

Lecture 37 – “Heaven & Earth are Filled with Thy Glory”: Eastern Orthodoxy

“The ultimate purpose of an historical inquiry is not in the establishment of certain objective facts, such as dates, places, numbers, names, and the like, as much as all this is an indispensable preliminary, but in the encounter with living beings.” Georges Florovsky

“Pray without ceasing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Background Reading

Gonzalez, ch. 32

Prayer

From *The Orthodox Liturgy*

“It is proper and right to praise, bless, glorify, thank, and worship Thee in all places of your dominion. For Thou art God ineffable, beyond comprehension, invisible, beyond understanding, ever-existing and always the same, Thou and Thy only-begotten Son, and Thy Holy Spirit. Thou hast brought us from non-being into being, and when we fell Thou raised us up again, and Thou didst not cease doing everything until Thou leadest us to heaven and grants us Thy kingdom to come. For all these things we thank Thee, and Thy only-begotten Son and Thy Holy Spirit, for all things of which we know and of which we do not know, for benefits apparent and unseen that have been bestowed upon us.”

“Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are filled with Thy glory. Praise the Lord in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” Amen.

“Heaven & Earth are Filled with Thy Glory”: Eastern Orthodoxy

Please note: Dr. Calhoun engages in approximately 13 minutes of general discussion about Orthodoxy prior to the prayer and the start of the lecture below.

I. History of the Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Eastern Church

A. The date: 1054

B. The patriarchs

1. Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople (ecumenical or universal patriarch)
2. Parallel jurisdiction

C. The theologians

1. Symeon the New Theologian (10th century)
2. St. Gregory Palamas (and the Hesychast Controversy of the 14th century)
3. *Philokalia* (compiled by Nicodemus of Athos [1748-1809])

D. Moscow—“The Third Rome”

1. Conversion of Russia c. 1000
2. Fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453
3. Fifth patriarch in 1589
4. “Old Believers” (17th century)
5. Peter the Great (1689-1725) and the Holy Synod (which ruled the church until 1917)
6. Communism: Older women kept the faith

II. Orthodox Distinctives

Read Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-88) for an understanding of Eastern (and especially Russian) Orthodox religion: *Crime and Punishment* for the doctrine of sin and *The Brothers Karamozov* for grace.

A. Bible and holy tradition

Chrysostom: “Hence it is manifest that [the apostles] did not deliver all things by epistle, but many things also unwritten, and in like manner both the one and the other worthy of credit. Therefore let us think the Tradition of the Church also worthy of credit.”

1. Roman Catholic—pope
2. Protestant—“Scripture alone”
3. Orthodox—the church

The Orthodox convert promises to “accept and understand Holy Scripture in accordance with the interpretation which was and is held by the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church of the East, our Mother.”

B. Deification (*theosis*)

C. Liturgy and worship

“Eastern theology originates in the sanctuary, Western theology in the scholar’s study or university library. The one employs candles, frescoes, mosaics, bells, icons, and incense, the other a word processor. For Orthodoxy ‘sights and sounds’ point the way to God, not philosophic speculation or literary subtlety” (Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, 79).

D. Mystery (apophaticism)

For Further Study

**Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective* by Daniel B. Clendenin

Best introduction to Orthodox Christianity for Protestants—and perhaps for the Orthodox as well! It is “a presentation so lucid, fair, and sympathetic that this reviewer, an orthodox parish priest, is disposed to recommend it to his parishioners by way of introducing them to their own faith!” (Patrick H. Reardon, “The Other East,” *Books & Culture*, March/April 1996: 6).

*In *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader* Daniel Clendenin has collected thirteen readings by eight contemporary Orthodox theologians on the major motifs in Orthodox Christianity.

**The Orthodox Church*, Timothy Ware

The best one-volume summary of Orthodox history, faith, and worship. Ware, Lecturer on Eastern Orthodox Studies at Oxford and an Orthodox bishop, has also written *The Orthodox Way*.

**The Christian Activist*

Orthodox paper edited by Frank Schaeffer, son of Francis Schaeffer and convert to Orthodoxy.

**Reclaiming the Great Tradition: Evangelicals, Catholics & Orthodox in Dialogue* edited by James S. Cutsinger

Essays from scholars from each tradition on what they hold in common and where they differ.

A. Read “The Elements of Liturgy” by Georges Florovsky from *Ways of Worship—The Report of a Theological Commission of Faith and Order* (SCM Press, 1951), 52-65. Father Georges Florovsky was one of the most respected recent spokesmen for Eastern Orthodoxy. I remember seeing him as an old man with a long white beard, black robe, and cigarette—on the Princeton Seminary campus where he taught an occasional course. In this article he identifies and discusses the central element of Orthodoxy.

*How do you respond to the statement: “Worship comes first, doctrine and discipline second” (172)?

*How is the word “orthodoxy” understood in the Eastern tradition?

*Florovsky says that “most of the liturgical structures and devotional habits of the Christian East were stabilized at an early date” (172). Do you see this as a strength? Why or why not?

*What does Florovsky mean by a “crowd prayer”? Do you find his description of “private” prayer helpful?

*In Eastern theology does the Eucharist repeat the death of Christ? What roles does the Eucharist serve in the Orthodox understanding?

*Do you see grace or sacramentarianism prominent in Florovsky’s description of Orthodox worship?

*What is the role of preaching in the Orthodox church?

*What is your impression of Orthodoxy after reading this essay? Has it changed your mind about the

Orthodox church?

B. In the preface to *The Gospel in Dostoyevsky* (Plough, 1988), J. I. Packer writes that Dostoyevsky's "plots and characters pinpoint the sublimity, perversity, meanness, and misery of fallen human adulthood in an archetypal way matched only by Aeschylus and Shakespeare, while his dramatic vision of God's amazing grace and of the agonies, Christ's and ours, that accompany salvation, has a range and depth that only Dante and Bunyan come anywhere near." The immediate context of Dostoyevsky's writings is Eastern Orthodoxy and the cultural turmoil of nineteenth-century Russia.

This passage from *The Brothers Karamozov* (237-53) follows immediately after the autobiographical story of the Elder Zossima, a strict and highly esteemed monk, and the spiritual father and example for Alyosha Fyodorovitch Karamazov. There is no doubt that here we have before us Dostoyevsky's religious testament. What themes and values do you discover in Father Zossima's words? How do you respond to these themes and values?