

“The Enchanting Festival of Pentecost” (Cheryl Bridges Johns’ chapter 6 of *Reenchanting the Text*) – Lois Olena, 11/5/23

What does enchantment involve?

- A unified cosmology
- Flourishing of harmony and deep relationships
- Flourishing of the imagination
- Space to play
- The radical pull of otherness
- The granting of wonder
- Granting of the possibility of deconstruction

All of this comes together in the Feast of Pentecost.

- Jewish festival of *Shavuot* (Feast of Weeks, 7 weeks after Pesach)
 - **Waiting/anticipation** involved – counting of the omer...7 weeks
 - Commemoration of the giving of the Torah at Sinai
 - **Read Torah** all night, anticipation of **manifestation** of God’s presence
 - See Olena notes and Keynote
 - (End of grain harvest); *Shavuot* celebrates beginning of the wheat harvest
 - Ties together *creation* and *history*.
- Christian holiday of Pentecost (50 days after Easter)
 - Jesus told them to **wait (Acts 1:4)**
 - Descent of the HS on the disciples (Acts 2)
 - **“upper room” Acts 1/“house” Acts 2**
 - Red (fire) and green (blooming plants) – liturgical colors (note Jewish: green)
 - Time of fulfillment of the mission of Christ, beginning of messianic age
 - All-night vigil, prayer (p. 100)
 - Nature, grace, history, and creation
 - Calls for lament and repentance
 - Restoring creation; all live vivified and renewed
 - God’s Spirit poured out on all flesh
- Icon of Pentecost (Russian Orthodox) – See [web samples](#)
 - Depicts HS outpouring (apostles and Paul)
 - Scrolls and a book – writings of the apostles are **rooted in the coming of the HS**
 - Cosmos – emerges from darkness (all people fallen), emerging into a new era

The Icon of Pentecost (and Pentecost Itself) Shows/Celebrates:

- **Unified Cosmology** (heaven and earth united – the Spirit comes down; Christ ascends)
 - Cosmos is freed from the dark prison
 - Cosmos receives the light of the new creation
 - Pentecost makes a way for us to *enter* the mystery once hidden
 - Colossians 1:25-27 (p. 103)
 - He is holding the twelve scrolls – writings of the apostles
 - The **Word of God** serves as the means of revealing the mystery of Christ (103)
 - The **word** liberates him from darkness.
- **Cosmic Harmony** (103)
 - Creation set free and “properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies” (Col 1:20, MSG)
 - Things long separated being reunited
 - Heaven and earth
 - God and humanity
 - Jews and gentiles
 - Male and female
 - Slave and free
 - Grand party where everyone sings in harmony
 - Uniting of Word, Spirit, and flesh “to proclaim the good news of God’s grand cosmic ingathering”
 - Natural elements – wind and fire – uniting with humanity in enchanting harmony
 - Eschatological sign of the end

- **Divine Love**
 - Restored embrace between God and His people, made possible by the Cross
 - The harmony reflects “a stream of deep relationality...fueled by the flames of divine love.”
 - Baptism of the HS – a baptism of love
 - Fire at Pentecost – flames of love “burning away ... distancing shame”
 - Incarnation – HS came upon Mary’s flesh, incarnation of God’s love
 - Pentecost – HS came upon disciples’ flesh, gift of “embodied agape” (106)
 - A “celebration of the law being written on human hearts ... [and God] lavishing his love on humanity” (106).
- **Transformed (Pneumatic) Imagination**
 - HS (God’s imagination) enables humanity to envision a new world. (I.e., *What would your world look like if God’s flames of love burned away your shame?*)
 - Inverted social order - “The imaginative Spirit of Pentecost makes a world in which the ethos of the kingdom of God flourishes. In this world, the last are first, and the first are last” (109).
 - Reversed fund of knowledge – no longer exclusive (knowledge, wisdom, discernment come to ALL who have God’s law written on their hearts.
 - Does not suspend reason; offers possibility for the transrational. Set free from constraints; know as we are known. Circumvents the logic of Babel.
 - Skillful weaving of the Spirit, natural elements (fire and wind), and human bodies
 - We require “intense interventions of the Spirit to remind us of our enchanted status” (111)
- **Imaginative Play**
 - “The contemporary haunting and longing for enchantment includes a deep desire for free, imaginative space. ... The space created by Pentecost facilitates freedom of play” (111)
 - “Pentecost reflects imaginative free space wherein the divine is at play *with* the natural world in a manner that resolves the tension between the two” (112).
 - Many of the poorest of the world are the most exuberant in such expression.
 - Jazz, improvisation, inviting pain into a “sacred circle” (112) where pain loses its power.
 - In a place of such “divine-human synergy, the pneumatic imagination is freed to join with the Creator Spirit in remaking the world” (113) *What would your “remade” world look like?*
- **Otherness/Deconstruction**
 - The dove (of the HS) “breaks the air” (113)
 - “Pentecost not only suspends social barriers and hierarchies, it also dismantles them” (114)
 - “It is Word and Spirit at play, a festival that mocks the world’s ‘order of things.’ Even language itself is questioned. Pentecost frees us from the structures of repression that language represents. It ... says what cannot be said” (114)

Icon of Pentecost ([Iconreader](#)) and ([OrthodoxWiki](#))

Newly-Constituted Cosmos (emerging from the fires of Pentecost)

- Able to taste God’s life
- Able to participate in the mission of God’s economy
- Participatory, humbled, empowered to fulfill God’s mission to make all things well. *What would it look like to “make all things well?”*
- Pentecost burns our sin and darkness on the funeral pyre and causes us to blossom in new creation (as God’s Word is written on our hearts).
- “In Pentecost we find the beginning as well as the end” (115).
- Pentecost continues ...
 - to invite us “into fellowship with the divine life” (115)
 - to “pour out divine love upon all flesh” (115)
 - to “scandalize this present order of Babel” (115)
- “The scrolls in the hands of the apostles as well as the scrolls over the hands of King Cosmos indicate the importance of Scripture within the context of Pentecost. When framed within Pentecost, the Bible offers the enchanting possibility of serving God’s purposes for the healing of all creation. It is able to help lead the cosmos out of darkness into the light of redemption” (115)