' here as in the Eucharistic change (an issue we will return to shortly) but there is a mode of semiotic identity. The ritual gesture does not then simply represent or express some doctrine, meaning or spiritual content but is a meaning*ful* act: literally, an act full of, imbued with, inherent meaning.

It is in this sense that we can say that the ritual act is fundamentally iconic in its theological presuppositions, that it expresses what Scheffel refers to as the 'iconic principle'. Scheffel uses this phrase in his study of the Old Believers of Alberta, to refer to the idea that the 'major symbols of Orthodoxy… [are] faithful copies of divine prototypes', that rituals image divine truths.[17] This is an extremely valuable observation and Scheffel details how it operates in the day to day lives of the Old Believer community of Alberta, furnishing numerous examples of its significance for their worldview and daily practice. However, since Scheffel's study is largely ethnographic, the theology of this principle is left un-developed and its resonance with Orthodox theology more generally is not explored in detail. We want to proceed by exploring the theology of the iconic principle with the aim of unfolding the relationship between icon, iconicity as a capacity, and ritual, arguing that the iconic understanding and practice of ritual re-articulates defining elements of Orthodox theology. This task will demand that we delve somewhat into the theology of icons themselves, or at least into the image-prototype relation in the icon. In this context, we also want to draw on Pentcheva's work on the 'performative' aspect of the icon, illustrating how 'performativity', which we will clarify below, links icon and ritual: both of which express iconicity as an ontological possibility and capacity. Herein, effort will be made to ground our theoretical discussion through reference to relevant Old Believer texts and patristic examples. We will conclude by considering the nature of the symbolicity of ritual and the idea of the symbol as a means of participation.

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[17] *In the Shadow of Antichrist,* p. 143.

## 2. The Iconic Principle in the Icon

> I know a man of whom it is written that when he was gazing upon
> an image of the most pure Mother of God, he saw a human face,
> though it shone with ineffable light, so that, if it could be called
> human, the light of that face was more radiant than the human mind
> can comprehend (*A Son of the Church*).[18]

According to the understanding of the Orthodox Church, an icon does not merely represent or figure a particular subject, the Lord, the *Theotokos*, the saints and so on, but actually renders that subject present or, more precisely, facilitates their presence, albeit non hypostatically in the literal-essential sense.[19] The icon writer does not, like a magician, conjure up the presence of the subject through paint on wood or metal relief work as some kind of automatic causal act – as though the subject is made or forced to appear in the icon. This would be a magical and occult understanding. Rather, like the scriptures, the icon is a synergistic phenomenon involving both human contribution (*praxis*) and divine action and energy. The icon reveals the presence of the subject, the prototype, in and as their image, it reveals the presence of the heavenly realm in transfigured materiality: 'Every image makes manifest and demonstrates something hidden'.[20] When the Orthodox Christian stands before the icon of the Lord, he stands before the Lord actually present in some way, the materiality of the icon's substance - which corresponds to an aesthetic reality - acting as a window to divine life, to the presence of the subject in and through their image, in the onticity of the icon as an aesthetic object.[21] Thus, as we read in *A Son of the Church*:

> Know if a right-believing Christian stands before the image of
> Christ our God or of the Mother of God with humility and ardent
> faith he will receive whatever he asks for, because  where the
> image is, there also is the grace of the image.[22]

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[18] LII, p. 20.

[19] An interesting question emerges here: does every icon have this quality? For a complex discussion of this and related ontological issues, see C. A. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity: Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013).

[20] St. John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, III, 17, p. 96.

[21] Compare Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy', *The Complete Works* (trans. Colm Luibheid & Paul Rorem, New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 225-6. On the aesthetic reality of the icon see Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*.

[22] *A Son of the Church*, LII, p. 19.

St. John of Damascus gives perhaps the quintessential patristic expression to the Orthodox belief in the communicative presence of the subject in the icon in his defence of the holy images in the wake of the iconoclast movement of the eighth century. The passage is worth quoting in full. John quotes Basil the Great then offers a commentary on the point:

> *Basil:* Because the image of the emperor is called the emperor, yet there are not two emperors, for neither the power is divided nor the glory shared. For as the principle and authority that rules over us is one, so also is the praise that we offer one and many, because the honor offered to the image passes to the archetype. What the image is by imitation here below, there the Son is by nature. And just as with works of art the likeness is in accordance with the form, so with the divine and incomposite nature the union is in the communion of the divinity.[23]

> *Comment:* If the image of the emperor is the emperor, and *the Image of Christ is Christ, and the image of the saint is a saint*, then the power is not divided nor the glory shared, but the glory of the image becomes that of the one depicted in the image [emphasis added].[24]

The icon of Christ *is* Christ, not in the sense of a full and literal hypostatic presence,[25] but in the sense that the icon comes to be imbued with the glory Christ is and bears, thus revealing and communicating Christ himself: 'Icons of Christ are dissimilar to their divine original but glimmer with divinity', as Tsakiridou puts it.[26] As Athanasius implies, this is the distinct quality of the meaning of 'icon' or 'image', again using the example of the image of the emperor in a discussion of the oneness of the Father and the Son:

> For the form and shape is in the image of the Emperor, and the form in the image is in the Emperor. The likeness in the image of

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[23] St. John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, I, 35, p. 42.
[24] Ibid, I, 36, p. 42.
[25] As John of Damascus clarifies: 'An image is a likeness depicting an archetype, but having some difference from it; the image is not like the archetype in every way' (*Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, I, 9, p. 25). See also Treatise III, 16, 95, and St. Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons* (trans. Catherine P. Roth, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), 11, pp. 31-2.
[26] Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, p. 151.

the Emperor is exact, so that one who sees the image sees the Emperor in it and again one who sees the Emperor understands that this is in the image.[27]

As St. Theodore the Studite argues, building on the earlier arguments of St. John Damascene, likeness binds image and prototype, facilitating a kind of communicative transference between them. As the author of *A Son of the Church* thus instructs the neophyte, when standing in church: 'Turn your face toward the image of the Saviour, and raise your mind to its Prototype, and keep your prayer to Him constantly in your mind and on your lips'.[28] The icon communicates the divine power and glory of the prototype and thus, as John Damascene asserts, the demons flee before it.[29] In conceptual terms then, whilst a distinction can indeed be drawn between subject and object, or the signified and the signifier - Christ Himself and the icon itself - their synergy, as it were, is nevertheless realised in the icon as an image defined by likeness, and resonates in our experience of it, for indeed, what actually *takes place* in and through iconography is something we encounter and experience. Thus, John of Damascus relates both the possibility of icons and their veneration to what it is to be human, to be created with the 'double nature' of the spiritual and the material.[30] The icon is something which makes sense, which resonates, with our own nature.

Consequentially, as the Iconophile writings strongly emphasise, the veneration of icons is the veneration of the subject made present or communicated in the materiality of the icon.[31] We venerate the icon but our veneration is not of materiality but of the subject-prototype in their image, that is, of materiality 'filled with divine energy and grace',[32] and just so, as Tsakiridou suggests, the icon itself already participates in that divine life:[33] 'The image does not "convey" or "display" concepts. It *lives* them'.[34] A distinction between the signified and the signifier

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[27] Athanasius, 'Against the Arians,' III, 5, in St. John of Damascus' florilegium, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, III, 114, p. 147.

[28] *A Son of the Church*, XXXVIII, p. 13. See also, XL-XLIII, p. 14.

[29] Ibid: I, 36, pp. 42-3. See also *A Son of the Church*, LXVII, p. 26.

[30] Ibid: I, 36, p. 43.

[31] St. John of Damascus clearly defines the nature of the veneration of icons: 'I do not venerate matter, I venerate the fashioner of matter, who became matter for my sake and accepted to dwell in matter and through matter worked my salvation, and I will not cease from reverencing matter, through which my salvation was worked (*Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, I, 16, p. 28).

[32] Ibid, I, 16, p. 28.

[33] Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, p. 29.

[34] Ibid: 31.

remains and yet there is a presence of the signified in the signifier which simultaneously belies mere depiction, in the like of some secular or religious portraiture.[35]

Importantly for us, this synergy in the icon as an object reflects iconicity as a broader ontological possibility and capacity – the creation of man in the image and likeness of God and the possibility of the radiating of the Divine Prototype in the human image which we considered briefly in the introduction. In this sense, the icon is therefore a testament to transfigured materiality, transfigured life, and to the reality of synergy as relationship and, as it were, communion. The icon speaks of deification, revealing therein the ontological meaning or potentiality of iconicity as a modality in creation.  This iconic principle is not limited to icons themselves, but refers to the theology of creation as such, vis-à-vis the transfiguration of the world in the light of Christ. We have already seen as much in noting the Damascene's association of the veneration of icons with human nature.  The very possibility of icons reflects something of the nature of reality: "'the invisible things of God, since the creation of the world, have been clearly perceived through the things that have been made".[36] 'For we see images in created things intimating to us dimly reflections of the divine'.[37] We want to suggest below that in its own way the theology of ritual reiterates and recapitulates this incarnational-iconic vision, but to do this we first need to consider the notion of 'performativity'.

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[35] It is for this reason that the Orthodox faithful are often uncomfortable about the veneration of non-canonical forms of icons. Because there is a mode of communicable inseparability, as it were, between signifier and signified, a non-canonical form is felt to compromise the making present of the subject, thus rendering veneration questionable or indeed inappropriate. This point is illustrated by Gregory Milessenos in the fifteenth century, reflecting on his experience of entering Latin churches: 'When I enter a Latin church, I do not revere any of the [images of] saints that are there because I do not recognize them. At the most I recognize Christ, but I do not revere him either, since I do not know in what terms he is inscribed. So I make the Sign of the Cross and I revere this sign I have made myself, and not anything that I see there.' (Quoted in Andreopoulos, *The Sign of the Cross*, p. 55.) Milessenos clearly recognised that the pictorial representation of Christ was indeed of Christ and yet he felt that it did not actually convey the Christ he knew, thus he recognised a disunity and non-identity in terms of likeness. For Milessenos the pictorial representations were just that, representations, pictures, but not conduits of divine grace manifesting the divine Name and presence.

[36] Rom 1: 20.

[37] St John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, I, 11, p. 26. See also Dionysius, 'The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy' in, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (Mahwah, NJ: Classics of Western Spirituality Series, Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 193-260.

### 3. The Icon, Performativity and Iconicity

In unfolding the idea of the iconic principle, we have been exploring the basic affirmation of presence in the icon: the icon of Christ is Christ, and thus the imaging of divine reality to which Scheffel refers, as a general process, can be seen to involve a communicative making present.  In this context however, and returning to a point noted briefly above, it needs stressing that the presence of Christ in His icon is not, of course, the same as His presence in the Eucharist. As Theodore the Studite affirms, the former is His image whereas the latter is Christ in natural reality - His actual Body and Blood.[38]  And yet we might assert that both the icon and the Eucharist have the same essential ontological *possibility*: the transfiguration of materiality through the Incarnation, icons in a sense flowing out from the Eucharist itself as the locus of the new incarnational revelation.  In her study of Byzantine relief icons and the synesthetic quality of their 'performative' role in Orthodox worship and culture, Pentcheva has made precisely this point, stressing that the Eucharist forms the basis and model for the more general process of 'the inspiritng [*empsychosis*] of matter, achieved through the descent of the Holy Spirit [*Pneumena*]' which, she argues, defines Byzantine iconography.[39] It is worth our pausing to consider this idea in a little more depth, since it points to the iconicity which underwrites both icons and, we want to suggest, ritual.

For Pentcheva, this inspiriting of matter is the crucial constituent factor in what she describes as the 'performative' nature of the icon in Byzantine worship, by which she refers to the synesthetic presence of the icon, as well as to its aesthetic-spiritual impact in our experience in the sacred spaces of Orthodox worship.[40] This notion of performativity reflects in part the work of writers such as Austin and Tambiah,[41] as well as resonating with the hierotopy paradigm, but Pentcheva's work seeks to consider a specifically Byzantine understanding of the 'performative' as a notion. According to Pentcheva, this performative quality is

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[38] St. Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons*, 10-12, pp. 29-33.
[39] Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon*, p. 17.
[40] See Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon*, and the earlier essay, 'The Performative Icon', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 88, no. 4 (Dec., 2006), pp. 631-655. For Pentcheva's definition of 'synesthetic' see chapter 1 above, fn. 56.
[41] John L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962); Stanley J. Tambiah, 'A Performative Approach to Ritual', *Culture Thought and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 123-66.

experienced in the 'spectacle of shifting phenomenal effects on the surfaces of icons and architectural décor',[42] but a shifting of phenomenal effects which expresses spiritual presence (*empsychosis*): the 'performative' thus being a kind of phenomenal communication of pneumatological presence; a real expression-manifestation of spiritual presence in and through an 'other' materiality.

It is in this sense that Pentcheva's notion of the performative is relevant to our concern with ritual, for as her work suggests, the performative quality she refers to stretches to the hierotopic ritual nexus in which the icon subsists; the performative quality of the icon subsists in interaction with the rituality which embraces it in Orthopraxis and the Divine services. In other words, ritual facilitates this same performativity - here not so much the inspiriting of matter in the sense of an object or a material species, but of embodied action; indeed Pentcheva's work is very much concerned with what the icon *does* in a phenomenal sense. Pentcheva is certainly aware of this facility of ritual, but does not explore ritual itself in explicit and sustained depth, and thus we are extending her application of the performative as a concept. The important point for us is that if, as Pentcheva affirms, the Eucharist and thus the Incarnation, is the foundation for the performativity of the icon, then it is similarly the foundation for performativity understood more generally as an iconic mode, as a feature or expression of iconicity: a kind of active-dynamic reflecting-radiating of divine presence in created being.  For certainly, performativity is not limited to the icon as an aesthetic object but expresses what we might call the 'performative possibility', a possibility which conceptually speaking we can identify as being iconic. Performativity takes place in and through the icon but performativity as a capacity and possibility is already a testament to iconicity as a capacity and possibility. The defence of icons, as John of Damascus so well instructed, is the defence of the Incarnation – the very reality of God made man, of the possibility of creation to bear the uncreated, of transfiguration.

Pentcheva goes on to suggest that there is in fact a Greek word more suited to capturing the meaning of performativity for Byzantine culture: the Greek word *teleiotes*, derived from the noun *teleiosis*, which comes from the Eucharist and defines the moment of the Eucharistic change of the bread and wine into the Body

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[42] Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon*, p. 2.

and Blood of Christ. This concept, she suggests, represents the 'Byzantine equivalent of "performative"'.[43] As Pentcheva explains:

> *Teleo* (the verb) and *teleiosis* express the process of bringing to completion, to perfection, and to fulfilment, but they also refer to "enchantment," "initiation into the mysteries," and the "performance of sacred rites." Thus the "performative" as a concept in Byzantium is first and foremost a *teleiosis*, defined by the Eucharist; it is a performance of sacred rituals leading to transformation.'[44]

There are a number of overlapping points to draw out here: firstly, the implicit relationship between the icon and ritual, grounded in the Eucharist and subsequently in performativity or *teleiosis*; secondly, that the notion of performativity in classic Byzantine Orthodoxy suggests pneumatological presence; thirdly, the notion that performativity involves an entering in and participation (an idea we want to explore in more depth below), and fourthly, the connection between the performance of rituals and transformation-deification. These points coalesce in a *pneumatological* understating of performativity as an iconic and participatory capacity, and this is the important point in terms of our own specific concerns. For as we considered in the previous chapter, the art of Christian living involves an existential performative theology which finds its point of reference in ritual gestures understood to be iconic. If we used the word 'performative' in a more or less non-technical sense in the previous chapter, we can now affirm that Orthodox performativity is at once iconic and pneumatological. We are not trying to suggest here that every ritual action, every ritual 'performance', is inspirited, but simply that such performativity underlies the ideality of Orthodox ritual; that ritual as it were, seeks the inspiriting which undergirds it as a possibility (thus also its ascetic dimension). The iconic principle identified by Scheffel refers to the idea that rituals image divine content – this process, we are arguing here, is performative; it is theology as performativity, and this point brings our discussion to a more explicit consideration of the iconicity of ritual itself.

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[43] Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon*, p. 2.
[44] Ibid.

## 4. Ritual and the Iconic Principle: Ritual Iconicity

> As for ancient Israel, when fire, storms and lightening served as signs for the presence of God on Sinai, so the ritual serves for people – always and everywhere – as a symbol and witness of the reality of the presence and influence of God on people. The Orthodox Church believes that every ritual performed in its name has, therefore, some other sanctifying, renewing, and fortifying meaning.[45]

The ritual act can be seen as iconic in a number of senses: firstly, in the sense that like the icon it belies a mechanical separation of form and content,[46] meaning or subject and expression; secondly, in the sense that it points beyond its own immediate material or physical actuality; it images, embodies, makes present that to which it refers, belief, devotion, doctrine etc., (this is Scheffel's sense of the iconic principle); and thirdly, in the associated sense that it participates in and expresses performativity or *teleiosis* as a possibility given through the Incarnation and subsequently the Eucharist. This provides us with a theoretical framework for understanding the experiential meaning ritual gestures have within the Old Rite, particularly for example, the Sign of the Cross. *A Son of the Church* devotes three of its short chapters to the Sign, and the Old Rite Psalter begins with an explanation of the Sign of the Cross, its role and correct use. Indeed, it is noteworthy that in the recent translation of the Russian Orthodox liturgical psalter (*Sledovannaya Psaltir*) into English, the usual section at the beginning on the Sign of the Cross (in this case *troeperstie*) is conspicuously absent, the reason given being that 'the Old Rite controversy has been resolved'.[47] Whether the controversy over the Sign of the Cross has been resolved is not the point we are pursuing here, but rather the fact that the section on the Sign of the Cross is understood by the editor only in a 'polemical' sense and not as something instructionally or indeed performatively significant in its own right. A point which

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[45] 'O tserkovno-obriadovom vospitanii v shkole', *Slovo Tserkvi*, 1916, no. 22: 484; Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, p. 42.

[46] See Uspensky, *The Schism and Cultural Conflict*, p. 106: 'This conjunction of form and content was an extension of the same attitude toward the sacred sign expressed in the veneration of icons'. In his semiotic interpretation of the Schism as cultural conflict, Uspensky pre-supposes the separation of dogma and form.

[47] 'Preface', *A Psalter for Prayer: An Adaptation of the Classic Miles Coverdale Translation, Augmented by Prayers and Instructional Material Drawn from Church Slavonic and Other Orthodox Christian Sources* (ed. David Mitchell James, Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, The Printshop of St. Job Pochaev, 2011), p. 10.

perhaps emphasises in its own limited way the relative importance placed on ritual gestures in the old and the reformed rites.[48]

In the pre-Nikonian books whilst the section on the Sign does indeed have a polemical function, the Sign is also understood in broader terms to facilitate an incorporation into the mystery which it symbolically-iconically embodies and thus, we might now say, performatively realises. In the Old Psalter we are explicitly instructed that, in the context of the Crucifixion of Christ, the Sign of the Cross is sacramental, incorporating us into the mystery of the economy of salvation through its specific symbolicity: 'the Sign of the precious Cross, this excellent sacrament of the faith teaches us how to know a mystery',[49] or in the words of *A Son of the Church*: 'It is not something ordinary; it contains a great mystery'.[50] We have already mentioned Peter of Damascus' words to similar effect.[51]  This is precisely what renders the correct, and that is to say Orthodox, execution of the gesture so crucial; the Sign refers to doctrinal truths in its 'content' (the Holy Trinity, the two natures of Christ, the Incarnation) and like all doctrine it speaks of a mystery:

> Be careful that all these things are performed correctly, because they concern, first of all, the Trinity, and second, the economy of the two natures. If you do not make the Sign of the Cross properly, you do not confess your faith in the indivisible Trinity, and you do not confess your faith in the economy of the two natures in the one person of Christ… If one does not make the Sign of the Cross correctly, he does not confess faith in the Incarnation of God the Word.[52]

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[48] Of course, this is only one edition of the psalter and its Russian prototype retains the instructional section. Nevertheless, the absence of the instructional material in a psalter is intended for English speaking Orthodox Christians in the Russian tradition – many of whom will be converts – remains noteworthy.

[49] 'On the Sign of the Cross' (abridged from the psalter printed under the Patriarchate of Patriarch Joseph of Moscow) in, *Old Orthodox Prayer Book*, p. 335.

[50] *A Son of the Church*, LXV, p. 24.

[51] See the previous chapter, section 3.

[52] *A Son of the Church*, LXVI, p. 25. See also the section of the sermon of St. John Chrysostom taken from the Prologue for April the 18th, included at the end of *A Son of the Church*, pp. 48-9. The doctrinal meaning of the symbolism of the ritual is found in a variety of places, including the *Psalter,* the *Domestic Rule* and the *Azbuka*, as well as manuals such as *A Son of the Church* and the anthology, *The Book of the Elders*.

Thus, the Sign of the Cross is a performative confession of the faith[53] which, when carried out carelessly and incorrectly, and that is to say in manner in which its symbolic form is obscured or altered in some way, its communication-confession – its iconic quality - is similarly obscured and incomplete and its confessional efficacy therein compromised. Such, at any rate is the perspective of the Old Belief, a point that is stressed emphatically in *A Son of the Church*.[54] To be clear, the point here is not merely that correct 'form' safeguards correct 'content', but (if we are indeed to use the form content division here) because form embodies content and thus, in a sense, is content, the phenomenality of the *total gesture* matters. Albeit without the same degree of 'formal' specificity we find in texts like *A Son of the Church* or the *Domestic Rule*, we find a strong sense of the importance of the manner of execution of the ritual gesture in, amongst others, Symeon the New Theologian:

> Christians who believe in Christ sign themselves with the sign of the Cross not simply, not just as it happens, not carelessly but with all heedfulness, with fear and with trembling and with extreme reverence. For the image of the Cross shows the reconciliation and friendship into which man has entered with God… according to the degree of reverence which one has towards the Cross, he receives corresponding power and help from God.[55]

For Symeon, the ritual gesture of the Sign of the Cross is at once a confessional and relational mode for the divine mystery of the Cross (and herein lies its iconicity) in a manner which facilitates a participation in the mystery – an idea we will return to in more depth below. The Sign does not merely represent the mystery in the way a conventional sign informs and points to a particular piece of information, but incorporates the person who makes it into that 'content' in some way:

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[53] This confessional-doctrinal dimension is seen clearly in some old Greek and Russian icons of the crucifixion where the centurion, known to Christian tradition as Longinus, is pictured at the foot of the cross holding up his hand in a gesture of *dvoeperstie* in confession of the God-Man: 'Truly this man was the Son of God' (Mk 15:39).

[54] *A Son of the Church*, LXVI, 'If the Sign of the Cross is Made Incorrectly', pp. 25-6 and chp. LXVII, 'How the Demons Tremble Before the True Sign of the Cross', p.26.

[55] St. Symeon the New Theologian, *The First-Created Man* (ed. and trans. Fr. Seraphim Rose, Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2013), pp. 48-9.

those who have understood this mystery and in very fact have known in experience the authority and power which the Cross has over demons, have likewise understood that the Cross gives the soul strength, power, meaning, and divine wisdom.[56]

It is arguably in this sense that the old books stress the importance of the Sign and its meaning in the Christian life, although they perhaps add another layer of 'formal' detail, and whilst we are not in any sense trying to suggest that such an understanding of the rituality of the Sign of the Cross is lacking in contemporary Orthodoxy, in comparison with the Old Rite, it is perhaps less emphasised and less explicit:

> Let this be known: It behoves every Christian to know clearly how to cross himself properly in the form of a Cross; how great a mystery lies in the joining of the fingers; and why we are called Christians. Let everyone born again in the laver of regeneration mark this well…[57]

Ritual gestures such as the Sign of the Cross then, image that to which they refer,[58] they express the iconic principle as a relational modality, rooted in the principle of synergy and expressing the performative possibility. More than this however, we would suggest that ritual reiterates the iconic principle in the human person themselves, testifying to the ontological reality of material and spiritual that lies at the heart of creation. As John of Damascus writes:

> since we are twofold, fashioned of soul and body, and our soul is not naked but, as it were, covered by a mantle, it is impossible for us to reach what is intelligible apart from what is bodily… For this reason Christ assumed body and soul, since human kind consists of body and soul; therefore baptism is twofold, of water and the Spirit; as well as communion and prayer and psalmody, all of them twofold, bodily and spiritual, and offerings of light and incense.[59]

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[56] Ibid: 49.

[57] Ibid, p. 334.

[58] In the case of the Sign of the Cross, the referent is not the actual Cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified, for us the relic of the True Cross, but the mystery of the Cross. See Andreopoulos, *The Sign of the Cross*, pp. 50-65.

[59] St John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, III, 12, p. 93.

The ritual gesture, involving the simultaneity of the spiritual and the material/physical is iconic and expresses being in its iconic quality, that humanity is the 'living image',[60] as Gregory of Nyssa puts it, a living image imbued with a natural longing for God expressed in the fullness of that image. Certainly, 'worship in spirit and truth'[61] does not preclude the body, but involves the fullness of human being in communion with the Holy Spirit of God.[62] The resurrection, it is worth remembering, is the resurrection of the body, the transfiguration, but not negation, of materiality into the spiritual body spoken of by St. Paul.[63] As St. Gregory of Sinai writes:

> The body in its incorruptible state will be earthy, but it will be without humours or material density, indescribably transmuted from an unspiritual body into a spiritual body (cf. 1 Cor. 15: 44), so that it will be in its godlike refinement and subtleness both earthy and heavenly. Its state when it is resurrected will be the same as that in which it was originally created – one in which it conforms to the image of the Son of Man (cf. Rom. 8: 29; Phil. 3: 21) through full participation in His divinity.[64]

This is perhaps precisely why *A Son of the Church* encourages the newly baptised to start with the fundamentals of Christian rituality, to start with the immediate and material. The site of our relationship with God is that which is, according to Athanasius, closest to us[65] – our material experiential being – and it is interesting to note that as the Apocalypse of St. John reveals, even worship in heaven involves ritual gestures of veneration such as prostrations.[66] At any rate, this iconic quality is fundamentally human: 'since I am a human being and wear

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[60] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Creation of Man*, 4; St John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, I, 49, p. 47.

[61] Jn 4: 24.

[62] Incidentally then, the kind of idea we find in Kliuchevsky, based on this Gospel passage above, which suggests that through a kind of 'evolution' Christianity will shed its ritual skin to become a pure spiritual worship perhaps betrays a subtle form of rationalist dis-incarnationism. See Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century*, p. 309.

[63] 1 Cor 15: 42-9

[64] St. Gregory of Sinai, 'On Commandments and Doctrines', in Palmer et al (ed.) *The Philokalia*, vol. IV, pp. 212-55, 46, p. 221.

[65] Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 1, 3, NPNF, 2, 4, p. 194 [5].

[66] See, for example, Rev 4: 10. This fact also helps makes sense of the symbolic meaning associated with prostrations: the prostration is on one hand an act of veneration, but it also reiterates the economy of salvation from fall to resurrection. The act of veneration includes this theological meaning and confession. See the explanation of prostrations in *A Son of the Church* (LXVIII, p. 26), and St Basil, (*On the Holy Spirit*, 27, 66, p. 106) – both texts given in out text, p. 100.

a body, I long to have communion in a bodily way with what is holy'.[67] John Damascene refers here to the veneration of icons, to seeing and of course experiencing the holy in the icons, but the point refers to something broader than this, to the very possibility of experiencing the divine in and through the material world, a material world of which iconic human being is a part. Thus, as the patristically inspired instructional material on the Sign of the Cross in the Old Rite suggests, the Sign of the Cross is experientially connected to the very mystery of divine dispensation.

Although he is generally critical of it, Fedotov points out that Old Russian ritualism expresses man's connection to 'nature', to the created world,[68] a theme also explored by Sinyavsky in his discussion of 'folk religion'.[69] Ritual, in this sense, can act as 'communion in a bodily way', the realising of heavenly truths in the body, in the material world now transfigured and being transfigured in Christ: for 'now, since the divinity has been united to our nature, as a kind of life giving and saving medicine, our nature has been glorified and its very elements changed into incorruption'.[70] This is also why Christian ritualism is not, in itself, a kind of new law (although in a negative sense it can become one as we discussed in the previous chapter): it refers to a theological ontology which is pre-eminently Christocentric, which finds its meaning in the Incarnation and Resurrection and thus in the Eucharist; it is about human being in the process of becoming, that is, vis-à-vis a participatory symbolicity, the remembrance of God and the ascesis of *ustav*, it refers ultimately to the assimilation of likeness and deification. As we have seen, this is the end, the goal, of performativity / *teleiosis*. Actually, this theological purpose renders the stagnation of ritual life as petrification which we considered in the previous chapter all the more tragic: it perverts the essential meaning and functionality of rituality, slipping into a kind of ritual idolatry.

There is, of course, a spectrum of ritual importance, some rituals holding more immediate significance and doctrinal importance than others, and the internal semiotics of distinct rituals in not uniform,[71] nevertheless, speaking generally, we can assert that like the icon, ritual is a capacity for the performative presence of,

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[67] St John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, I, 36, p. 43.
[68] Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, vol. 1, p. 371.
[69] Sinyavsky, *Ivan the Fool*, pp, 164-82.
[70] St John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, II, 10, p. 67.
[71] See Andreopoulos, *The Sign of the Cross*, pp. 43-83.

and as we saw above with St. Symeon, entering into, spiritual reality: it is a means of the active iconicity of the icon, that is, of man as image. Thus, as Robson elucidates: 'For the faithful, pre-Nikonian rituals *realized* rather than represented heaven on earth. Orthodox literature is replete with references to this process of realization, which is less developed in the Christian West'.[72] Thus Symeon's reference to the efficacious power of the Sign of the Cross mentioned above. But we would want to nuance or at least clarify Robson's point here by stressing 'realisation' as a process. Ritual life - the art of Christian living - is a *process* of the realisation of spiritual realities, the immaterial in the material, and in this sense it is a work (*praxis*) of the becoming of likeness. As John of Damascus writes: 'our worship is an image of the good things to come, the realities themselves, that is Jerusalem above, immaterial and not made by hand'.[73] The rhythm of the *ustav* of every-day life was intended to render life as worship through the constant remembrance of God through ritual symbolicity, and therein the shaping of life through a ritual *ascesis*.

## 5. The Internal/External Dualism Re-visited

Returning now to the whole notion of the internal/external dualism which invariably accompanies the consideration of Christian ritualism: If we consider the ritual gesture of making a bow or a prostration, a common act in Orthodox prayer and asceticism, we can stress that the actual physical act – the 'outer dimension' of the ritual – does not merely express and manifest the 'inner disposition' – contrition, veneration, etc., – but embodies and even is this disposition. The body itself is a sight of ritual meaning, 'a sacred topos … a field of ritual significance'.[74] Here, there is no clear dualistic separation of the signified and the signifier. One does not make a prostration to *show* one's contrition/veneration, rather the prostration is a part of one's contrition/veneration; showing is a by-product, as it were, of the physicality of the gesture. In its proper balance the ritual gesture is a living of its content – an integral performative act. The prostration, though physical is (in ideal terms at least) an action of the heart, it embodies a movement of the heart. There is an integral union between intention and ritual and this union reiterates the essential totality of human being as spiritual-corporeal. In other words, the total ritual action - understood in these terms - reiterates and therein

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[72] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russian*, p. 8.
[73] St John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, II, 59, p. 78.
[74] Andreopoulos, *The Sign of the Cross*, p. 58.

reorients human being in its own totality.  Moreover, as *A Son of the Church* suggests, a bow or prostration itself, like the Sign of the Cross, manifests-embodies-performs a particular doctrinal meaning which cultivates the remembrance of God:

> When you bow down, this signifies Adam's transgression and fall into sin. When you come up, this signifies restoration through repentance and a return to the original state of incorruption. In the same way, we bow to other men, because they have the image of God in them, having been created according to the image of God.[75]

Incidentally, the text here reiterates the patristic understanding evidenced by St Basil: 'With each going down on the knee and rising up we *indicate in deed* [performatively express] that we have fallen through sin to the earth and are called up to heaven by the love of our creator'.[76]

The tendency to approach Christian ritual in an overly dualistic sense not only obscures the positive role of rituality in the Christian life, but perhaps contributes to an obscuring of the totality of the human person as image. As soon as ritual comes to be seen as 'merely symbolic', something fundamental is lost. The cord tying the material to the spiritual is severed and a certain rationalism and dualism enters into our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.[77] This would be emblematic of the secularisation of anthropology-theology - of 'disenchantment', to use Max Weber's phrase - and it in this situation that ritual becomes a matter of 'religion' rather than a matter of Orthodoxy, that is, a system and culture separate to life rather than life in its fullness. At the same time, if ritual comes to be seen as exclusively salvific in its own right in a causal-mechanistic sense, then iconicity can become idolatry.  In right balance (and this is essential) ritual is iconic as a doctrinal confessional practice, as Orthopraxis: 'In the same

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[75] *A Son of the Church*, LXVIII, p. 26

[76] *On the Holy Spirit*, 27, 66, p. 106 [emphasis added].

[77] To be clear, the Old Belief is not free of dualism as such. The ritual prohibitions characteristic of the priestless Old Believer communities tend to cast the world in terms of a variety of dualisms: Christian/pagan, pure/impure, the realm of Christ/the realm of antichrist, old/new, etc.  On dualism and ritual prohibitions see Scheffel, *In the shadow of Antichrist*, pp. 191-205. Scheffel convincingly argues that the ritual prohibitions of the Old Believers derive from early Greek Orthodox models and the practices of early Christians. If Orthodox Muscovy came to extend these Byzantine prohibitions to more and more spheres of daily life, then after the Schism itself the priestless Old Believers would significantly amplify their role, importance and scope, translating what Scheffel describes as 'purism' into a kind of 'puritanism' which potentially 'Pharisaic' dimensions. See the previous chapter, section 7.

way that a gas or liquid might take the form of its container, old ritualists believed that faith took on its comprehensive, iconic form in symbol and ritual'.[78] As a psychosomatic act ritual orients the person to God and, in its ascetic quality, to their own nature,[79] and in so doing plays a much more important role in Christian life than mere group cohesion and cultural form. As Robson clarifies, writing specifically of the Old Believers:

> Instead of social cohesion or dogmatic representation, Old Believers hoped that their symbols and rituals could actually transform them into better Christians. Following ancient eastern Christian traditions, Old Believers accepted the proposition that ritual life could help them to achieve "the[80] final goal at which every Christian must aim: to become god, to attain theosis, 'deification' or 'divinization.'"[81]

Above, we have tried to show how the iconic principle and performativity help explain on the theoretical level such an understanding of ritual. To conclude this exploration however, we need to briefly consider the symbol, for naturally, ritual gestures involve symbolical expressions and how we understand ritual relates importantly to how we understand symbols and what they do.

## 6. The Symbolical Ontology of Creation and the Symbol as Epiphany

Ritual is associated with the symbolical realm of Christian experience and practice and if ritual can in any sense be understood as a playing a role in *theosis* as Robson suggests, then this role is associated with the very meaning of the symbolical, with the symbol as a mode of participation. As we have already seen with Symeon the New Theologian, the symbolical rituality of the Sign of the Cross, for example, does not merely represent the mystery but actually facilitates a kind

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[78] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russian*, p. 87.

[79] If, as 'the divine Basil says, memory comes about through words and images' (St. John Damascene, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, I, 38, p. 44), then we can say that it also comes about through rituals in their iconic quality. Ritual acts are acts of remembrance, of making present, which find their form as elements of the non-Scriptural corpus of Holy Tradition. See St. Basil *On the Holy Spirit*, especially chap. 27, and Vladimir Lossky, 'Tradition and Traditions', in *In the Image and Likeness of God* (London and Oxford: Mowbrays, 1974), pp. 141-68.

[80] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 236.

[81] Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russian*, p. 8. According to Robson, the Old Believers are not primarily attached to their rituals and symbols because of their antiquity, but because of the experiential depth of these rituals and symbols in the living of the Christian life (Ibid, p. 9). This is an important point since the Old Believers are often seen as being fanatics of the old for the sake of the old, for the sake of its antiquity.

of communicative participation in it. As Pavel Florensky suggests, we tend to think of a symbol as something that is self-referentially true, but this limits our understanding and involvement with the symbolical: if it fulfils its purpose as such, then the symbol not only reveals but becomes intertwined with the reality or, as Florensky puts it, the 'superreality' (i.e. the spiritual reality) which it reveals.[82]

In the context of sacramental theology, Alexander Schmemann has provided some key insights into the patristic understanding of the symbolical which further illuminate the ontological suppositions of the iconic principle in its application to ritual.[83] Schmemann's essay *Sacrament and Symbol* sketches out a shift in the theological understanding of symbols which, we want to argue, resonates with the shift we have already mentioned from the understanding of ritual implicit to the iconic principle to a more dualistic understanding which separates ritual and meaning or content. In what follows, we want to try to apply some of Schmemann's observations, which he wrote as a specific contribution to Eucharistic theology, to our own field of enquiry, thus using Schmemann's work in a somewhat novel way - albeit critically.  To be clear, we are using Schmemann's argument in a manner extrapolated from his broader theological project and our use of this argument should not be read to suggest a wholesale acceptance of his vision of contemporary Orthodoxy nor his plan for a 'liturgical theology' with its rather positivist methodological underpinnings.[84]

Schmemann's essay speaks of 'a deep transformation of theological vision, indeed of the entire theological "world view"' which, he argues, takes place after the sixteenth century. For Schmemann, this transformation marks the emergent 'Western captivity' of Orthodox thought: the 'breakdown of the patristic age when tragic conditions of ecclesiastical life forced upon Orthodox "intellectuals" a non-critical adoption of Western theological categories and thought forms'. 'The result', he continues, 'was a deeply "westernized" theology, whose tradition was

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[82] Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis* (trans. Donald Sheen and Olga Andrejev, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 2000), p. 65.
[83] It goes without saying that Schmemann's interpretation of symbolicity directs us only to the surface of much broader and deeper patristic area, and a much fuller exploration of our theme would demand a study of the understanding of symbols in the patristic tradition, focussing especially perhaps on Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor and Gregory Palamas. Given the limited scope of this project however, this task must be reserved for future research.
[84] For a critique of this project see Michael Pomazansky, 'The Liturgical Theology of Father Alexander Schmemann' originally published in, *Selected Essays*, (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1996), pp. 82-102 [online] http://orthodoxinfo.com/phronema/pom_lit.aspx [accessed 15/05/15].

maintained (and to some extent is still maintained) by theological schools.'[85] Schmemann's idea here of the breakdown of the patristic age might well be contested and, it should be noted, Schmemann has himself been criticised for having a rather 'Western' approach to the whole topic of the Westernisation of Orthodox theology,[86] nevertheless the very idea of the Westernisation of theology in Russia (i.e. scholastic influence and Latin-Jesuit learning) is less problematic and it is worth noting that the early Old Believers consciously perceived their battle to be against the tide of Westernisation which, according to Kliuchevsky at least, the Nikonian reforms indirectly prepared.[87] In fact they were fighting on two fronts: Westernisation on the one hand, and the Turkish influence on Greek Orthodoxy on the other, thus Old Believer identity, particularly amongst the priestless, came to be characterised by an out and out rejection of all things Western, at times verging on the fanatical. At any rate, we can accept Schmemann's basic point of the growing Westernisation of Russian theological thought after the sixteenth century, what elsewhere, Florovsky has identified as a prominent feature of the 'pseudomorphosis' of Russian theology. Indeed, Schmemann points his readers to Florovsky for a history and explication of the Westernisation he has in mind here, and which, generalising somewhat, boils down to the preponderance of an essentially scholastic approach which emphasises a kind of de-contextualised and, as it were 'scientific', conceptual exactitude.[88]

According to Schmemann, one of the definitive consequences of this shift - a shift away from Patristic Orthodoxy and toward Western rationalism - is expressed in the understanding of symbols, indeed, of the very meaning of symbols, and it is on this level we can apply Schmemann's argument to our discussion of ritual and the Nikonian reforms. Indeed, Schmemann argues that this shift specifically involves the adoption of the Western juxtaposition between reality and symbol, where the former denotes, as it were, the thing in itself substantially present and the latter something representational and illustrative. Schmemann discusses this

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[85] Schmemann, 'Sacrament and Symbol' in, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press), pp. 135-51, pp. 135-6.
[86] Pomazansky, 'The Liturgical Theology of Father Alexander Schmemann'.
[87] Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century*.
[88] Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*; Schmemann, *Sacrament and Symbol*, pp. 135-8.

theme in the context of exploring the narrative of the 'real presence' in the Eucharist. As Schmemann explains:

> We need not go here into the very complex and in many ways
> confused history of that term [symbolical] in Western thought. It
> is clear that in the common theological language as it takes shape
> between the Carolingian renaissance and the Reformation, and
> in spite of all controversies between rival theological schools, the
> "incompatibility between symbol and reality," between "figura et
> veritas"[89] is confidently affirmed and accepted. "To the 'mystice,
> non vere' corresponds not less exclusively 'vere, non mystice.'"[90]

Figure or symbol, and truth become separate elements in a dualism, the former of which then illustrates the latter, it operates as a form of representation distinct from that which it represents. Importantly, Schmemann points out that this dualism is entirely at variance with the patristic tradition, which recognises no such 'distinction and opposition' and actually tends to see symbolism as integral and fundamental to the sacrament and to its understanding. In other words, if Schmemann is right and broadening the context somewhat, the Fathers held an entirely different understanding of symbols than modern rationalist theology in the scholastic vein – although it needs to be acknowledged that 'the Fathers' or 'patristic tradition' is a rather large conceptual umbrella.   Schmemann gives the example of St. Maximus the Confessor, 'the sacramental theological par excellence of the patristic age', who actually 'calls the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist *symbols* ("symbola"), *images* ("apeikonismata") and *mysteries* ("mysteria"). As Schmemann concludes in words which bear profoundly on our own subject matter:

> "Symbolical" here is not only not opposed to "real," *but embodies it*
> *as its very expression and mode of manifestation*. Historians of
> theology in their ardent desire to maintain the myth of theological
> continuity and orderly "evolution," here again find their explanation
> in the "imprecision" of patristic terminology. They do not seem to
> realize that the Fathers' use of "symbolon" (and related terms) is

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[89] B. Neunhauser, *Historie des Dogmes: L'Eucharistie*, II. Au Moyen Age et a l'epoque modern (Paris: Led Editions du Cerf, 1966), p. 42.
[90] Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: L' Euchariste et l'Eglise au Moyen Age* (Paris: Aubier, 1944), p. 258, in Schmemann, 'Sacrament and Symbol', p. 138.

not "vague" or "imprecise" *but simply different from that of the later theologians*, and that the subsequent transformation of these terms constitutes indeed the source of one of the greatest theological tragedies [emphasis added].[91]

The newer theology represents a departure from patristic tradition, a departure which entails the emergence of a different world-view: 'a difference in the apprehension of reality itself'.[92]   Again, this notion of a clear and almost absolute rupture in world-view might be questioned, but what is most important here is that for the patristic sensibility, symbolicity belongs to the very ontology of the created world: the world created by God is symbolical not in a representational sense, but in its very structure: 'the symbol being not only the way to perceive and understand reality, a means of cognition, but also a means of *participation*'.[93] This clarification resonates with what we have already seen in the case of the Sign of the Cross and prostrations as presented in texts such as *A Son of the Church*.

To continue, creation itself is integrally imbued with a symbolic quality, it has a natural symbolism as a facet of its created subsistence, an iconicity – although Schmemann does not use the term. Schmemann insists that it is this symbolical ontology of the created order - what he refers to as it its inherent 'sacramentality' - that makes possible the sacraments themselves and, specifically, the Eucharist. In other words, the sacraments, although unique in their particular revelatory nature, nevertheless flow out of the symbolical quality of the ontology of the created world. They are not *sui generis* in an absolute ontological sense; although unique they express a *possibility* written into creation. We have already suggested above that such a 'possibility' underpins icons and ritual, both of which, following our discussion of Pentcheva's work on performativity, find their model in the Eucharist and ultimately the Incarnation and the creation of man in the image of God. The sacraments then, are modes of revelation and communication which facilitate a participation in the fullness of reality itself, in this case, Christ and His Kingdom, and thus the sacraments actually express the symbolic nature and potentiality of being. If this is the case for the sacraments of the Church, then it also applies, although in a qualitatively

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[91] Schmemann, 'Sacrament and Symbol', p. 139.
[92] Ibid, p. 139.
[93] Ibid.

different manner we might say, to the whole symbolical world of Christian worship and experience (see below). The symbolical forms of Christian worship have for their *a-priori* the symbolical ontology of creation and facilitate a manner of participation for the human person already integrated into that ontology and expressing its perfection in his unique iconic being, albeit fallen. For what Schmemann identifies as the patristic world view, the patristic apprehension of reality, the symbol is a kind of 'epiphany', a making present; for the created world is in itself a symbol-epiphany of God's holiness and glory:

> The symbol is means of knowledge of that which cannot be known otherwise, for knowledge here depends on participation – the living encounter with and entrance into that "epiphany" of reality which the symbol is… In the early tradition, and this is of paramount importance, the relationship between the sign in the symbol (A) and that which it "signifies" (B) is neither a merely semantic one (A *means* B), nor causal (A *is the cause of* B), nor representative (A *represents* B). We called this relationship an *epiphany*. "A *is* B" means that the whole of A expresses, communicates, reveals, manifests the "reality" of B (although not necessarily the whole if it) without, however, losing its own ontological reality, without being dissolved in another "res".[94]

Here, Schmemann gives a more precise expression to the analogy of the sponge we introduced above to explain the nature of icon/ritual as understood in the Old Orthodox tradition: As a symbolical gesture, a ritual (A) is integrally embedded with meaning (B) involving a manner of identity, though not absolute, between these elements (A *is* B). We are reminded again of John Damascene's point in outlining the ontology, as it were, of icons discussed above: the icon of Christ is Christ. Just as an icon is a window into the heavenly realm, making present spiritual reality so might we not say that ritual as symbol shares in the epiphanic quality of symbolicity as such: the participatory potentiality of the symbolical ontology of creation? In fact, this is what ties symbolicity, and therein, ritual, to the priestly vocation of man, to mediation itself as a kind of performativity. Performative ritual mediation expresses the unique iconic quality of human being and the symbolicity of creation, in the sense that ritual gives

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[94] Ibid, p. 140.

form to natural symbolicity transforming it as prayer and offering. The sacraments are of course the fullest expression of this transformation, but all Christian ritual nevertheless expresses the same potentiality and ontological foundation.

Following Schmemann's argument, this shift in theological worldview from the 'patristic' to 'western-scholastic' corresponds with the growing preponderance of discursive rationality in theological discourse and, specifically, the reduction of knowledge to rational knowledge *about,* rather than participatory knowledge *of.* Under these circumstances the symbol begins to lose its quality as epiphany:

> Because of the reduction of knowledge to rational or discursive knowledge there appears between A and B a *hiatus.* The symbol may still be means of knowledge but, as all knowledge it is knowledge about and not knowledge of. It can be a revelation about the "res," but not the epiphany of the "res" itself. A can mean B, or represent it, or even, in certain instances, be the "cause" of its presence; but A is no longer viewed as the very means of "participation" *in* B. Knowledge and participation are now two different realities, two different orders.[95]

This is a tragedy precisely because, we might assert, theology ceases to be theology; it becomes a subject *about* rather than a participation *in*, God. Returning to our central concern however, the more pressing implication is that the modern dualism of reality and symbol represents a distortion of the theology of creation itself, it misconstrues or at least provides an alternate vision of, created reality, one subject to more or less reified intellectual categories, and one in which symbolism becomes alienated from the real and the actual: symbols become a way of representing or illustrating reality, they become 'mere symbols', rather than modes of participation and modes through which mystery is made present. In such a context, performativity surely loses its experiential meaning. In a way, the externalisation of symbolicity – the objectification as it were of symbols as means  - actually 'disenchants' the world by intellectually removing mystery from reality and subjecting the experience of symbolicity itself to the codifications of rationality.  The modern anti-ritual prejudice noted above (a prejudice present

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[95] Ibid, p. 142.

in Christianity itself) perhaps expresses the alienation of symbolicity, the estranging of symbolicity from ontology and, therein, the hollowing out and devaluing of the significance and role of symbols.[96] The Old Believers have at times, and sometimes quite justifiably, been associated with an excessive ritualism, a kind of ritual idolatry. But more generally, we might suggest that the critique of Old Believer *obriadoverie* is coloured by this theological anti-ritual prejudice, and that a fuller exploration of the Old Belief requires the clearing of these cobwebs. In its positive potentiality, *obriadoverie* needs to be considered in the context of symbolical ontology.

## 7. The Iconic Principle, Ritual and the Sacramental World

The iconic principle in its application to ritual expresses the symbolical ontology of creation. If ritual is iconic then we must remember that it refers us back to being as icon, that is, to what it is to be created in the image of God. This iconic ontology is, as it were, the unique symbolicity of human being. Ritual is a *praxis* of reorientation, a mode of anthropological-theological re-centring, a humanising of fallen humanity in Christ by virtue of the Incarnation and, as we have seen, by virtue of the natural symbolicity of the created world: 'He came to His own'.[97] Christian ritualism, like the holy icons, is incarnational: in the very immediacy of it embodiedness it testifies to the fact that the immaterial became material therein sanctifying and transfiguring materiality and, most importantly, humanness. The Incarnation is the fulfilment, the realisation, of the symbolicity of creation and therein, the opening of the door to *theosis* which, of course, is Christ. Christ is, as Schmemann puts it, the 'Symbol of all symbols'.[98]

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[96] As something of an aside, we might suggest that this amelioration of the experience of symbolicity as an ontological quality, facilitates the growth of scientism in its positing of the world as mechanism, for the ontology of pure mechanism is precisely the negation of natural symbolism: it marks the absolute tyranny of the *sui generis* as the 'natural' quality of all ontology. The world becomes pure *is-ness*, ossified being ruled by 'natural' processes - a 'scientific' re-packaging of the *ananke* of ancient Greek mythology. It is this same sense of is-ness which we find at the heart of materialism, existential philosophy, the absurd, and all forms of nihilism. Schmemann himself links this shift in the apprehension of reality to the emergence of what he describes as the 'heresy' of secularism. The more devoid of ritual symbolicity Christian worship becomes – a process self-evident in the anti-sacramental, anti-ritual tendencies of some Protestantism – perhaps (as strong as this may sound) the less Christian it becomes, for it ceases to be that worship in spirit and truth which both expresses and participates in the mystery of creation and the mediating vocation of human being, at once spiritual and corporeal. As Schmemann interestingly suggests, secularism is not primarily atheism as such, but the denial of worship, and in so being we can add, it is the denial of humanity – it is self-violence, suicide.

[97] Jn 1:1

[98] Schmemann, 'Sacrament and Symbol', p. 148.

The site of ritual is the material-physical world and the body itself which partakes in that world: it is in this sense that in the previous chapter we spoke of an existential hierotopy. The ritualism of the Old Rite can therefore be understood as a facet of what Andrew Louth, following Sergei Bulgakov and others, refers to as a 'Christian materialism':

> Some Orthodox theologians, such as Bulgakov, have spoken of a
> 'Christian materialism', and they are right: running through the
> history of the Church there has been a constant struggle against a
> tendency towards a false spiritualization, that opposes the spiritual
> to the material, and seeks flight from the material.[99]

Christian materialism is an affirmation of creation, of materiality as such, but it is also a safeguard against the various heretical tendencies (Arianism, Nestorianism, Iconoclasm) which have sought to draw a false dichotomy between the material and the spiritual or, more specifically, the material and God.[100] Christian materialism affirms a world in which material reality, valuable in itself ('it was good'[101]) points beyond itself, a world within which materiality, as we have already suggested, is essentially iconic. As Louth explains:

> In his letter to the apostle John, Dionysius remarks: 'Truly visible
> things are manifest images of things invisible' (ep 10). This seems
> to be presented as a general principle about the nature of reality:
> visible things point beyond themselves to the invisible; they have
> a meaning that cannot be confined to their visible, material
> reality.[102]

Christian materialism finds its clearest expression in the sacraments and, in broader terms, in the very possibility of sacraments, the very possibility of a revelatory materiality, a materiality that makes present a mystery – the performative possibility. This possibility is, as we have seen, immanent in creation in its symbolic quality, now energised, as it were (or re-energised) through the Incarnation; it is a possibility unfolding the actuality of a world filled with the

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[99] Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* (London: SPCK, 2013), p. 96.
[100] Ibid, p. 97.
[101] Gen 1: 4.
[102] Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, p. 100.

meaningfulness of God, a world in which materiality is ontologically transparent and revealing: 'the world as sacrament'.[103]

Although ritual actions such as the Sign of the Cross, prostrations and so on, are deemed to be qualitatively different to what are often identified as the seven major sacraments (Baptism, Chrismation, the Eucharist, Confession, Marriage, Holy Orders, Holy Unction), they nevertheless form part of a sacramental world, a world viewed under the aegis of Christian materialism and symbolicity, a world at one sanctified but also a world in the process of being sanctified, transformed and transfigured in Christ. The Old Believers of Scheffel's study refer to this sacramental world - this domain of rituality and symbolicity with all its anthropological and cosmological implications - using the term *sviatost*, which 'can be loosely translated as "holiness" or "sacredness",[104] and which we might suggest constitutes a hierotopic nexus. As Scheffel observes, whilst this domain 'is distinguished from sacraments (*tainstvo*), the dividing line is thin'.[105] Actually, the very use of the Latin term 'sacrament' perhaps obscures what is meant here since it lends itself to a rather reified distinction between 'sacraments' and 'sacramentals', such as it stands in Latin theology. We should remember that the equivalent Greek and Slavonic words of the Latin '*sacramentum*' – '*mysterium*' / '*tainstvo*' - actually mean 'mystery', and in a sense the recalling of this word helps remind us of the connection of both the sacraments - the Mysteries, as the Orthodox refer to them - and so called sacramentals, the world of mystery as it were, with the Mystery of Christ.[106] Moreover, it subtly encourages us to avoid the temptation to draw rigorous distinctions, suggesting a certain unity in that Mystery.[107] As Louth suggests, '[t]he idea of mystery and sacrament converge, and at the point of convergence we find the human'.[108]

*Sviatost* suggests precisely a kind of sacred realm of action and being which we can connect with the transfiguration-reorientation of humanity in and through the Incarnation: 'The mysteries [sacraments] of the Church lead us to participate in the mystery of Christ, for the Church is the body of Christ: Christ is now manifest

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[103] See Schmemann, *For the Life of the World.*
[104] Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, p.140.
[105] Ibid.
[106] See Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, pp. 98-9.
[107] See Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*, p. 21.
[108] Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, p. 101.

through the Church and its members'.[109] Although the Incarnation is a singular event it is also the dynamic potentiality for the becoming of the human and material world, for *theosis*. In this way, ritual acts are indicative of the 'between' status of human being, the subsistence of human life in the between of the material and the spiritual - consisting of both but not reducible to one without the other - which has we have previously highlighted is a crucial element of the uniqueness and privilege of human being. Ritual acts are at once corporeal in their physical or verbal actuality - they are immediate gestures taking place in space and time - and in this way they are literally embodied actions and thus, vis-à-vis Athanasius, fundamentally human.[110] But they are also *embodying actions*, in the sense of their iconic properties, in the sense that they are inherently doctrinal-confessional, pointing to spiritual realities, and in the sense that they are a key facet of the Orthopraxis of the spiritual life: the synergistic striving for salvation.

As we have seen, the human person is a unity of soul and body, of the spiritual and the physical, and the image of God in man refers to the totality the person is, although the soul is seen to occupy a position of monarchy. Ritual actions have a potentially unifying role in the postlapsarian condition, for they subject physical and material being - now recalcitrant - to the spiritual realities and truth immanent within this sphere, allowing the body to operate as the instrument of the soul, manifesting a harmonious unity of these elements. At least, this is their possibility and ideal as *praxis*. The *ascesis* of ritual – like all *ascesis* – is in part anthropological, it involves the reorientation of the human person to God and to the actuality of their own being.

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[109] Ibid, p 99.
[110] Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 1, 3, p. 194 [5].

# Conclusion

### 1. Aesthetic Orthopraxis

> The purpose of rhythm, it has always seemed to me, is to prolong
> the moment of contemplation (William Butler Yeats).[1]

Orthopraxis in the Old Russian vein includes the living of a ritual life; the ritual forms and symbols of the Church operating as an interactive nexus of integrally meaningful actions, grounded in and constantly articulating and recapitulating Holy Tradition.[2] In ideal terms (although certainly not always in reality) this ritual nexus is not conceived as an end in itself, a backward and stagnant 'traditionalism',[3] but as a context, a language, of the world or environment of the Church within and through which the Christian struggles for their salvation. The hierotopic ritual nexus facilitates lived theology, lived tradition - 'theology is action' as Robson puts it[4] - finding its loci in rituals and symbols of integral iconic meaningfulness:  the 'iconic principle'. As we have argued in the preceding chapters, the ritual life should be understood in the broader context of the 'iconizing' potentiality characteristic of the human condition and vocation: the sacralisation of the world and the unfolding of the immanence of likeness vis-à-vis the materiality of the created order. In this sense, the ritual life is 'aesthetic' in its essential character. It implies the dynamism or becoming of human being - *theosis* - to be a kind of aesthetic act, reflecting therein the theological presuppositions of the icon itself as an aesthetic object: that is, the very possibility of a revelatory materialism and of deification in and through the Incarnation. In

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[1] William Butler Yeats, *The Yeats Reader* (ed. Richard J. Finneran, New York: Scribner, 2002), pp. 378-9.

[2] As we have stated previously, ritual can be associated with what Basil identifies as the non-scriptural customs of Holy Tradition. See Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* (trans. Stephen Hildedrand, Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 27, pp. 103-8.

[3] The 'force of habit' criticised by Lossky. See 'Tradition and Traditions' in *In the Image and Likeness of God* (London & Oxford: Mowbrays, 1974), pp. 153-60. It is worth pointing out that some voices amongst contemporary Old Believers are equally critical of stagnant traditionalism. Metropolitan Cornelius defines the Old Believer relationship with the past as an 'enlightened conservatism'. See, 'Interview with Inter-Fax Religion,' 2007 [online] http://rpsc.ru/mitropolit/interview/intervyu-portalu-interfaksreligiya/ [accessed 22/05/15]. Metropolitan Cornelius sets out the contemporary Old Belief as informed and defined by the past, but looking to the future, responding to 'the challenges of the day'. See 'The Fate of Russia and the Old Believers', speech given at the Presidential Council, 23 Oct., 2014 [online] http://rpsc.ru/mitropolit/vistupleniya/sud-by-rossii-i-staroobryadchestva-vy-stuplenie-mitropolita-korniliya-na-rasshirennom-prezidentskom-sovete-23-oktyabrya-2014-g/ [accessed 22/05/15].

[4] Roy R. Robson, *Solovki,* p. 97.

other words, rituality recapitulates and participates in the aesthetic possibility which is seen more clearly in iconography, and in this regard it is relevant to note that in the Russian icon-painters' copy books and the manuscript anthologies, icon painting was itself envisaged as a synergistic divine-human process in which 'the icon painter created an image just as God had created the world and humankind in his image'.[5] Icon painting was seen as a participation in the iconicity of creation, an aesthetic-spiritual act empowered by iconicity as a potentiality.

Insofar as it is true to itself, this aesthetic quality is performative, it facilitates a performative theology - the quality Pentcheva associates with the Byzantine icon. Ritual it is not so much the *acting out* of theology, if by this we mean the putting on of a show or a kind of theatrical pretence, as the living of it *in action*, a performative embodying; and in this sense, this aesthetic quality is fundamentally liturgical. The ritual life is a liturgical life. Its life-forms are replete with the principles - to use something of an abstraction here - of liturgy: relationship, communion, praise, offering, sacramentality; all as experiential realities that embed life in, and open life to, God. According to the worldview of the Old Belief, as with a poem or a painting, ritual 'meaning' is embodied in the whole hierotopic atmosphere to which its form gives life in a semiotic/aesthetic unity, an integral holism. As the Old Believer writer F. E. Melnikov puts it:

> Religious understanding is unlike logic or mathematics in that in it an idea or motif is unbreakably connected to its form of expression. A logical theorem can be proved mathematically irrespective of the language or style used. But religious and aesthetic feelings do not work that way: the idea or motif is organically attached by the law of psychological association to the text, ritual, or sounds.[6]

This is an aesthetically informed vision of theology and Orthopraxis, and one centred in a liturgical consciousness. The ritual life is liturgical theology, theology lived liturgically: an existential liturgy imbued with integral theological meaning and which seeks, in that meaning, the Archetype of which its forms speak. By virtue of its iconicity, rituality does not merely convey but actually

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[5] Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion*, p. 182.
[6] F. E. Melnikov, in Caroline Humphry, 'Schism, Event and Revolution: The Old Believers of Trans-Baikalia', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 55, no. S10 (Dec., 2014), [The Anthropology of Christianity: Unity, Diversity, New Directions], pp. S216-S225, p. S220.

embodies and, as it were, lives its content[7] - or at least it bears this potential, for it can of course find a petrified expression. In Florensky's terms, we can say that like all symbolicity, rituals strive to be that which they symbolise,[8] and in this way rituality participates in the 'mysticism', as it were, of iconicity as a capacity. The rhythm of *ustav* which we explored above, finds its *true* meaning not in law as the dead letter, but in reorientation, aesthetic and ascetic: in shaping, moulding, opening, and thus in a sacralisation of life through ritual and symbolic order - a hierotopic creativity. Any ossification of *ustav* is a tragic perversion of its spiritual functionality, its spiritual meaning and purpose. For all its ascetic quality, the rhythm of the *ustav* of everyday life, the art of Christian living, is perhaps best understood in the light of language or music, each of which requires a certain formal quality to shape its expressive potential. Indeed, its ascetic character is safeguarded by precisely this formal quality. But this formal quality is not then dualistically juxtaposed to the meaning it shapes and allows, as if the 'essential' meaning or content of a symphony can be abstracted from its musical 'form'. Indeed, the dualism has little tangible meaning in the *experience* of the art work, but is instead revealed in this existential context as a conceptual abstraction. Perhaps all art, we might conjecture, ultimately strives for iconicity in its creative potentiality, in its *eros*, its desire to perceive the Beautiful in becoming-being beautiful.[9] Art in its proper form is longing for 'communication and communion', to use Tsakiridou's phrase.[10]

The aesthetic-liturgical property of rituality has its foundation in the iconicity of the human person, and in that 'beauty-goodness' (*καλόν*) which should already direct attention to the aesthetic quality, as it were, of creation itself: the beautification of the 'unfinished' nature of the world worked through the Holy Spirit.[11] If ritual can be seen in terms of the iconic principle, then as we have suggested, the possibility of this principle resides in the anthropological constitution of man in the image and likeness of God, the image of the Image, and of creation itself as an aesthetic act, as something akin to art or craft. Gregory of Nyssa describes the creation of

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[7] See Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, p. 31.
[8] Florensky, *Iconostasis*, p. 66.
[9] In this regard see Florensky, *Iconostasis*, pp. 86-7 and Sergius Bulgakov, *Icons and the Name of God* (trans. Boris Jakim, Grand Rapids: MI, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012), pp. 45-6.
[10] Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, p. 187.
[11] See Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron*, 2 in NPNF, II, 8 (ed. P. Schaff), [online] Christian Classics Ethereal Library, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf208 [accessed 17/02/15]. Basil very clearly reads *καλόν* in terms of beauty. An interesting question emerges here regarding the relationship between the beautiful and the good, but there is insufficient space to explore this further.

man using the imagery of a painter transferring form and beauty through the application of colour, the implication being that man *is* himself a work of art, bearing within himself an immanent beauty capable of reflecting the Divine Beauty.[12] Basil makes a similar although more general point: 'the world is a work of art displayed for all people to behold'.[13] The imagery of God as artist, the 'supreme artisan'[14] as Basil puts it, and of creation as art work, as beautiful and revealing of Divine Beauty (an iconic quality), is common in the Fathers, especially the Cappadocians. But there is perhaps more than imagery and metaphor here: creation, image and likeness, indeed, being as such in its nature and dynamic, shares something with the aesthetic. More accurately, art/craft as a capacity shares something with creation, participating in its unfolding potentiality as beautification – thus the *eros* which in certain instances it reveals and is. Iconicity characterises creation and the aesthetic potentiality or possibility is embedded in human being.

In this sense, beautification and theosis are descriptions of the same essential process and goal in which being finds its fundamental identity and meaning. The becoming or realising of likeness is the becoming and realising of beauty, in which, as Gregory of Nyssa suggests, Divine Beauty is itself reflected. The task of the Christian life is an aesthetic one in this sense; thus Basil describes the process of 'the acquisition of piety' as being 'just like the arts', something that must be worked at with order, step by step, if one is to achieve 'perfect wisdom'.[15] This same logic is expressed in *A Son of the Church*, its steps, like the *bábochki*, the 'rungs' of the *Lestovka*, the old Russian prayer rope or rosary, are steps to beautification. If rituality is limited to 'externals', or limits itself to externals, then its participation in this process is superficial or even non-existent: it is a dead end, the phariseeism criticised by Christ in the Gospels, and this is certainly a possibility of ritual. The very word 'ritualism' is commonly used in this pejorative sense, even within Christianity, and yet Orthodox Christian rituality, the ritual world of the Church, is in its proper mode and balance something different: it is

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12 Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, 5, 1, p. 746 [390].
13 Basil, *Hexaemeron*, 1, 7, p. 259 (55) [translation adapted]. The Greek word translated here as 'work of art' actually spans the conceptual ground which in English tends to be divided between 'art' and 'craft'. Basil's point should not be confused with 'the work of art' as it stands in the romantic sense, but refers more generally to a creative artistic/craft-like activity.
14 Ibid: 1, 7, p. 259 (56).
15 Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 1, 2, p. 28.

pneumatological (a point we will develop below). This is what F. E. Melnikov refers to when he suggests that 'Ritual… was created by the spirit'.[16]

We have already noted the connection between the liturgy and the aesthetic quality of rituality. If we were to think of the specific rituality and symbolicity of liturgical form, in word, gesture, movement etc., as simply representational-allegorical, 'symbolic' in the common-place sense of the term, then we risk misunderstanding its performative quality.[17] For the rituality of liturgy involves not merely a representational symbolism in the like of a kind of theatrical allegory, but remembrance-participation *in* experiential-participatory symbolicity - in performative symbolicity as it were.[18] Tsakiridou makes the point in reference to the Cherubic hymn chanted before the anaphora and the reception of Holy Communion. Ritual and word are iconic, 'iconizing':

> The magnificent sixth-century *cherubikon* or cherubic *troparion* that is included in the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom uses the verb *eikonizein* (to mold something into form). As human and angelic hosts unite in prayer, the faithful come to "iconize" the Cherubim. *Eikonizein* in this context is to take on the qualities of another and realize them in one's way or act of existence. To iconize the Cherubim is to assume or embody their form, to give them a tangible presence, rather than to reflect or replicate them. It is also a reflexive act that incorporates those to whom the *troparion* is addressed in the act of chanting itself. To sing the *troparion's* words and give them a voice is to exist in that act (and moment) as human cherubim (angels on earth). Thus, the chanter's being a picture of the cherubim is inseparable from the chanting act itself. It *is* that act and what *it* (the act) makes present. As long as the chanting lasts,

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[16] F. E. Melnikov, in Humphry, 'Schism, Event and Revolution', p. S220.

[17] As Bulgakov points out, this whole understanding of the symbol actually distorts and denigrates the nature of symbols as such; it betrays a kind of nihilism wherein symbols are perceived as human constructions rather than ontologically communicative modes. See Bulgakov, *Icons and the Name of God*, pp. 134-5.

[18] Building on the decrees of the Seventh Ecumenical Council Florensky identifies remembrance, understood not as a subjective experience but as the impact of an objective reality, as one of the primary characteristics of icons. See *Iconostasis*, pp. 70-2.

chanter, chant and cherubim are indistinguishable. The *eikon* is in time, the persons chanting are in eternity.[19]

The liturgical moment, in word, facilitates the translucent potentiality of the iconic, where word itself reverberates with the incarnational potential given in the Incarnation of the Logos. Iconicity is energised by the Incarnation of the Proto-Icon, the Word-Image of the invisible God. The symbolic modes of the liturgy radiate out from the ultimate 'symbol' of the Eucharist at its heart: 'this do in remembrance of me'.[20] Its ritual 'forms' are energised, filled with the Holy Spirit, 'the Comforter, everywhere present and filling all things',[21] given in and through the Lamb immolated on the Holy Table, 'slain from the foundation of the world'.[22] Melnikov's point implies that ritual articulates-expresses the Holy Tradition of the Church, which as Lossky suggests in his well-known interpretation, is 'the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church'.[23] The rhythm of ritual is the rhythm of the repeated phrase, the repeated prayer, centring the person in Christ.[24] In this sense we can say that ritual was 'created by the spirit' as a language of tradition, 'Christians speak by their bodies', as Florensky writes.[25] Ritual works as a physical-material icon, an existential hierotopic capacity, vis-à-vis the body, vis-à-vis embodied hypostatic being: an iconizing-sacralising capacity of man as icon - 'the art is *in* the one who practices it', as Basil suggests in a slightly different context.[26] Whilst anyone might physically make the Sign of the Cross or some other ritual gesture or indeed read the words of a hymn or prayer, the energisation of the gesture, as it were, is in the Spirit of God; the ritual gesture like the specific forms of prayer uttered, and other 'traditions', is a word (λόγος) spoken as Lossky suggests,[27] a confession, and 'no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit'.[28] Following Pentcheva, this is the very nature of the performative as a facet of

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[19] Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, p. 71. See also Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon*, p. 50-8.
[20] Lk 22: 19; 1 Cor 11: 24.
[21] A line from the common Orthodox prayer used at the opening of most services and personal prayers.
[22] Rev 13: 8.
[23] Lossky, 'Tradition and Traditions', p. 152.
[24] Tarasov notes this connection, *Icons and Devotion*, pp. 64-5.
[25] Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis*, p. 58.
[26] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 26, 61, p. 99.
[27] See Lossky, *Tradition and Traditions*, pp. 148-9. According to Lossky: 'the word is not uniquely an external sign used to designate a concept, but above all a content which is defined intelligibly and declared in assuming a body, in being incorporated in articulate discourse or any other form of external expression' (ibid, p. 148).
[28] 1 Cor 12: 3. See also Lossky, *Tradition and Traditions*, pp. 151-2.

Orthopraxis. Incidentally, an analogy might be drawn here to the traditional idea that icon painting itself requires the presence of the Spirit in the icon writer, a point expressed in the icon copy books which sometimes contained an introductory section about practical methods of acquiring the Holy Spirit. Iconic saintliness was and is the ideal of the icon writer's craft.[29]

The authenticity of the ritual 'word' then, is in the Spirit - the Spirit is the 'place', as Basil suggest for true worship and Christian life,[30] and rituality draws its light from the Spirit and thus from life in the Church. It follows that we can only know and experience the 'meaning' of rituality in life and worship as a spiritual phenomenon in its performance.[31] In other words, as we have suggested above, ritual is primarily experiential. The elucidation of ritual meaning in texts like *A Son of the Church* or much earlier in patristic authorities such as Theodoret and Peter of Damascus, find their deeper reality and resonance in lived spiritualised experience. Following Basil, rituality has its origins in silence and experience rather than written exegesis,[32] and in Lossky's terms, drawing on Basil, ritual traditions in their specificity then emerge from the womb of Tradition as an encompassing spiritual world.[33]

The efficacy of ritual resides in in its spiritual content as a synergistic act, but only within the totality of the Christian life and genuine ascetic struggle, for 'the activity of the Spirit is in the purified soul.'[34] The *telos* of rituality – but only as a *part* of the Christian life – is the Silence which gives it life,[35] thus its realisation, as it were, is in the saint whose whole life has become an icon revealing the spiritual, whose whole life has become symbolicity, at once transparency and true identity-likeness. Ritual, without the continued attempt to keep the commandments and the struggle against the passions is empty, it facilitates what Florensky refers to us as the self-conceit of 'spiritual neatness';[36] in a sense it is perhaps even a kind of blasphemy or, at the very least, an example of the hypocrisy scorned in the

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[29] See Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion*, pp. 183-4, and Florensky, *Iconostasis*, p. 67, 88-95 and the passages Florensky quotes from the *Stoglav*, pp. 92-5.
[30] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 26, 62, p. 101.
[31] See Lossky, *Tradition and Traditions*, pp. 151-2.
[32] See ibid, p.105. Basil actually suggests that it is inappropriate to divulge the meaning of such traditions in writing, at least to the uninitiated (ibid). See also Lossky, *Tradition and Traditions*, p. 144. Texts like *A Son of the Church* are of course intended for initiation, but post-baptism.
[33] See Lossky, *Tradition and Traditions*.
[34] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 26, 61, p. 99.
[35] See Lossky, *Tradition and Traditions*, p. 151.
[36] Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis*, p. 49.

Gospels. Rituality might contribute to the transfiguration of the person, but only in relation to the transfiguration of the interior man in the 'doing of God's will',[37] and if ritual is indeed 'created by the spirit' then a suppleness to the Spirit is required to integrate ritual into the Christian life in a balanced way.

## 2. Iconicity and the 'Semiotic Revolution' of the Nikonian Reforms

Ritual conceived outside of pneumatology is the stuff of the sociology of religion and this latter perspective has arguably clouded our whole approach to its meaning and purpose. The aesthetic imagination is perhaps a much better way to approach the whole issue of ritual life, for it is an imagination at once closer to the work of the Spirit, which 'was hovering over the face of the waters'[38] with the first brush strokes of creation. An iconic consciousness is demanded here. The ritual world of the Church is an overflowing of the liturgy itself into the totality of everyday life: a part, perhaps, of the 're-creation', to use Athanasius' phrase,[39] of the world as church - a symbolic mediation in and through performativity. Actually, this is why the *bezpopovtsy* position turns out to be so tragic: in cleaving to the old rituals and in emphasising the importance and role of ritual in the Christian life, the priestless Old Believers have, to some extent, become alienated from the living source of rituality, as indeed of performativity as such, in the Eucharist. This is the *peripeteia* of the priestless drama.

*Sviatost* cannot be *sui generis*, it breathes with the breath of Eucharistic life finding its centre and anchor on the altar which it simultaneously envelops.[40] Of course, for the *bezpopovtsy* themselves this tragedy is perceived in eschatological terms as the natural result of the Nikonian reforms, and thus a tragedy within which they, the 'righteous remnant', are the victims and martyrs. As Tarasov points out, the Nikonian reforms engendered, amongst other things, a 'semiotic revolution',[41] a transformation of the sign system, the symbolic nexus, of Russian Orthodoxy, through the negation of the old established rituality and symbolicity and the introduction of the contemporary Greek norms. The rejection of the old rituals was to all intents and purposes a statement of their non-iconicity

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[37] See Florensky's commentary on Rom 12: 1-3, *Iconostasis*, pp. 57-9.
[38] Gen 1: 2 (OSB)
[39] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation.*
[40] Compare Lossky, *Tradition and Traditions*, pp. 155-6.
[41] Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion*, p. 119.

and their non-iconizing capacity.[42] For the priestless Old Believers, it was this semiotic-iconic negation which in turn compromised the legitimacy and reality of the Eucharist, for the compromising of *sviatost*, of the symbols which make up the ritual nexus of the Church led back to the Symbol of symbols, the Eucharist.[43] The official church was no longer the Church since it had negated its own symbolical self-identity and legitimacy, and thus the legitimacy of the Eucharist or other Mysteries could no longer be vouchsafed. Grace had been removed because the grace-filled symbolicity of church life had been negated and transformed. This was, for the Old Believers, the 'apostasy' of the official Church.

Central to the Schism then was the interpretation of symbols, but the deeper issue referred to their iconicity – a point which has not received adequate focus in the secondary literature. As Tarasov has rightly pointed out, the debate over ritual was a debate over the iconic potentiality of the contested gestures and forms, a debate which would naturally connect rituality to iconography itself. Thus, the movement to 'correct' the form of symbol and sign - the new spelling of the name 'Jesus' and the new style formation of the fingers in blessing - in the icons written around and after the 1666-7 Council, and even the literal 'correction' (repainting) of older icons.[44] The official polemics of the 18th and 19th centuries contained explicit attacks on the 'old icons', precisely because they were 'the most important basis of the Old Believers' means of proving the authenticity of the old devotion'.[45] Explicitly 'Old Believer' icons, for example those depicting the Archpriest Avvakum, were burned, as were numerous 'old books'.[46] Iconicity and rituality were fundamentally intertwined in both the popular imagination and in the polemics of the Old Believers and the 'Nikonian' authorities. For the Old Believers, text, ritual, icon, even the appearance of the person, the wearing of beards most notably, are iconic. Moreover, the Old Believers argued that the

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[42] Tarasov makes the point vis-à-vis sign and symbol in the old iconography: the rejection of the old symbols and ritual entailed an affirmation of the 'view of the older icon as an image of false likeness' (ibid: 120). The notion of false likeness lends itself to ideas of deception and the false imitation of holiness and thus, naturally, to the demonic. It is partly in this sense that the Old Believers traditionally associated the new sign system – for them a rituality of false iconicity - with demonic deception. The new signs, expressed in the icons and in daily Orthopraxis, were considered a falsification of true Christian dogma and practice, thus the whole association of Nikon with the Antichrist. The new Sign of the Cross was seen as a demonic imitation of the 'true' Sign.

[43] See ibid, p. 125. See also Scheffel, pp. 140-62. Scheffel found that for the Old Believers of Alberta the legitimacy of the Sacraments were conditional on the 'Orthodoxy' of the ritual nexus.

[44] Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion*, pp. 134-42, p. 192.

[45] Ibid, p. 140.

[46] Ibid, p. 193.

efficacy of the iconic potential of the iconic mode was maintained by its likeness – that is, by its conformity to the received form.

In a somewhat different context, Pentcheva has examined the Byzantine notion of the icon as an imprint defined by a typological likeness, and the related fact that the 'mechanical reproduction' of iconic form (*morphe*) - and thus the sameness of form - was perceived by some of the Byzantine Iconophiles as essential to safeguard the legitimacy of the icon as a communicative mode vis-à-vis image and prototype. According to Pentcheva, the metal relief icons dominant in ninth century Constantinople particularly expressed and fulfilled that strand of Iconophile theology which perceived the definitive quality of icons in terms of the imprint (*typos*) and seal (*sphragis*) of likeness.[47] There may well be interesting parallels between Old Believer understandings of iconicity and the mechanical exactitude of form and the notion of imprint in Byzantine image theory (which it has to be stressed, is not static and unchanging) - and it is perhaps not incidental that traditional cast metal icons, banned by Peter the Great in 1723,[48] were and remain highly popular amongst Old Believers,[49] particularly because they facilitate the exact reproduction (likeness-imprinting) of the old iconic symbolicity. Pentcheva points out that the very word *typos* can actually mean 'rite'[50] and, importantly for us, suggests the notion of the imprint of likeness, as the point of connection between the relief icon and ritual:

> Just as the icon is an imprint of visible characteristics on matter, so too, the rite becomes the imprint of a set of gestures and speech acts in time and space. Both icon and ritual present endless faithful reproduction rather than imitation of form. The imprint as a cultural practice ensures uniformity and secures traditions.[51]

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[47] Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon*, pp. 83-8. Pentcheva's argument here is based on Theodore the Studite's and Patriarch Nikephorus' icon theory which she believes to be more formalistic in character than the 'essentialist' approach of St. John Damascene. On this topic see also Pentcheva, *The Performative Icon* and Charles Barber's study, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[48] For a brief discussion of the ban see Anton Serge Beliajeff, 'Old Believers and the Manufacturing of Copper Icons' in Ahlborn and Espinola (ed.), *Russian Copper Icons and Crosses from the Kunz Collection, pp. 17-21.*

[49] See the collection of essays in Ahlborn and Espinola (ed.), *Russian Copper Icons and Crosses from the Kunz Collection.*

[50] Pentcheva, *The Performative Icon*, pp. 638-9.

[51] Pentcheva, *The Performative Icon*, p. 639.

If Pentcheva is right, then the notion of the imprint of likeness serves as the theoretical basis for the iconicity of a plethora of iconic expressions, including ritual, a thesis which helps reiterate the argument we have been pursuing regarding the iconic properties of rituality. Unfortunately, there is insufficient space to explore these connections further here; we are left, in any case, with the conclusion that the usual critique of Old Believer external formalism has not delved anywhere near deeply enough into the iconic principle which undergirds the Old Russian and Old Believer pre-occupation with the exactitude of form, nor ancient Orthodox understandings of the notion of image, likeness and imprint. This does not mean that a formal literalism is not a characteristic of the Old Belief, or of some Old Believers, but it does mean that the 'formalism critique' should not be used as a blanket denigration of the adherents of the Old Rite or as a one size fits all explanation of the Schism. In our discussion above, we have relied mainly on St. John of Damascus' icon theory, but a fuller exploration would demand a much broader and deeper exploration of the nuances of the theology of image in Byzantine and Russian Orthodoxy.

If the Old Belief looked to the past, it did so in the belief that because of the semiotic revolution of the reforms, true iconicity was only to be found in the old ways, the old icons, the old rituals, the old faith,[52] for in these were safeguarded the *typos* of iconic likeness and thus the legitimacy of the hierotopic nexus. As Scheffel found amongst the Old Believers of Alberta, even newly printed books and newly cast or painted icons could be considered 'old' so long as they expressed the old form and symbolicity.[53] The old / new dualism we raised in the introduction to our study works on overlapping levels.[54] It applies historically to the before/after of the Nikonian reforms and thus the old/reformed rites, and yet it also, and in interconnection with this first sense, contains a trans-temporal characteristic, referring to the symbolicity of iconic potential.

What we see in all this, is that for all its cultural, social, and political dimensions, the Schism also centred on the principle of iconicity and its expression-realisation

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[52] This is the nature of the 'iconic principle' as it appears in Scheffel's study (*In the Shadow of Antichrist*): Scheffel uses the term to explain the tendency he found amongst the Old Believers of Alberta to seek authentication for their way of life in the iconic forms of the Old Belief – oral, written, visual, etc. If there is an ossification here of 'traditions', then it must be considered in the context of this semiotic revolution and the consequent belief that grace had been withdrawn from the official Church.

[53] See Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist*, p.143.

[54] See the Introduction, section 4.

in Orthopraxis and the world of the Church. It is no accident that the symbolism of the icon itself became one of the chief battle grounds between the old and the new ritual, and as Tarasov has suggested, changing iconic style indicated broader changes in piety and culture. The move toward naturalism in the iconography of the eighteenth century and beyond reflected the emerging Enlightenment view that symbolism and ritual were a form of obscurantism that it was reason's job to de-mystify.[55] Naturalism eschews symbolical revelation since, as Florensky observes, 'naturalism generates imaginary portrayals whose similarity to everyday life creates an empty image of the real'.[56] Pentcheva perceives naturalism as a move away from the more synesthetic quality of the older iconography, particularly as it was expressed in relief icons with their heightened phenomenology. For Pentcheva the naturalistic tendency diminishes the experience of the icon by locking it in the realism of naturalist imitation.[57] The new realism in iconography in Russia, we can say, inspired partly by Renaissance art, reflected a changing understanding of symbolicity and rituality which marked a distinct shift toward rationalism and allegory and which, as it were, re-conditioned the very approach to symbolicity.[58] Tarasov interprets this shift in the religious culture of Russia to be a development from the Nikonian reforms.[59] Not only do the new icons reflect the specificity of the new ritual but they come to express a changing religious culture, a point which in itself reveals the connection of symbol and ritual -'the "abridged" word of the symbols of the faith', as Lossky puts it[60]- to the broader theological and cultural outlook. The Nikonian reforms engendered a semiotic revolution, and an emerging cultural conflict as Uspensky has shown,[61] but a revolution in which a shifting theology of symbolicity and rituality resonated in the experiential realm of Orthopraxis as the realm where symbols receive an existential shape and resonance.   The issue of iconic

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[55] Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion*, p. 231.

[56] Florensky, *Iconostasis*, p. 45.

[57] Pentcheva, *The Sensual Image.* Pentcheva detects the emergence of naturalism as a theory of the image in eleventh century Byzantium.

[58] Relevant here is Florensky's discussion of the degeneration of symbolicity to allegory in Russian iconography, which Florensky perceives as a testament to a more general condition of 'ontological collapse'.  See *Iconostasis*, pp. 85-6.

[59] Ibid, 258.

[60] Lossky, *Tradition and Traditions*, p. 166.

[61] For Uspensky (*The Schism and Cultural Conflict*) the semiotic dimension of the Schism reflects a broader cultural conflict between East and West.

potentiality thus became entwined with a shifting aesthetic which in itself suggested a shifting mode of life as art, a shifting aesthetic-praxis.

### 3. Re-considering the Old Belief

Robson has emphasised that an understanding of the Old Belief requires consideration of its experiential dimension. By exploring the art of Christian living and the iconic principle, and focussing especially on the role of ritual in the reorientation of the human person, we have tried to explore how this experiential dimension embodies a lived-performative theology, what we have described above as an existential-aesthetic mode. The historical-sociological paradigm for the study of the Schism and the Old Believers has been immensely fruitful in exploring and unfolding the socio-cultural and political currents which led to the Schism, and then ran through the formation of the Old Believer social movement or movements. Moreover, anthropological approaches have been similarly fruitful in exploring the cultural dimensions of existing Old Believer communities and reflecting on the links between contemporary Old Belief and pre-Nikonian Russian culture. However, and quite understandably given the specificity of its remit, this scholarship has tended to circumnavigate the theological principles which characterise the Old Belief as a cultural phenomenon. In other words, and speaking rather generally here, there has been a tendency to reduce the Old Belief to a subject to be considered in terms of a sociology or anthropology or politics of religion but not as something which, rooted in Orthodox Tradition, is theologically relevant and valuable in itself – irrespective of the at times ugly polemic within which it is encased. From the Orthodox perspective at least, the lifting of the anathemas invites a call for the re-consideration of the positive contribution of the Old Rite to Orthodoxy, the rite lived and practiced by the ancient saints of Russia.

Even amongst the Orthodox, the Old Belief has often been viewed as something of a relic, the stagnant remnant of fanatical religion and something to be fought. If this position is entirely understandable in terms of the Church's rightful prerogative to resist schism and heresy, it has nevertheless - recalling the erroneous 'correction' argument - compacted the view of the Old Rite itself as inherently heretical; a view which the lifting of the anathemas has directly countered. In Russia, up until the outbreak of the Revolution, the seminaries

cultivated an understanding of the Old Belief as primarily a threat and aimed at training a clergy equipped to combat the schismatic and heretical challenge.[62] As a young monk, Antonii Khrapovitskii, a conservative stalwart of the pre-Revolutionary Russian Orthodox Church and later the First Hierarch of the ROCOR, brought suspicion upon himself by questioning the legitimacy of such a propagandist approach, invoking the antagonism of the seminary authorities.[63] Not only did Khrapovitskii (later) question the excommunications of 1666-7, but along with his contemporary the controversial philosopher, Vladimir Soloviev, even suggested that the Old Believers perhaps had a valid point when they called into question the legitimacy of the canonical structure of the Russian Orthodox Church since the Petrine reforms.[64] In any case, whilst Khrapovitskii may not have been alone in these views, the seminary approach remains a strong indication of the prevailing views of the Synodal authorities at the time - although not necessarily the people or the entirety of the clergy. This only emphasises that the lifting of the anathemas and the affirmation of the Orthodoxy of the Old Rite calls for a reconsideration of the issues of relevance, and not merely on the political, social and cultural levels. If it is indeed the case that the Old Believers, building on Muscovite norms, fashioned a mode of Christianity which could over-exaggerate ritual and order, and in some cases deviate from Orthodoxy, it remains that *obriadoverie* has been neglected and at times misunderstood as a theological phenomenon – a misunderstanding partly the result of what Max Weber would refer to as the 'rationalisation' of theological discourse under Western influence, the so-called 'Western captivity' of Orthodox theology which the Old Believers and numerous voices within the Russian Church itself rallied against.

Ritual is dogmatic and confessional, but in an iconic rather than an absolute sense: The icon of Christ is Christ, but not in the sense of an absolute ontological identity. If we are to use the distinction, then the 'form' of ritual contains its 'content', but the form is not absolutely identical to that content. There is therefore

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[62] On Seminary culture see, for example, Gregory L. Freeze, *The Russian Levites: Parish Clergy in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1977), chp. 4, pp. 78-106, and for first-hand accounts, Metropolitan Evlogy, *My Life's journey: The Memoirs of Metropolitan Evlogy,* vol. 1 (trans. Alexander Lisenko, Baker Academic Books, 2014), and N. G. Pomalovsky, *Seminary Sketches* (trans. A. R. Kuhn, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973).
[63] Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope*, pp. 61, 64-5.
[64] Ibid, p. 61.

a 'correct', and that is to say *Orthodox* form for particular rituals but this is not necessarily to say that there is only one form. We are left with the fact that there are in practice and in experience two ways of making the Sign – to use as an example one of the more contested ritual gestures. Rituality cannot be the dead letter of absolutism: 'Do not quench the Spirit',[65] and it is worth noting that even in the ancient icons we find both the two fingered blessing and the contemporary 'Greek' form of composing the fingers to indicate the letters of the name of Christ, a fact which has caused consternation amongst some Old Believer groups.[66] Quite rightly, the iconic principle disallows any hint of a relativist approach to ritual, but we might nevertheless be left with the fact of some variation and variation does not, itself, equate with heterodoxy: a point Paisios of Constantinople had tried to impress on Patriarch Nikon.[67] As Florensky asserts in relation to the forms of iconography, the authentication ultimately resides in the extent to which these forms reveal-iconize truth; whether they are old or new is not the main point. [68]

In general terms, the 'anti-ritual prejudice' of modern 'enlightened' thought has tacitly shaped our interpretation of the role and meaning of ritual. Ritual is usually seen as something separated from true spiritual life and whilst it is of course true that ritual without an interior life is impoverished, it is rarely emphasised that ritual may be a *part* of that life and may indeed aid it. Metropolitan Cornelius of the Belokrinitsa gives a contemporary Old Believer perspective, stressing that cleaving to the old ways and the old ritual is not a question of simply retaining 'external' forms, but of striving to live the spiritual values, the 'spiritual component' (*духовную составляющую*) they involve - what he sees as the essence of 'Holy Russia'.[69] The principle of *ustav* as a monastic phenomenon establishes this rule: a ritually ordered life becomes the space for the *disciplined* interior life, just as the ritual gesture potentially iconizes its content as prayer-remembrance. The novice, like the newly baptised reader of *A Son of the Church*, starts at the beginning.

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[65] 1 Thes 5: 19.
[66] See Silvestre Valihov, 'Letter to Old Believer Pastors' (trans. John Hudanish, 2011), [online] HTTP://WWW.ROCORSTUDIES.ORG/DOCUMENTS/2015/03/02/LETTER-TO-OLD-BELIEVER-PASTOR/ [accessed 08/03/15].
[67] See, Introduction, fn. 31.
[68] Florensky, *Iconostasis*, p. 81.
[69] Metropolitan Cornelius, 'The Fate of Russia and the Old Believers'.

The Nikonian reforms opened the door to the Westernisation of Russian culture and society which Peter the Great enforced with zeal, and in this context the cultural conflict between the 'old' and 'new' shaped itself around the symbolicity and praxis of Orthodoxy. But old and new have since the Nikonian reforms subsisted in relationship: obviously, there isn't a new without an old and vice-versa. The polemics between the 'Nikonians' and the 'Old Believers' were definitively relational in character. Interestingly, in modern Russia, the old was to become a way to define and reinterpret the new, that is to say, the contemporary situation. In the years preceding the outbreak of the First World War and eventually the Revolution, the Russian Orthodox Church embarked on a process of self-reflection and reform in a context of rising political and social unrest, disaffection and growing secularisation – trends not disassociated with the Petrine reforms themselves. In so doing the Church looked back to its medieval past, and particularly, as Strickland has shown, to the seventeenth century[70]- a somewhat ambiguous project perhaps, since this was after-all a century of schism and turmoil. A rising tide of religiously informed nationalism sought to re-invigorate Imperial Russia through the notion of 'Holy Rus' - a kind of utopian ideal seen to be expressed in the medieval traditions and spirit of Russian Orthodoxy. Thus, the wave of church building projects across major cities, especially St. Petersburg, which sought to reclaim the modernised landscape through the erection of medieval style churches; or the well-known paintings of Nesterov which imaged a Holy Rus defined by a medieval piety and aesthetic, imbued with the hesychastic calm of a Saint Sergius;[71] and the countless speeches and tracts which sought a workable model from the past to define and shape the future of Russia and the Russian Church, amidst the growing revolutionary turmoil, as well as the newly emboldened 'schismatic' groups.

This project looked back to an idealised Russian past, but as a whole tended to bypass contemporary Old Believers who had retained many of the characteristics of the culture it projected, and who had themselves come to mythologize the Muscovite past in their striving to maintain the old piety and their self-identity as the 'true' Orthodox.  The 'making of Holy Russia' within the official Church looked to 'Old Russia' but not to the contemporary 'Old Belief', although re-union with

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[70] Strickland, *The Making of Holy Russia*. See also Van Den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe.*
[71] Strickland, *The Making of Holy Russia*, pp. 162-71.

the Old Believers was high on the agenda for some within the Church.[72] Whilst the Synodal Church celebrated its medieval ideal, the Old Believers criticised it for a kind of theatricality and romanticism,[73] enjoying their new freedoms since the Pascal Edict of 1905 and seeking to establish their own voice in the 'new' post-1905 Russia.  In the waning years of the empire then, and for both the Synodal Church and the Old Believers, Old Russia became the model for defining and shaping the 'new' – although both 'old' and 'new' would soon be swallowed up by the Revolution, by the new or as it were 'post-new' un-holy Russia, and as ever in the Church, the martyrs would show the true meaning of the holy ideal.

The 'Old Belief' remains an enduring and we would say defining characteristic of Russian Orthodoxy, albeit an ambiguous one – on the one hand the ever present testament to the 'scar of the schism', to use Krevsky's phrase,[74] and on the other the loved ancient piety of Old Russia. The lifting of the anathemas and the affirmation of the Orthodoxy of the Old Rite and importantly, of the symbols and rituals of ancient Russia, re-incorporates on the canonical level the old symbolicity into the world of the Church – an incorporation which Nesterov had only hinted at in his romanticisation of medieval Rus. It marks the re-affirmation of the iconicity of the old ritual, the forms of piety which indirectly the Church itself had sought to re-imagine in its vision of Holy Russia.  What effect this canonical reintegration will have on the Russian Church's relationship with, and understanding of, its own past remains to be seen but it is at any rate a vindication of its own ancient rites, and dialogue between, for example the Belokrinitsa and the Russian Orthodox Church continues in the face of what both churches perceive as the infringement of secular and secularising values on more and more spheres of life. 'As for the theological and historical debate', to conclude with the words of Metropolitan Cornelius of the Belokrinitsa hierarchy, 'it is not only possible, but also desirable, because, despite the efforts of the Russian Orthodox Church to correct the historical errors in relation to the Old Believers [rescinding of the anathemas] the essence of the great tragedies of the XVII church still requires a comprehensive understanding in the spirit of theological and historical objectivity'.[75]

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[72] Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope*, particularly pp. 300-2.
[73] See ibid, pp. 178-86.
[74] Krevsky, 'The Scar of the Schism'.
[75] Metropolitan Cornelius, 'Interview with Inter-Fax Religion'.

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[1] As a rule Old Believer texts do not contain the copyright material common in other publications. We have used the modern re-reprints of the pre-Nikonian service books printed by the Belokrinitsa Hierarchy and associated press.

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