

Pembentukan Habitus Eskatologis: Estetika Multisensoris dan Kesadaran Religius dalam Ortodoksi Rus Abad Pertengahan

The Formation of Eschatological Habitus: Multisensory Aesthetics and Religious Consciousness in Medieval Russian Orthodoxy

Nadezhda Zenonovna Gaevskaya

Russian Christian Academy for the Humanities, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation

Email: lovich2000@mail.ru

Submit: 23 July 2025 | Revision: 2 April 2026 | Accepted: 30 April 2026 | Published: 28 May 2026



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Abstrak: Studi ini bertujuan mengkaji pembentukan habitus eskatologis dalam Ortodoksi Rus abad pertengahan sebagai mode konstitutif kesadaran religius. Studi ini penting karena kajian terdahulu tentang eskatologi Ortodoks cenderung menekankan doktrin, simbolisme, atau muatan ikonografis, tetapi belum cukup menjelaskan bagaimana makna eskatologis distabilkan menjadi disposisi yang bertahan lama melalui persepsi, afeksi, dan pengalaman liturgis. Studi ini menggunakan desain kualitatif berbasis dokumen dengan pendekatan fenomenologis-hermeneutik. Data dikumpulkan melalui pembacaan dekat dan analisis dokumen terhadap teks himnografi dan liturgi terpilih, narasi hagiografis Rus Kuno, serta satu bentuk representatif ikon Penghakiman Terakhir, yang seluruhnya dibaca melalui edisi, terjemahan, dan deskripsi yang telah diterbitkan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa motif eskatologis seperti kebangkitan, penghakiman, cahaya ilahi, pertobatan, dan kenosis distrukturkan secara estetik melalui ritme, repetisi, metafora, dan kontras simbolik. Makna eskatologis juga diperkuat melalui integrasi unsur visual, auditori, ragawi, dan simbolik dalam praktik liturgis, sementara struktur temporal berupa ingatan, antisipasi, dan pengulangan kalender gerejawi menyediakan mekanisme yang memungkinkan pengalaman tersebut menstabil menjadi habitus religius yang bertahan. Analisis ini bersifat interpretatif terhadap struktur tekstual dan visual, bukan pengukuran pengalaman empiris umat beriman abad pertengahan. Orisinalitas studi ini terletak pada perumusan habitus eskatologis sebagai sintesis perseptual dan simbolik yang menghubungkan himnografi, ikonografi, dan temporalitas liturgis dalam satu kerangka analitis.

Kontribusi: Temuan ini berkontribusi pada kajian agama dengan menunjukkan bahwa eskatologi dalam budaya Ortodoks abad pertengahan tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai doktrin, tetapi juga sebagai mode pembentukan kesadaran yang bersifat multisensoris dan temporal.

Kata kunci: habitus eskatologis; estesis; ikonografi; Rus abad pertengahan; himnografi Ortodoks; kesadaran religius.

Abstract: This study examines the formation of an eschatological habitus in medieval Russian Orthodoxy as a constitutive mode of religious consciousness. The study is important because previous scholarship on Orthodox eschatology has tended to emphasize doctrine, symbolism, or iconographic content without adequately explaining how eschatological meaning is stabilized into durable dispositions through perception, affect, and liturgical experience. The research employs a qualitative, document-based design with a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach. Data were collected through close reading and document analysis of selected hymnographic and liturgical texts, Old Russian hagiographical narratives, and one representative iconographic form of the Last Judgment, all read through published editions, translations, and descriptions. The findings show that eschatological motifs such as resurrection, judgment, divine light, repentance, and kenosis are aesthetically structured through rhythm, repetition, metaphor, and symbolic contrast. Eschatological meaning is also intensified through the integration of visual, auditory, bodily, and symbolic elements within

liturgical practice, while temporal structures of memory, anticipation, and calendrical repetition supply the mechanisms through which this experience can stabilize into a durable religious habitus. The analysis is interpretive and concerns textual and visual structures; it does not measure the empirical experience of medieval believers. The originality of the study lies in its formulation of eschatological habitus as a perceptual and symbolic synthesis that connects hymnography, iconography, and liturgical temporality within a single analytical framework.

Contribution: These findings contribute to religious studies by showing that eschatology in medieval Orthodox culture functioned not merely as doctrine, but as a multisensory and temporal mode of consciousness formation.

Keywords: eschatological habitus; aesthetic perception (estesis); iconography; medieval Rus; Orthodox hymnography; religious consciousness.

INTRODUCTION

In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, eschatology is not merely a doctrinal statement about the end of history, but a constitutive horizon of Christian existence articulated through liturgy, hymnography, iconography, and ascetic practice. Orthodox theology understands the last things not only as future events, but also as realities anticipated and experienced within the life of the Church. In medieval Rus, this eschatological horizon was mediated through religious texts, sacred images, and ritual time, which together shaped how believers perceived death, salvation, repentance, and eternity. Rather than functioning solely at the level of dogmatic teaching, eschatology was embedded in the sensory and symbolic world of worship and thus participated in the formation of religious consciousness (Cunningham & Theokritoff, 2008).

This eschatological imagination found concrete expression in hymnographic texts, liturgical cycles, and the iconography of the Last Judgment. The eight-tone hymns of the All-Night Vigil, penitential troparia, Dormition texts, and visual representations of resurrection and judgment did more than communicate theological propositions; they organized perception, emotion, and memory within a shared ecclesial world. Through repetition, sacred sound, symbolic imagery, bodily discipline, and calendrical rhythm, these forms oriented the faithful toward the horizon of eternity. It is within this context that the present study examines the formation of an eschatological habitus in medieval Russian Orthodox art, not as a secondary ornament of doctrine, but as a constitutive mode through which eschatological consciousness was shaped and stabilized.

Although this article concerns medieval Russia, eschatological themes remain visible in Orthodox life today, and scholars of religious ethics have shown that eschatology can operate as a horizon of meaning that orients moral life, practices of repentance, and

personal responsibility (Höfner, 2022). Such contemporary resonance is noted here only as context; it is not offered as evidence for medieval religious experience. What the medieval sources do show is that eschatology lived through texts, rites, and images. The Church celebrates the Dormition of the Mother of God every August 15 and precedes the feast with a two-week fast whose liturgical roots reach back to the Byzantine era (Kariatlis, 2024). Homilies on the Dormition attributed to John the Theologian circulated in Greek and Latin traditions from the early centuries of Christianity, and the earliest Slavonic text appears in twelfth-century manuscripts (Kuca, 2023). Texts, fasts, feasts, and images of this kind shaped a collective sensory experience of the last things.

Within the Eastern Christian tradition, eschatology comprises the dogmas of universal resurrection, the Last Judgment, and divine recompense, grounded in the Book of Revelation, the Gospel parables, the Old Testament prophets, and the teachings of the Church Fathers. Alfeyev (2008) defines eschatology as the teaching concerning the ultimate destiny of the individual and of all creation in eternity, and distinguishes between individual and universal eschatology. Yet although the Icon of the Last Judgment depicts heaven and hell and hymns proclaim resurrection and judgment, existing scholarship has not systematically explained how these forms shape believers' inner experience of eternity into a durable disposition.

The problem can be stated more precisely. The experiential dimension of eschatology has rarely been conceptualized within a theological aesthetics that treats perception as a mechanism of habitus formation. Existing literature often approaches eschatology as doctrine, historical imagination, or rhetoric, and it does not systematically describe the perceptual mechanisms by which believers might internalize eschatological reality as an existential orientation (de Boer & Göttler, 2024; Kaethler, 2025; Weidner, 2022). These works are drawn largely from Western early-modern and modern contexts and are cited here for the general pattern they illustrate, not as studies of Orthodoxy. Icons, hymnographic texts, and liturgical chants, meanwhile, integrate visual, auditory, and symbolic elements that can shape religious consciousness in profound ways (Amsikan, 2025). The absence of an analytical category that explains how this perceptual synthesis operates and stabilizes over time leaves eschatological studies at the level of representation rather than at the level of life orientation and the formation of religious dispositions.

Three key terms require definition. *Habitus* is used in Bourdieu's sense of a structured and structuring disposition: a durable, embodied orientation that emerges from repeated engagement within a field of practice, produces and reproduces practice, and ensures that the past persists in present experience through internalized routines (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Maton, 2010; Robbins, 2012). In religious contexts, habitus denotes embodied dispositions that emerge from repeated religious activity and acquire social and cultural meaning (Mellor & Shilling, 2014; Setten, 2009). *Estesis* (from the Greek *aisthēsis*) designates the aesthetic perception through which sensory experience becomes the medium of theological meaning; in this article it names the perceptual-affective process, whereas habitus names the durable disposition in which that process can settle. *Eschatological consciousness* refers to the structured orientation toward death, judgment, resurrection, and eternity that results. A caution is necessary here: Bourdieu's habitus is largely pre-reflective, whereas phenomenological "consciousness" is reflective. The article therefore uses "consciousness" in a limited sense, as the lived orientation that habitus makes available, and does not equate the two.

Scholarship on Orthodox art and eschatology has developed along four main tendencies. The first concerns the ontological and theological dimension of Orthodox art. Alekseeva (2022) positions ecclesial art as a mode of being that makes divine reality present within material media. Dimitrijević, Todić-Jakšić, and Stojilović (2025) analyze transcendent experience through iconography and ritual using psychological and aesthetic approaches. Kravchenko (2023) argues that iconographic practice forms faith through the interaction of human intention and materiality, and Galabova (2020) examines spatial and formal dimensions of Eastern church art as expressions of visual metaphysics. These studies enrich our understanding of the ontology and aesthetic experience of Orthodox art, but they do not develop a conceptual category that explains how integrated sensory perception forms eschatological consciousness as a durable habitus.

The second tendency concerns historical transformation and the dialogue between Orthodox art and modernity. Džalto (2017) discusses tensions between canon and contemporary art, Gronek (2022) traces transformations in church painting in the context of the Orthodox Renaissance, and Ivanova (2019) analyzes the historical development of the resurrection and the Harrowing of Hell in Christian art. These studies illuminate formal and symbolic dynamics, but they do not theoretically articulate how

perceptual mechanisms enable eschatological themes to become existential experience stabilized over time.

The third tendency concerns the social, material, and political dimensions of Orthodoxy. Bakas (2024) and Tadesse (2024) show how Orthodox churches shape social environments and cultural resilience; Kupari (2023) examines materiality in contemporary conversion; Kormina (2023) studies Orthodox activism as a public and counter-public arena; and Tarabrin (2022) analyzes the position of the Russian Orthodox Church in bioethical debates. These approaches underscore Orthodoxy's social role but do not connect eschatological aesthetics with the long-term formation of religious dispositions.

A fourth tendency comes closest to the present concern: work on the senses, space, and liturgical theology. Pentcheva (2010) examines how space, ritual, and the senses worked together in Byzantine experience of the icon; Lidov (2006) develops the notion of hierotopy, the creation of sacred spaces, for Byzantium and medieval Rus; and Schmemmann (1966) presents the liturgy as the Church's eschatological passage into the Kingdom. These studies establish that the senses and liturgical space are central to Orthodox experience and that liturgy is eschatological in character. What they do not do is articulate eschatological perception as a mechanism of habitus formation across hymnography, iconography, and liturgical time.

These four tendencies show that scholarship has addressed the ontology of art, historical dynamics, social roles, and the sensory-spatial character of Byzantine and Russian worship. To the best of my knowledge, however, no study has yet integrated medieval Russian hymnographic texts, the iconography of the Last Judgment, and liturgical temporality within the phenomenological theological aesthetics articulated by Manoussakis (2007) in order to explain how eschatological perception may stabilize into a habitus. This gap opens space for a study that positions sensory perception as a condition for the formation of theological experience and durable religious dispositions.

This study therefore examines the formation of an eschatological habitus in the art of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Rus during the tenth to fifteenth centuries, with limited reference to later reception, as a constitutive phenomenon within cultural space and religious consciousness. Its material object is a selected corpus of medieval Russian liturgical, hymnographic, and hagiographical texts together with one iconographic type; its formal object is the multisensory perceptual structure of these materials. Three

questions guide the analysis: (1) How do hymnographic texts structure eschatological motifs aesthetically? (2) How do visual, auditory, bodily, and symbolic elements combine in liturgical practice to produce a coherent field of eschatological perception? (3) How do temporal structures of memory, anticipation, and calendrical repetition allow this perception to stabilize into a durable disposition?

The study argues that eschatological representations in medieval Russian Orthodox art do not merely transmit the dogmas of resurrection and judgment as theological content or iconographic program, but form perceptual structures with the potential to generate an eschatological habitus as an existential experience of eternity. Grounded in Manoussakis's (2007) theological aesthetics, which situates sensory experience as the locus of revelation and encounter with the Divine, the study shows that the Icon of the Last Judgment, the eight-tone hymns, and the Dormition tradition integrate visual, auditory, temporal, and symbolic dimensions within a coherent horizon of experience. This multisensory integration produces what the article calls an aesthetic polyphony, which transforms eschatology from doctrinal proposition into a lived orientation toward eternity, stabilized through temporal structures of memory and repetition. Unlike studies that emphasize the ontology of art (Alekseeva, 2022), historical transformation and formal development (Gronek, 2022; Ivanova, 2019), or the social and material dimensions of Orthodoxy (Kormina, 2023; Kupari, 2023), this article proposes that perceptual mechanisms constitute a condition for the formation of eschatological consciousness as a durable habitus. By formulating eschatological habitus as a structured multisensory synthesis embedded in texts, rites, and iconography, the study complements Manoussakis's theological aesthetics and extends it through a concrete analysis of religious habitus formation within the Eastern Christian tradition. It thereby understands the relationship between art, perception, and religious identity as a process of consciousness formation rather than mere symbolic representation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, document-based design with a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach. Because the materials are textual and visual rather than ethnographic, the phenomenological dimension is applied as a mode of descriptive reading that attends to how eschatological reality is structured at the level of perception, affect, and temporality within medieval Orthodox sources. The hermeneutic dimension

then interprets the theological meanings of these perceptual structures. The approach is appropriate because the article does not seek to reconstruct political history or to measure contemporary religious attitudes; it seeks to explain how texts, chants, images, and ritual time organize the experience of judgment, resurrection, repentance, and eternity within the symbolic world of medieval Russian Orthodoxy, and how this organization can stabilize into a habitus.

An important qualification governs every claim that follows. A document-based study can identify the *habitus-forming potential* of texts and images, that is, the perceptual, affective, and temporal structures that invite repeated, embodied engagement. It cannot observe habitus itself, which is a disposition of persons acquired through practice. Statements below that a text “inscribes,” “conditions,” or “stabilizes” a disposition should therefore be read as interpretive claims about what the materials are structured to do, not as findings about what they did in the lives of individual medieval believers.

The primary corpus consists of three groups of sources. First, hymnographic and liturgical texts containing explicit eschatological motifs: selected passages from the eight-tone hymns of the All-Night Vigil, penitential and commemorative troparia, Paschal hymnographic material, Dormition texts, and the Canon to Blessed Basil. These are drawn from the published liturgical editions and translations cited in the article, especially *The Festal Menaion* (Ware, 1969), *The Menaion* (Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2005), and the Russian collection of church hymns edited by Uspenskii (1911). Second, Old Russian hagiographical narratives used in the analysis of temporality: passages concerning Abraham and Sergius of Radonezh from *Biblioteka literatury Drevney Rusi* (Likhachev, Dmitriev, Alekseev, & Ponyrko, 1997), and the Old Russian version of the Life of Basil the New (BLDR, 1999). Third, one representative visual source of the iconographic type of the Last Judgment, treated as a visual-textual comparison for the analysis of spatial opposition, symbolic ordering, and moral perception, based on the published description in Knorre (2013).

Two features of the corpus should be stated openly. First, not every item is strictly Russian or strictly medieval. The liturgical texts are Byzantine in origin and were received in Slavonic and Russian forms; the Life of Basil the New concerns a Byzantine saint and is read here in its Old Russian version, as a text that circulated in Rus; and the Canon to Blessed Basil, Fool-for-Christ, honors a Moscow saint who died in the sixteenth century. The Canon is therefore included as a late witness to the kenotic tradition rather than as a

tenth-to-fifteenth-century source. Second, the study relies on published Russian editions and English translations; it makes no claim to a new philological reconstruction from unpublished Slavonic or Greek manuscripts. Observations about rhythm, parallelism, and imperative form are made on the basis of the published translations and therefore indicate structural features that survive translation; they are not statements about prosody in the original languages.

Source selection followed two criteria. A source was included when it explicitly articulated eschatological themes such as resurrection, judgment, repentance, remembrance, divine light, heavenly ascent, death as transition, or eternal life, and when it contained formal features that could be analyzed phenomenologically, such as repetition, parallelism, symbolic contrast, narrative movement, ritual temporality, or visual opposition. Because these criteria favor passages in which the features are concentrated, the study does not claim that such features are unique to eschatological texts; repetition and parallelism are general characteristics of liturgical poetry. The claim is narrower: that in these passages they work to organize eschatological perception. The unit of analysis in the textual corpus is not the entire liturgical book or narrative but selected passages, stanzas, tropes, or episodes in which the themes appear in concentrated form. In the iconographic material, the unit of analysis is the compositional structure of the image, especially oppositions such as above and below, right and left, light and darkness, and salvation and punishment, together with their correspondence to the textual motifs discussed.

Data were collected through document study and close reading. Each selected source was first identified bibliographically and grouped by genre: hymnographic, liturgical, hagiographical, and iconographic. The researcher extracted passages that contain recurrent eschatological motifs and recorded their symbolic vocabulary, sensory cues, metaphors, emotional valences, and temporal markers. In the visual material, the researcher recorded the major symbolic zones, the oppositional structure, and their theological significance as presented in the published iconographic description. This procedure was intended to keep the analysis tied to identifiable textual and visual evidence rather than to general claims about Orthodox culture as a whole.

Phenomenological reduction was operationalized in four steps. First, the analysis bracketed later ideological readings and confessional truth-claims in order to attend to how the sources themselves structure experience. This bracketing is a methodological

discipline, not a claim of neutrality: the interpretive framework, Manoussakis's theological aesthetics, is itself a confessional theology, and the hermeneutic stage openly uses it. Second, the researcher described the sensory and affective features embedded in the material, including what is heard, seen, remembered, feared, hoped for, repeated, and anticipated. Third, these features were reduced to a smaller set of recurrent experiential patterns, such as the tension between fear and hope, the visual ordering of salvation and punishment, the role of liturgical repetition in memory formation, and the bodily discipline of fasting and silence. Fourth, these patterns were interpreted hermeneutically through Manoussakis's (2007) theological aesthetics in order to explain how perception functions as a mode of religious knowledge and existential orientation.

The analysis proceeded in three stages that correspond directly to the Results section. The first examined the aesthetic structure of eschatological motifs in the selected hymnographic texts, focusing on repetition, rhythm, metaphor, and symbolic imagery. The second analyzed the integration of visual, auditory, bodily, and symbolic elements across hymnography, iconography, fasting, and liturgical practice. The third examined temporality in the hagiographical and liturgical materials, focusing on memory, anticipation, calendrical repetition, and the relation between *chronos* and *kairos*. This procedure keeps the article's claims proportionate to the corpus: the study interprets perceptual and symbolic structures in selected medieval Orthodox materials, rather than claiming to measure the empirical experience of all medieval believers.

RESULT

The Aesthetic Structure of Eschatological Motifs as a Foundation for Habitus

The analysis of the selected hymnographic corpus shows that eschatological discourse does not merely transmit the dogma of resurrection and judgment but functions as an aesthetic structure that organizes affective and symbolic experience through liturgical language, thereby supplying a foundation on which a durable eschatological habitus can be built. The analysis draws on hymnographic and liturgical texts received and used in medieval Rus, particularly the eight-tone hymns of the All-Night Vigil, penitential and commemorative troparia, ascetical canons, and Dormition texts circulating within the Slavic tradition. These texts construct a horizon of meaning through the integration of motifs of resurrection, divine judgment, the heavenly Jerusalem, and human transformation in the light of the Resurrection. The tradition rests on the patristic

heritage and on the concept of *philokalia* as “love of spiritual beauty,” which directs the human person toward participation in divine reality (Averintsev, 1975). In this context, aesthetics does not operate as rhetorical ornament but as a mode of experience that connects Christian anthropology with an eschatological orientation toward eternal life.

The motif of resurrection and victory over death appears explicitly in the Paschal hymn, which constructs an atmosphere of cosmic joy and transfigured reality:

“Let the heavens rejoice fittingly, let the earth be glad, let the whole visible and invisible world celebrate; Christ is risen, eternal joy” (Uspenskii, 1911, p. 512).

The sentence forms a parallel repetition that integrates cosmic and personal dimensions within a single movement of praise. The text does not merely state the resurrection as a theological fact; it invites emotional participation through its imperative rhythm and the opposition between the “visible” and the “invisible.” This pattern suggests that the selected liturgical language presents the resurrection as a reality that permeates the entire cosmos, so that eschatological meaning is framed affectively before it is articulated conceptually. Repeated year after year, such language is structured to cultivate a disposition of cosmic joy.

The motif of judgment and repentance constructs an affective tension between fear and hope. A troparion of commemoration and intercession, belonging to the penitential and commemorative stratum of the hymnody, presents a personal relation between the soul and Christ in the form of supplication and remembrance:

“And we pray to You, glorifying Your memory: now, through Your prayers, save us, who glorify you and joyfully perform the divine remembrance and salvation” (Uspenskii, 1911).

The text displays a thematic repetition among memory, prayer, and salvation, which constructs a temporal orientation toward the eschatological future. The repetitive structure of the hymn intensifies awareness of judgment while simultaneously opening a space of hope for salvation. The tension between fear of divine judgment and joy in the resurrection creates an affective dialectic that characterizes Orthodox eschatological aesthetics and is structured to cultivate a habitus of vigilant repentance.

The motif of transformation and kenosis appears through ascetical and anti-aesthetic imagery that constructs a paradox of beauty within humiliation. The Canon to Blessed Basil, Fool-for-Christ presents the image of a naked body and an exposed soul:

“You did not wear earthly clothing upon your body, like Adam, until you saw the nakedness of your soul, until you recognized the ugliness of your flesh”

(Canon to Blessed Basil, Fool-for-Christ, Moscow Miracle Worker, 2014, p. 607).

The language of nakedness and ugliness produces a kenotic aesthetic which affirms that eschatological glory emerges through self-emptying. This anti-aesthetic pattern shows that beauty in Orthodox theology arises from transformation rather than visual splendor. Within the framework of theological aesthetics, the experience of paradox prepares an interior readiness for encounter with the Divine (Walter, 2009) and points toward humility and self-emptying as a permanent orientation. As noted in the Method section, this canon honors a sixteenth-century saint and is read as a late witness to a tradition that is older.

The narrative and symbolic structure of the Dormition tradition expands the eschatological horizon through metaphors of light, journey, and ascent. The narrative situates death as *transitus* toward eternal life rather than as the end of existence, and repetition, parallelism, and symbols of light construct the perception that death functions as a gateway to transformation. In this way linear temporality is reoriented as movement toward eternity, and the believer's disposition is oriented toward hope in the face of death.

Across the corpus, the dominant motifs that shape the aesthetic structure of eschatology are resurrection, judgment, divine light, the journey toward the heavenly Jerusalem, and ascetical kenosis. These motifs do not stand independently; they are integrated into liturgical rhythm and cyclical repetition, which reinforce the internalization of meaning. Annual repetition within the liturgical calendar and musical repetition within the hymns construct a pattern of collective liturgical memory that situates eschatological meaning within the symbolic world of the tradition and makes its stabilization into habitus possible.

From a phenomenological perspective, the selected hymnographic texts construct an experiential framework in which eschatological awareness is activated before theological meaning is fully articulated at the conceptual level. Rhythm, parallelism, and symbol engage imagination, emotion, and memory. Eschatological aesthetics thus appears as a mechanism of religious consciousness formation: hymnography does not merely represent theological teaching but creates a performative space in which this formation takes place within the Orthodox Eastern tradition.

Table 1. Structure of Eschatological Motifs in Hymnographic Texts.

Text	Dominant Motif	Aesthetic Function	Perceptual Effect
Paschal Hymn	Resurrection, cosmic joy	Parallel repetition, imperative exhortation	Emotional and cosmic participation
Penitential Troparion	Memory, judgment, salvation	Rhythmic intensification	Tension between fear and hope
Canon to Blessed Basil	Kenosis, asceticism	Paradoxical anti-aesthetic form	Awareness of transformation
Dormition Text	Transfiguration, light	Symbolism of journey and ascent	Orientation toward eternity

Table 1 summarizes the dominant eschatological motifs identified in the hymnographic texts. The Paschal hymn foregrounds resurrection and cosmic joy through parallel repetition and imperative address, generating emotional and cosmic participation. The troparion of commemoration emphasizes memory, judgment, and salvation through rhythmic intensification that produces tension between fear and hope. The Canon to Blessed Basil articulates kenosis and asceticism through paradoxical anti-aesthetic imagery that cultivates awareness of transformation. The Dormition tradition highlights transfiguration and light through symbols of journey and ascent that orient the faithful toward eternity.

Taken together, these patterns show that the selected liturgical texts function as performative spaces that organize religious meaning through intensified affective and symbolic experience. Parallel repetition in the Paschal hymn, rhythmic tension in the troparion, kenotic paradox in the Canon, and transfigurative symbolism in the Dormition tradition collectively construct a horizon of experience that integrates fear, hope, joy, and transformation into a unified aesthetic field (Table 1). The pattern indicates that eschatological experience is not conveyed primarily through intellectual reflection on dogma but through structured sensory and emotional engagement with liturgical language. Hymnography does not merely represent teachings about the end times; it produces perceptual conditions in which memory, imagination, and symbolic attention are oriented toward eternity. The aesthetic structure of the text thus constitutes the foundational layer in the formation of eschatological habitus within the Orthodox Eastern tradition.

Multisensory Integration as a Mechanism of Habitus Formation

The analysis of the selected hymnographic, iconographic, and liturgical materials shows that eschatological habitus can emerge through the integration of visual, auditory,

bodily, and symbolic forms within a shared liturgical environment. The materials include the eight-tone hymns of the All-Night Vigil, the troparia, the Dormition tradition, and the representative iconographic form of the Last Judgment. This structure of experience does not move linearly from doctrinal understanding to emotion; it proceeds from sensory engagement to the formation of meaning internalized as lived knowledge and embodied disposition. Manoussakis's (2007) aesthetics enables this reading because it locates sensory experience as the locus of theological relation, that is, as a space of encounter with God that occurs more often through praise and hymn than through systematic *logos*. In the medieval Russian Orthodox tradition, eschatological discourse operates as something "heard," "seen," and "lived," so that eschatological knowledge appears as knowledge-as-affection, participatory rather than an intellectual conclusion detached from experience.

"I am interested in reflection on the personal God, a God who is known more through praise and hymn than through *logos* and systematic theology"
(Manoussakis, 2014, p. 4).

Visual-textual integration appears clearly in the relationship between the icon of the Last Judgment and the liturgical texts that articulate resurrection, judgment, and divine recompense. The iconographic tradition of the Last Judgment draws on the Book of Revelation, the Gospel parables of judgment, Old Testament eschatological prophecies, and the teachings of the Church Fathers, which together consolidate a framework of meaning concerning the final day (Ivanova, 2019). The visual structure of the icon arranges the world through oppositions (right and left, above and below, light and darkness, salvation and punishment), so that the viewer confronts the eschatological image as a reality that demands both affective and evaluative response (Knorre, 2013). The icon in this sense does not merely depict judgment; it addresses the gaze as a form of participation in the reality it represents, in line with the Orthodox understanding of the icon as presence rather than illustration (Ouspensky, 1960). A single image cannot establish what a congregation habitually saw. It can, however, show the perceptual pattern that the form is built to teach, and it is plausible that such a pattern, met repeatedly within the church interior, positioned judgment not as a distant idea but as an existential horizon present in current experience (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Icon of the Last Judgment.



Source: Knorre, B. K. (2013). Icon of the Last Judgment: A Detailed Analysis.

The auditory dimension occupies a central role in the formation of *estesis* because listening involves humble receptivity and opens space for knowledge to arise as inner experience. Prokhorov (2002) interprets Dionysius's understanding of the organs of perception as means of receiving divine illumination, so that seeing, smelling, and hearing do not stop at biological function but move toward apprehending divine meaning in existence; the Dionysian corpus was received early in Slavic literature (Mikulka, 2024). The New Testament likewise emphasizes the sensory dimension of faith in its testimony to "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have touched with our hands" (1 John 1:1). In the liturgical context, hymnography activates the generative power of sound because rhythm, repetition, and tonal structure transform text into experienced time. Repetition can deepen eschatological tension, particularly in motifs of repentance, anticipation of judgment, and longing for redemption, as the commemorative troparion cited above suggests with its recurring terms of memory, prayer, and salvation. Hearing also binds experience to memory, because sound adheres to affect and can activate collective remembrance; eschatology then appears as a reawakened memory within the consciousness of the faithful.

This multisensory experience engages the body as a field of religious participation. The two-week Dormition fast before August 15 disciplines the body and conditions the faithful's perception of text, prayer, and rite (Kariatlis, 2024). A fasting body alters the manner of hearing and sensing the liturgy, because physical limitation generates inner

attentiveness and intensifies affective experience. The Byzantine hesychast tradition, later codified in the *Philokalia* and received in Rus in the late medieval period, emphasizes *nepsis* (watchfulness) and *hesychia* (silence) as spiritual conditions that render the person open to God (Bingaman & Nassif, 2012). Religious experience thus becomes an exercise in attention that demands sensory involvement together with the discipline of imagination, so that *estesis* is formed through the discipline of perception rather than through abstract contemplation alone, and repeated discipline of this kind is how a disposition is acquired (Bourdieu, 1990).

Liturgical temporality reinforces multisensory integration because annual repetition and cycles of fasting construct an experience of time that transcends ordinary chronology. The liturgy transforms time into experiential space, enabling the faithful to encounter the present as a meeting point between memory of the past and anticipation of the future. Manoussakis (2014) situates sensory experience within immediate theological relation, yet this immediacy generates temporal depth because hearing always carries a temporal vector. Liturgy thus produces what may be called a “minor eschatology” within the act of listening, namely, an experience of the end times that manifests as inner tension during worship. This is an interpretive term of the present article, not a category drawn from the sources. It indicates that eschatology functions not solely as a future event but as an orientation structuring spiritual life in the present.

Eschatological *estesis* thus arises through a multisensory aesthetic polyphony that integrates icon (visual), hymn (auditory), fasting and ritual practice (bodily), and theological symbol (meaning). The integration generates eschatological knowledge as affective participation that unites the knowing subject and the known reality in relational involvement. According to Manoussakis (2007, 2014), such knowledge appears as sympathy and co-compassion; eschatological experience therefore cannot be reduced to theological information but must be understood as the formation of consciousness through structured sensory experience. Orthodox art and liturgy form *estesis* not as a secondary effect of doctrine but as the primary mechanism through which eschatology is made a lived, embodied experience. It should be added that the senses treated here are sight, hearing, and the bodily discipline of fasting and silence; smell (incense), touch (the veneration of icons, prostrations), light (candles and lamps), and taste (the Eucharist) are also part of the liturgical environment and are discussed only as areas for further work (see the limitations in the Conclusion).

Table 2. Multisensory Components in the Formation of Eschatological Habitus.

Multisensory component	Medium/source	Formal or liturgical function	Perceptual effect
Visual contrast	Icon of the Last Judgment	Organizes oppositions such as salvation/punishment, light/darkness, and above/below	Moral vigilance and eschatological orientation
Auditory repetition	Eight-tone hymns and troparia	Intensifies affect through rhythm, recurrence, and mnemonic patterning	Tension between fear, hope, and remembrance
Bodily discipline	Dormition fast and liturgical ascetic practice	Regulates attention through restraint, preparation, and ritual participation	Heightened receptivity and anticipatory awareness
Contemplative silence	Hesychia as spiritual discipline within liturgical-ascetic life	Opens inward attentiveness and apophatic receptivity	Readiness for encounter with divine mystery
Symbolic remembrance	Liturgical text and chant	Reactivates sacred memory through repeated prayer and performative remembrance	Internalization of eschatological meaning as lived memory

The components in Table 2 do not function in isolation; together they form an integrated experiential network that contributes to the formation of eschatological habitus. Visual contrast in the icon of the Last Judgment structures moral and eschatological oppositions such as judgment and salvation, while auditory repetition in hymns and troparia intensifies affective participation through rhythm and remembrance. Bodily discipline through fasting and ritual practice cultivates attentiveness and anticipation, and contemplative silence opens an inward space of receptivity to divine mystery. At the same time, liturgical remembrance preserves and reactivates sacred meaning through repeated text and chant. Taken together, these components show that eschatology in the selected medieval Orthodox materials is conveyed not merely as doctrinal content about the future but as a coordinated sensory and symbolic formation that shapes attention, memory, and existential orientation toward eternity.

Temporality, Memory, and the Stabilization of Eschatological Habitus

The analysis of the selected hagiographical and liturgical materials shows that eschatological habitus is stabilized through temporal structures of memory, anticipation, and calendrical repetition. In these materials, time is presented not merely as

chronological sequence but as a sacred horizon in which the past is recollected, the future is anticipated, and the present becomes the site of encounter with eternity. This pattern corresponds to the Orthodox distinction between *chronos* and *kairos*, in which liturgical and narrative forms transform time from a neutral succession of moments into a medium of eschatological orientation. As a result, eschatological experience in the selected sources extends beyond momentary affect and becomes a more enduring structure of orientation. This reading resonates with the “eschatology of the present” found in scholarship on realized and future eschatology (Baucham, 2009) and with the twentieth-century revival of theological interest in eschatology, which moved end-time reflection from marginal doctrine to a central theological discourse linking hope, historical crisis, and religious imagination (Bergmann, 2018; Tallon & Walls, 2013).

Medieval Russian hagiographical texts show that movement functions as a principle that unites time and space within the narrative structure of the saints’ lives. Bakhtin (1981) argued that the relation of time and space in literature forms a chronotope that determines the meaning of a character’s actions (see also Bagshaw, 2016), and Gurevich (1984) analyzed time and space as basic categories of medieval culture. In the vitae of the saints, ascetic movement toward holiness constructs an eschatological vector that directs the subject toward ontological transformation: the decision to renounce the passions places the saint at the threshold between time and eternity. The temporal structure of these narratives forms a sequence of past, present, and future that functions teleologically rather than merely chronologically, since the entire movement of life appears as a journey toward participation in the divine kingdom. The perspective parallels readings of the Gospel of John that emphasize the relationship between realized and future eschatology, in which the eternal future reflects itself within present faith (Garton, 2019).

This temporal dimension appears explicitly in liturgical texts that celebrate the memory of the saints as participation in eternal reality. The following text illustrates how the celebration of memory connects the present to eternity:

“Today we celebrate the memory of the Venerable and Blessed Abraham and rejoice, for the good and great gift granted to him is entry into the boundless kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ with the elect” (Likhachev et al., 1997, p. 527).

The word “today” signals the actualization of eschatology in the present moment. The liturgy does not commemorate the past merely as history; it re-presents eternal reality within the community’s lived experience. The annual repetition of the liturgical calendar,

including the celebrations of Pascha, Dormition, and Pentecost, forms a pattern of internalizing the memory of eternity that shapes the faithful's orientation toward life. This repetition creates temporal continuity that links personal experience with the Church's collective memory and thereby supports the stabilization of eschatological habitus. Eschatological temporality understands eternity not merely as a deferred future but as a divine dimension already operative in present experience (Baucham, 2009).

Hagiographical texts also employ retrospection and biblical allusion to construct continuity between past and present. The narrative of Sergius of Radonezh integrates his life with prophecy and figures from the Old Testament:

"And because God sanctified the prophet Jeremiah in his mother's womb, Isaiah said: 'The Lord said, having taken me from my mother's womb, He gave me a name'" (Likhachev et al., 1997, p. 583).

This allusive structure forms a temporal network that connects salvation history with the individual's concrete experience. Retrospection functions as a narrative strategy that actualizes the past as a reality that continues to operate in the present. The eschatological link here is indirect: the passage speaks of prophetic election rather than of last things, and it is cited as an example of how memory is built into the narrative form that carries eschatological hope. Through this mechanism, memory does not function as historical nostalgia; it operates as a spiritual energy that directs consciousness toward the end.

The temporal dimension also emerges through visionary experiences and dreams that anticipate the future. The Old Russian Life of Basil the New portrays visionary experience as a symbolic journey toward ultimate reality:

"I saw strange things, and it did not seem to me to be imagination, and in fear I beheld a vision" (BLDR, 1999, p. 555).

This experience shapes eschatological anticipation and imagination, placing the subject in direct relation to the divine future and generating the awareness that present life stands oriented toward the end times. The passage is only a small part of a text in which visions of the soul's ascent and of the Last Judgment have a larger place, and a fuller study would analyze those episodes directly. The suspension of speech in such encounters can also be read apophatically: Bibikhin (2007) suggests that inner silence creates a space in which participation in divine mystery becomes possible.

The temporal structure of the Orthodox tradition thus suggests that believers understood eternity not as endless duration but as a quality of time that transfigures present experience. Movement toward deification (*theosis*) structures life as a journey

toward divine perfection. The opening formula of the Byzantine Divine Liturgy, "Blessed is the Kingdom," places the assembly at the outset at the threshold of the eschatological Kingdom, and shows how rite integrates historical time with the horizon of eternity (Larin, 2013). Memory and hope thus appear as two constants in the formation of eschatological habitus, and cyclical repetition together with sacramental memory renders eternity a continuously renewed experience within collective consciousness.

Liturgical temporality generates a durable existential orientation toward eternity. Annual cycles, rhythmic repetition, the narratives of the saints' lives, and visionary experience shape a structure of orientation that can internalize eschatology as a direction of life. In this context, *estesis* develops from sensory experience into a religious habitus that conditions how believers see, remember, and anticipate the world. Temporality does not merely provide the background for religious experience; it works as a mechanism of consciousness formation that establishes eternity as the normative horizon of human existence. Eschatological *estesis* therefore tends to operate as a stable and enduring structure rather than as a fleeting emotion that appears only in particular liturgical moments.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that the aesthetic structure of medieval Russian hymnography, the multisensory integration within liturgical practice, and the temporal configuration of the ecclesiastical calendar jointly form eschatological *estesis* as a structure of religious consciousness that can stabilize into a durable habitus. Hymnographic texts construct an affective framework through repetition, metaphors of light, the opposition of salvation and judgment, and the tension between fear and hope, which activates eschatological awareness prior to intellectual reflection. Icons, hymns, bodily rites, and theological symbols operate within a multisensory polyphony that generates an embodied experience of eternal reality. Liturgical temporality, in turn, converts this experience into a stable disposition through annual cycles, collective memory, and orientation toward *kairos*. *Estesis* therefore does not emerge as a fleeting effect of religious emotion; it is a constitutive mechanism that shapes consciousness and religious identity within the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

The findings are interpreted through Manoussakis's (2007, 2014) phenomenological theology of aesthetics, which locates sensory experience as the locus of theological

relation and understands religious knowledge as affective participation that unites subject and reality in relations of sympathy and co-compassion. This framework clarifies why the integration of visual, auditory, and symbolic dimensions in liturgy can produce a deeper eschatological consciousness than doctrinal exposition alone. Structured sensory perception, through rhythm, light, iconography, and temporal repetition, creates conditions in which believers not only understand eschatology as doctrine but experience it as an existential horizon. The interaction among text, icon, and time functions as a field of experience that shapes affection, memory, and life orientation. *Estesis* arises not from the internalization of theological propositions but from disciplined and repeated sensory engagement within liturgical practice.

The study also reorients a discourse that has largely treated eschatology as doctrine, historical narrative, or iconographic program without explaining the perceptual mechanisms through which existential experience forms (de Boer & Göttler, 2024; Kaethler, 2025; Weidner, 2022). Earlier work has acknowledged visual and symbolic integration in Orthodox art (Amsikan, 2025) and has established the importance of the senses and sacred space in Byzantine and Russian worship (Lidov, 2006; Pentcheva, 2010; Schmemmann, 1966), yet it has not formulated an analytical category that explains perceptual synthesis as a mode of consciousness formation. Ontological approaches (Alekseeva, 2022; Dimitrijević et al., 2025; Galabova, 2020; Kravchenko, 2023) emphasize the manifestation of divine reality in material media, but do not clarify how sensory integration constructs eschatological orientation in believers. Historical approaches (Džalto, 2017; Gronek, 2022; Ivanova, 2019) analyze formal and symbolic developments without articulating the process of consciousness formation, and social and material approaches (Bakas, 2024; Kormina, 2023; Kupari, 2023; Tadesse, 2024; Tarabrin, 2022) highlight institutional and cultural dimensions without linking aesthetic experience to the formation of eschatological habitus. The contribution of this study is to conceptualize *estesis* as a multisensory perceptual synthesis that works as a constitutive mechanism in the formation of religious consciousness and durable disposition.

Historically, the findings suggest that medieval Russian culture understood time as a theological space integrating *chronos* and *kairos*, thereby directing present experience toward the horizon of eternity. Liturgy and hagiography constructed a temporal model that structured memory and hope as existential constants, consistent with an

eschatological temporality that understands eternity as already operative in present experience (Baucham, 2009; Garton, 2019).

Socially, multisensory integration in liturgy, iconography, and ascetic practice can generate a religious habitus that shapes collective dispositions toward eschatological reality. The integration of iconographic vision, hymnographic rhythm, fasting discipline, and hesychastic silence implants perceptual and affective patterns that gradually form a shared orientation toward the end times. Such a collective habitus binds communities in shared experiences of judgment, resurrection, and hope for salvation, constructing Orthodox identity not only through doctrinal affirmation but through aesthetic participation repeated in liturgical, educational, and family settings. Research on religious identity formation, although conducted in other traditions and in the modern period, points in the same direction: it shows how repeated experience in childhood and family contexts shapes religious identity (Ericcek Maraşlıoğlu & Kartopu, 2023). Social-psychological work on uncertainty similarly indicates that religious identity can provide stability in contexts of social uncertainty (Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010). These comparisons are offered as analogies and not as evidence about medieval Rus. Multisensory integration thus produces not merely individual experience but a social structure that sustains Orthodox identity through repeated and institutionalized aesthetic practice.

Ideologically, eschatology in the Russian context has functioned not merely as a rhetoric of threat but as a system of meaning that shapes repentance, moral vigilance, and transformative hope rooted in religious and political history. This wider context lies beyond the corpus analyzed here and is summarized to situate the findings, not to extend them. The concept of Moscow as the Third Rome in the sixteenth century positioned Russia as the final bastion of true faith with a divine mission until the end times (Stefanovich, 2023). In contemporary contexts, national-patriotic media and radical religious subcultures revive rhetoric concerning the Antichrist and the end times, linking eschatology to critiques of modernity, technology, and political systems (Prilutskii, 2025; Shnirelman, 2021). Russian religious philosophy has likewise framed eschatology as an alternative to secular ideologies such as Marxism, which some thinkers regard as a pseudo-eschatology of this world (Cizmović, 2025). Against this background, the aesthetic formation analyzed in this article is one of the means by which an eschatological worldview could be reproduced and sustained across generations.

The study also identifies both functional and dysfunctional dimensions of the mechanism of *estesis*. Functionally, multisensory integration strengthens social cohesion, deepens religious experience, and preserves the continuity of cultural memory concerning eternity, while the liturgical temporal structure stabilizes moral and existential orientation across social change. Dysfunctionally, intensified symbolism and ritual repetition may freeze eschatological interpretation into rigid patterns and reduce aesthetic experience to formalism without inner transformation. Research on ritual rigidity indicates that repetitive and stereotyped ritual forms have a homeostatic function that stabilizes communities under uncertainty, yet may also generate rigid and unreflective patterns of behavior (Tonna, Marchesi, & Parmigiani, 2019; Tonna, Ponzi, Palanza, Marchesi, & Parmigiani, 2020). Cultural selection models of ritual argue that highly structured repetition oriented toward danger or threat activates strong precautionary systems, making ritual intuitive and compulsive without necessarily producing deep internalization of meaning (Boyer & Liénard, 2008; Liénard & Boyer, 2006). Ritual preserves collective memory and group identity through repeated symbolic action (Kang & Yu, 2022), but excessive conservatism may reduce ritual to the mere reproduction of form and strip it of transformative capacity (Fugger, 2011; Kasap, 2021). These studies draw on cognitive and evolutionary research and are used here for their general insight into ritual rigidity; they were not designed to explain Orthodox liturgy. An overly stabilized eschatological habitus may nonetheless inhibit critical dialogue with modern contexts unless theological reflection remains historically aware and socially responsive.

To address these dysfunctional tendencies, religious communities can cultivate theological reflection that consciously reinterprets symbols and rites in dialogue with changing historical and social contexts. Ecclesial authorities and theological educators can present liturgy and iconography not only as forms to preserve but as living texts open to deeper meaning through homily, catechesis, and critical public discourse. Communities can accompany ritual repetition with hermeneutical processes that recover its eschatological horizon, enabling believers to grasp the relationship between symbol, sensory experience, and ethical orientation in concrete life. Liturgical education that emphasizes participatory and reflective dimensions can help prevent formalism by sustaining *estesis* as transformative experience rather than routine. The Church can also engage contemporary issues such as technology, ecological crisis, and social uncertainty,

so that eschatology functions as a source of hope and responsibility rather than frozen fear. In this way multisensory integration preserves its cohesive and stabilizing functions while gaining renewed vitality through contextual and reflective reinterpretation.

CONCLUSION

This study has argued that eschatological *estesis* in the art of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Rus, from the tenth to the fifteenth century and with limited reference to later reception, takes shape through the aesthetic structure of hymnographic texts, the multisensory integration of liturgical practice, and the temporal configuration that orients religious consciousness toward the horizon of eternity. The principal finding is that eschatology did not function merely as doctrinal teaching about the end times; in the materials analyzed it is structured as a mechanism of consciousness formation through sensory experience that is able to stabilize into a durable habitus. Hymnographic texts construct affective frameworks through repetition and metaphor; the icon of the Last Judgment organizes visual perception through symbolic composition; fasting and ritual discipline shape bodily experience; and liturgical cycles supply the temporal frame in which these experiences can settle into a stable religious habitus. *Estesis* thus develops from aesthetic experience into a structured form of consciousness with a lasting existential orientation toward eternity.

The study contributes conceptually by formulating eschatological habitus as a synthesis of multisensory perception that works as a constitutive mechanism in the formation of eschatological consciousness. It extends Manoussakis's (2007, 2014) phenomenological theology of aesthetics by showing how integrated sensory experience within text, iconography, and ritual may generate religious habitus in the concrete historical setting of medieval Russia. It also responds to a gap in literature that has emphasized the ontology of art, historical transformation, or the social role of Orthodoxy without systematically articulating the perceptual mechanisms behind consciousness formation. By linking the findings explicitly to Bourdieu's theory of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Maton, 2010; Robbins, 2012) and its religious applications (Mellor & Shilling, 2014; Setten, 2009), the study suggests how aesthetic practices within liturgy may function as mechanisms of social and religious reproduction that sustain an eschatological orientation across generations.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the corpus is small and selective. It rests on a limited number of passages and on a single icon known through a published description; the findings are therefore illustrative of a mechanism and cannot be generalized to all medieval Russian worship, still less to other Orthodox traditions. Second, the texts were read in published editions and translations, and some belong to Byzantine or later periods; observations about rhythm and form are limited to what survives translation. Third, the phenomenological-hermeneutic approach interprets experience as structured within texts and rites and does not include evidence of how medieval believers actually responded, nor empirical research on contemporary believers. Fourth, the study does not include the sound of Russian liturgical chant itself, nor the senses of smell, touch, and taste, nor church architecture and the iconostasis, all of which belong to a fully multisensory account. Fifth, because the selected texts were chosen for their eschatological content and formal features, the study has not tested whether the same features appear in non-eschatological texts, and it does not yet offer a comparative model across Christian traditions or across religions.

Future research may therefore examine the musical and spatial dimensions of the medieval Russian liturgy, analyze a larger and more varied corpus of Last Judgment images, study modern believers' responses to iconography and liturgy, draw on the cognitive science of religion, or compare mechanisms of *estesis* formation across cultural and religious contexts. Through such work, scholars may continue to test and refine *estesis* as an analytical category in the study of religious art and consciousness.

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