

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Issue 54: Eastern Orthodoxy

## Eastern Orthodoxy: Did You Know?

Little-known or fascinating facts about Eastern Orthodoxy

Daniel B. Clendenin

The Orthodox Church is not a single church but rather a family of 13 "autocephalous," or self-governing, churches. They are united in their understanding of the sacraments, doctrine, liturgy, and church government, but each administers its own affairs.

The head of each autocephalous church is called a "patriarch" or "metropolitan." The patriarch of Constantinople (that is, Istanbul, Turkey) is considered the "ecumenical," or universal, patriarch. He enjoys special honor but no power to interfere with the 12 other Orthodox communions.

Many Westerners have been confused about Orthodoxy's distinct identity. In the American armed services, military identification tags of enlisted Orthodox believers once bore the inscription "Protestant."

On the other hand, some western theologians have dismissed Orthodoxy outright. Nineteenth-century church historian Adolf von Harnack wrote, "The Orthodox Church is in her entire structure alien to the gospel and represents a perversion of the Christian religion, its reduction to the level of pagan antiquity."

The Orthodox Church claims to be the one, true church of Christ. Orthodox thinkers debate the spiritual status of Roman Catholics and Protestants, and a few still consider them heretics.

The doctrine of justification by faith is virtually absent from the history and theology of Orthodoxy. Rather, Orthodoxy emphasizes *theosis* (literally, "divinization"), the gradual process by which Christians become more and more like Christ.

The Orthodox have experienced more brutal and lasting persecution than any other Christian body. Under Soviet atheism, for example, communists closed 98 percent of the Orthodox churches in Russia, as well as 1,000 monasteries and 60 seminaries. Between 1917 and the outbreak of World War II, some 50,000 Orthodox priests were martyred.

Orthodox Christians number about 215 million worldwide, with about 5.6 million in the United States. This makes American Orthodoxy about the size of the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) and the Episcopal Church together.

In the last decade, many Protestants have converted to Orthodoxy. In 1987 former Campus Crusade for Christ staffer Peter Gillquist led 2,000 evangelicals in joining the Antiochian Orthodox Church. Another well-known convert is Franky Schaeffer, son of the late apologist Francis Schaeffer.

Orthodox worship can last two or more hours. Since Orthodox churches do not usually have pews, worshipers variously stand, kneel, and lie prostrate, depending on what the liturgy calls for.

Many Orthodox churches still follow the Julian calendar, authorized by Julius Caesar and used in Europe and the Mediterranean through the Middle Ages. Western churches adhere to the Gregorian calendar, Pope Gregory XIII's 1582 revision of the Julian. Because the Julian calendar now runs 13 days behind the Gregorian, many Orthodox celebrate holy days almost two weeks after the West.

The five largest Orthodox churches in the world are:

- Russian (70 to 100 million)
- Romanian (15 million)
- Greek (13 million)
- Serbian (8 million)
- Bulgarian (8 million)

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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## Eastern Orthodoxy: From the Editor - Exotic Orthodoxy

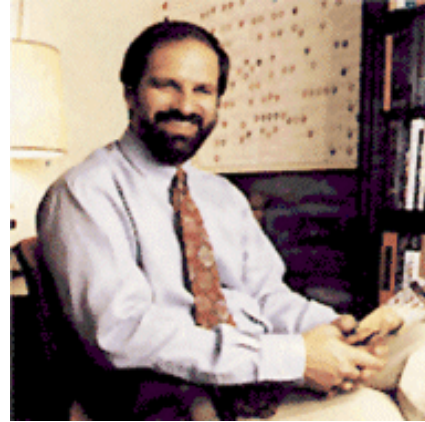
Exotic Orthodoxy

Mark Galli

Reading history is like being a tourist through time. You get to visit all manner of exotic people and places. Well, welcome to one of the most exotic journeys *Christian History* has taken.

Orthodoxy is a complete unknown to some, a great mystery to others. Orthodox priests wear long beards and glittering robes; believers cross themselves and bow incessantly during worship, and their churches are packed with somber religious pictures. No mistaking these folks for Baptists.

Yet the very strangeness of Orthodoxy is what attracts us. When we look closer, we see that these believers have been Christian in this way for some 1,900 years. It's a way of being Christian that has created and sustained great cultures (Byzantine, Russian), and one that has endured some of the fiercest persecution (from Muslims and Marxists) in church history. Today, it's a way of being Christian that makes sense to some 215 million people.



A quick glance suggests, then, that this church may not be merely unusual but a unique and powerful expression of the Christian faith.

**We've tried to keep the focus** on the years 300 to 1204, but we've fast-forwarded centuries ahead sometimes if we felt it would help you better understand Orthodoxy today. "[The Great Divorce](#)" looks at the time when Christians East and West went their separate ways, and I relied on Orthodox sources so we could see the Schism from the Orthodox perspective.

The articles on icons, monasteries, key figures ([Gallery](#)), councils, and worship are all written by Orthodox scholars. They highlight some of the distinctive practices and heroes of Orthodoxy. In "[What the Orthodox Believe](#)" and "[An Evangelical Appraisal](#)" two Protestant theologians help us compare Orthodox and Protestant theology and practice. Finally, in the interview with [Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I](#) (spiritual head of worldwide Orthodoxy), His All Holiness speaks forthrightly about issues facing Orthodoxy today. While an abbreviated version appears in our regular magazine, you can read the entire interview in this online version.

**Our approach**, as usual, is to try to understand Orthodoxy from the perspective of the Orthodox. We hope there are times in the issue when you think, *That's pretty cogent—and attractive*. This approach confuses some readers; some will assume we're trying to evangelize for Orthodoxy. Hardly. We just happen to believe that we cannot truly understand a historical subject unless we can empathize with it. So we hope as you go on this exotic journey, you will, at least for brief moments, see the world through Orthodox eyes.

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## **Imperious Mistress?**

**An Orthodox archbishop on the Catholic pope.**

In 1136, a Catholic bishop, Anselm of Havelberg, visited Constantinople on a diplomatic mission, and while there engaged in a public debate with the Orthodox archbishop of Nicomedia, Nicetas. Anselm put forth the traditional claims for Roman supremacy: Peter founded the church at Rome, and Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom to Peter.

Nicetas replied that the Holy Spirit did not descend on Peter alone at Pentecost but on all the apostles. All Christians had the right to be consulted about matters of faith and practice. One speech in particular sums up well the Orthodox views of the matter:

"We do not deny to the Roman Church the primacy amongst the five sister patriarchates; and we recognize her right to the most honorable seat at an ecumenical council. But she has separated herself from us by her own deeds, when through pride she assumed a monarchy which does not belong to her office. ... How shall we accept decrees from her that have been issued without consulting us and even without our knowledge? If the Roman Pontiff, seated on the lofty throne of his glory, wishes to thunder at us and, so to speak, hurl his mandates at us from on high, and if he wishes to judge us and even to rule us and our churches, not by taking counsel with us but at his own arbitrary pleasure, what kind of brotherhood, or even what kind of parenthood can this be? We should be the slaves, not the sons, of such a church, and the Roman see would not be the pious mother of sons but a hard and imperious mistress of slaves."

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### **Better the Infidel**

**Why two attempts at reunion were rejected by the Orthodox people.**

Mark Galli

In the decades following the sack of Constantinople, political events conspired to prompt the Eastern church to seek reunion with the West.

Michael VIII (reigned 1259-82), the emperor who recovered Constantinople from the Catholics, made the first attempt. He primarily desired political protection; he was militarily threatened by Charles of Anjou, sovereign of Sicily, and he desperately needed the papacy's protection.

At a council held at Lyons in 1274, the Orthodox delegates agreed to recognize the papal claims and to recite the Creed with the *filioque*.

But the union was fiercely rejected by the overwhelming majority of Orthodox clergy and laity. The emperor's sister summed up the Greek attitude: "Better that my brother's empire should perish than the purity of the Orthodox faith." The union of Lyons was formally repudiated by Michael's successor.

#### **Powerless agreement**

A second reunion council was held at Florence in 1438-9. This time Emperor John VIII (reigned 1425-48) attended, together with the patriarch of Constantinople and a large delegation from a number of Orthodox churches. A genuine attempt was made by both sides to reach a true agreement.

The Greeks knew their political situation had become desperate. The only hope of defeating the Turks lay in help from the West. Eventually an agreement was drawn up, which was signed by nearly all the Orthodox present.

The Florentine Union sought unanimity in doctrine but respect for the traditions peculiar to each church. Thus the Orthodox accepted the papal claims (though the wording was ambiguous), the *filioque* (though they weren't required to insert the phrase into their reciting of the Creed), and the doctrine of purgatory (a relatively new point of contention). Greeks were allowed to use leavened bread, while Latins were to continue to employ unleavened.

The Union of Florence was celebrated throughout western Europe; bells were rung in all the parish churches of England. But it proved no more of a reality in the East than its predecessor at Lyons. John VIII and his successor, Constantine XI (the last emperor of Byzantium), were powerless to enforce it on their subjects. They did not even dare to proclaim it publicly at Constantinople for 13 years. Many who signed at Florence revoked their signatures when they reached home.

The council's decrees were never accepted by more than a tiny fraction of Orthodox clergy and people. The Grand Duke Lucas Notaras, echoing the words of the emperor's sister after Lyons, remarked, "I would rather see the Muslim turban in the midst of the city than the Latin miter."

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## Kissers and Smashers

Why the Orthodox killed one another over icons.

Bradley Nassif

For many in the West today, Orthodox devotion to icons seems odd, especially the practice of kissing them. And when we learn that for a hundred-plus years in the early Middle Ages arguments raged over pictures of Jesus, causing one of the greatest political, cultural and religious upheavals in Christian History—well, we just don't understand it.

What is it about icons that created such a stir, and what do they represent to the Orthodox?

### A little bloody history

By the 700s, icons were a regular feature of Orthodox spiritual life all over the Byzantine Empire. And it was about that time that a movement against icons emerged. Iconoclasm (the movement to "smash icons") started from within the church itself. A few iconoclastic bishops in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) believed the Bible, particularly Exodus 20:4, forbade such images:

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them . . ."

Byzantine Emperor Leo III (reigned 717-741), convinced by such reasoning, tried at first to persuade his subjects to abandon icons. A dramatic act of nature reinforced his campaign: a violent underwater volcano suddenly erupted in the Aegean Sea; tidal waves surged over land, and a cloud of volcanic ash darkened the sky. The entire city of Constantinople was shaken. Leo interpreted it as a sign from heaven: the empire was in grave danger of incurring the divine wrath. So he preached a series of sermons against the use of icons.

In 726 (or 731; the date is uncertain), Leo stepped up the campaign. He ordered his soldiers to go to the palace gate called Chalke and destroy the icon of Christ painted over the entrance archway. When the soldiers began smashing the image, a group of elderly women kicked the ladder out from underneath the soldiers' feet. The incident triggered riots, and several women became the first martyrs to iconoclasm.

The most vigorous opponent of icons in the eighth and ninth centuries was Emperor Leo's son and successor, the brilliant Constantine V. Constantine was the person most responsible for developing the arguments used against icons.

In 754 he called the Council of Hieria, and the 338 bishops assembled from throughout the empire, condemned the making and venerating of icons. The deck, however, had been stacked: Constantine had guided into the assembly only those bishops who supported his views. Nonetheless, the bishops declared their assembly the "Seventh Ecumenical Council."

After the council, a large-scale war broke out against the supporters of icons. Monks, icons' staunchest defenders, felt the heat of persecution the most. Thousands were exiled, tortured, or martyred. In 766 Constantine paraded a group of monks holding hands with their sister nuns (a

scandalous display) through the Hippodrome. Between 762 and 775, countless Christians suffered greatly, and the period became known as the "decade of blood."

Eventually the tide turned. In 787 Empress Irene (reigned 780-802), a staunch supporter of icon veneration, convened what would later be recognized as the rightful Seventh Ecumenical Council. The council affirmed that icons, though they may not be worshiped, may be honored.

A new attack on icons was made under Leo V the Armenian in 815 and continued until 843, when icons were again reinstated once and for all by Empress Theodora on the First Sunday of Lent, a day still celebrated annually as the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy.

## **God cannot be painted**

The iconoclasts vehemently opposed icons for three basic reasons.

1. ***Icons are idols.*** Emperor Constantine V argued, "The icon of Christ and Christ himself do not differ from each other in essence," thus, "[An icon] is identical in essence with that which it portrays." Since an icon cannot obviously be Christ in the flesh, it must be a false image—an idol.

The Eucharist, iconoclasts further argued, was the only true image of Christ since that was the vehicle that contained Christ's real presence. "The bread which we receive," Constantine maintained, "is an icon of his body."

Yet, as the iconodules (icon supporters) argued, did not the Incarnation make a difference in the way Exodus 20:4 applied to icons? The iconoclasts declared "No!" The command against making images applied equally to Jews and Christians. Furthermore, there should be no portrayals of Mary, the saints, or angels. As the Council of 754 stated, "Since the former [an icon of Christ] has been abolished, there is no need for the latter either."

2. ***Icons are not supported by church tradition.*** The iconoclasts backed up their arguments with references from church fathers such as Origen, Eusebius, and Epiphanius of Salamis.
3. ***Icons deny the church's teaching about Christ.*** Starting with the Chalcedon Definition (451), iconoclasts maintained that Christ's divine nature cannot be "circumscribed" (i.e., captured, limited) in a portrait. It is impossible to portray true divinity in an icon. Yet to say that icons portray only Christ's humanity is to fall into another heresy—the belief that Jesus' divine and human natures were not really united but juxtaposed.

## **The Word became "icon"**

Three leading iconodule theologians finally united Orthodox opinion about icons: John of Damascus (c. 655-749), Theodore of Studios (759-826), and Nicephorus of Constantinople (758-828). Their threefold response went as follows.

1. ***Icons are not idols.*** The iconodules defined *icon* differently than did their opponents. There is a vital difference between an image and its prototype, John of Damascus explained: "An image is a likeness, a model, or a figure of something, showing in itself what it depicts. An image is not always like its prototype in every way. For the image is one thing and the thing depicted is another."

Icons are not primarily historical but spiritual portrayals. An icon of the Resurrection, in which Adam and Eve are rescued from the grave, is not intended to paint an exact physical likeness of Adam and Eve. Rather the icon seeks to communicate *spiritual* and *theological*

truths about the Resurrection: all of us sinners, like Adam and Eve, share in Christ's victory over the grave.

There is a difference, then, between an icon and the Eucharistic bread and wine, argued the iconodules: the Eucharist is not an image but Christ's real presence. An icon is more like the Bible. A Bible is not "identical in essence" with the living Word, Jesus Christ, yet the Bible mediates the grace of Christ as we read it.

Furthermore, the Seventh Ecumenical Council declared that the commandment prohibiting idolatry was designed to forbid Israelites from worshiping the false gods of the people they were about to conquer. Other scriptural texts suggest limited use of images (e.g., Exod. 25:18, 20; 36:8, 35; 1 Kings 6:28-29). Christian icons do not depict pagan gods; they are rather images that draw the venerator's mind and heart toward the one true God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

2. *Tradition supports icons.* The iconodules quoted church fathers like Athanasius, Basil, and John Chrysostom, who supported the use of icons. Furthermore, icon veneration had long been part of the practice of the most ancient churches, and none of the preceding six ecumenical councils had ever raised questions concerning it.
3. *Icons affirm the church's teaching about Christ.* Using texts such as John 1:14, Philippians 2:5-11, 2 Corinthians 4:4, and others, the iconodules argued that through the Incarnation, God identified wholly with the entire created order. Christ's redemption extends to both the "spiritual" and "physical" sides of creation. If Christ did not have a real human body, then he didn't identify completely with the created order. To deny an icon was to deny the Incarnation, a heresy!

Like their opponents, the iconodules also drew their conclusions from the Chalcedon Definition. Icons are pledges of not only the Incarnation but also of the doctrines of deified humanity and the future transformation of the cosmos.

## Honor and reverence

As for the role of icons in worship, the Seventh Ecumenical Council made an important distinction between *veneration* and *worship*: "We declare that one may render to icons the veneration of honor (*proskune-sis*), not true worship (*latreia*) of our faith, which is due only to the divine nature."

*Latreia* means "absolute worship," which is to be reserved exclusively for God. *Proskunesis* refers to the bodily act of bowing down and means "relative honor" that is offered to saints worthy of honor. Hence the physical act of bowing down to an icon and kissing it is not inherently idolatrous but a legitimate, cultural expression of respect.

In this way, the Seventh Ecumenical Council affirmed, "The honor paid to the icon is conveyed to its prototype." When the Christian worshiper revered an icon of Mary or the saints, the honor was transferred to the person it represented. When an icon of Christ was revered, however, the worshiper could express not just veneration but absolute worship as well. For the one who was portrayed was none other than the God who became human.

John of Damascus summed it up best: "In former times, God, who is without form or body, could never be depicted. But now when God is seen in the flesh conversing with men, I make an image of the God whom I see. I do not worship matter; I worship the Creator of matter who became matter for my sake."

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## The Spirit-Bearers

**If you know a little about Eastern monasticism, you know a great deal about Eastern Orthodoxy.**

John Chryssavgis

Monasticism began on a Sunday morning in the year 270 or 271 in an Egyptian village. The Gospel passage read in worship that day included the words "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Matt. 19:21). In the congregation sat a young man called Antony, who, upon hearing these words, sought a life not merely of relative poverty but of radical solitude.

Antony's step into the uninhabited desert was little noticed outside, or even inside, his village at the time. But when he died at the age of 106, his friend and biographer Athanasius of Alexandria (d. 373) informs us that his name was known "all over the road." "The desert," he wrote, "had become a city," meaning thousands had regularly flocked to Antony to be taught by him.

Monasticism has been an essential feature of Eastern Orthodoxy ever since, and one cannot understand Orthodoxy without understanding its monastic tradition.

### Flexible rigorists

In Egypt three main types of monasticism developed, roughly corresponding to three geographical locations:

- 1. The hermit life, found in lower Egypt, where Antony (d. 356) is the model. Here monks lived an isolated and austere life of prayer.**
- 2. The cenobitic or communal form, found in upper Egypt, where Pachomius (d. 346) formed a community of monks who prayed and worked together.**
- 3. The middle way, in Nitria and Scetis, west of the mouth of the Nile, started by Ammon (d. about 350). Here a loosely knit group of small settlements of two to six monks together looked to a common spiritual elder, or "abba."**

The center of Eastern monasticism moved from Egypt to Asia Minor in the late 300s, to Palestine in the 400s, to Sinai in the 500s, and in the 900s to Mount Athos, Greece, where these three types of monasticism still exist.

Other regions produced a variety of lifestyles: in Syria, for example, we find "stylites," who chose to live on pillars. In Cappadocia (in modern Turkey), a more learned, liturgical, and social monasticism appeared under the inspiration and influence of Basil the Great (d. 379). In Palestine the tradition of spiritual direction was established by such men as Isaiah of Scetis (d. 489) and Sabas (d. 532). On Sinai a more silent, or "hesychast," spirituality was founded by John Climacus (d. about 679).

Monasteries could also be found in cities. By 518 Constantinople numbered some 70 communities for men alone. Monks became increasingly influential in ecclesiastical and social life: they intervened in theological disputes, they taught liturgy and spirituality, and they inspired the laity, who tended to follow charismatic monks.

In general monasticism in the East has been more flexible and less uniform than in the West. The East never had an Augustine or a Benedict, who wrote strict regulations for monks. The "rules" of Basil of Caesarea, by contrast, are not nearly as systematic. His **Longer Rules** is a series of sermons, while his **Shorter Rules** are answers to questions raised by monks as Basil visited the monasteries of his diocese. There has been no generally accepted rule or order in the East. One simply becomes attached to a specific monastery with its own particular tradition.

There were also monasteries for women, which may have risen earlier than those for men. Before retiring to the desert, Antony had placed his sister in a "home for virgins," a fact that unintentionally reveals that women were already organized into Christian communities in Egypt.

In general in the East, there was less emphasis on "stability," that is, the requirement that monks and nuns live in one monastery their whole lives. In the East, monks and nuns often changed monasteries.

### "Sleepless ones"

Stability may not have been a main feature of Eastern monasticism, but "sitting in one's cell" was. In the **Sayings of the Desert Fathers**, Abba Moses (d. 407) reveals "The cell teaches us everything."

The cell was foremost a place of prayer, and prayer was the primary social service of the Byzantine monk. Most Eastern monasteries were located in desolate areas, remote from civilization, and thus conducive to prayer: St. Sabas's monastery in the Holy Land, St. Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai, the monastic republic of Mount Athos, and the towering rocks of Meteora in central Greece.

Some Eastern monks and nuns engaged in education, evangelism, and charitable work, but these works were considered secondary to the monastic's main vocation—prayer. Visitors to the monasteries expected to find places of prayer, to discover persons of prayer, and to encounter holy people with the gift of spiritual direction.

The goal of prayer, and of all monastic life, was union with God. Such union was made possible only through a life of spiritual purification and total renunciation—a self-stripping of both material possessions and intellectual projections. This was the way of negation, or of apophatic knowledge. The unknowable God was venerated through a series of negations that showed God as "ever beyond." The apophatic way had a moral dimension too: the purification from wrongful desires.

In the West, monasteries often became nurseries of scholarship, but in the East, they were always centers of spirituality. The most precious service of Eastern monasticism was its ever burning flame of prayer and spirituality. One monastery in Constantinople was called **Akoimatoi** (literally, "the sleepless ones"), where prayer was ongoing, 24 hours a day, with monks taking turns to recite prayers.

In a sense, then, Eastern monastic life has been an experience of charismatic enthusiasm, a Pentecostal reality. The monk has been a **pneumato** phoros ("Spirit-bearer"), bearing witness to the abiding presence of the Spirit in the Church.

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## Eastern Orthodoxy to 1453: Christian History Timeline

Eastern Orthodoxy to 1453 (A.D)

Gerald Bray

### Eastern Orthodoxy

**270** Antony takes up life of solitude

**301** Armenia officially embraces Christianity

**313** Emperor Constantine legalizes Christian church (right)

**325** First Council of Nicea; Arius condemned but not defeated

**328** Athanasius becomes bishop of Alexandria and fights Arianism

**358** Basil the Great founds first monastery (right)

**380** Christianity becomes the sole legal religion of the Roman Empire

**381** First Council of Constantinople adopts Nicene Creed

**398** John Chrysostom becomes bishop of Constantinople

**431** First Council of Ephesus condemns Nestorius

**444** Death of Cyril of Alexandria, who believed Christ had one nature after his Incarnation (monophysitism)

**451** The Council of Chalcedon condemns monophysitism; monophysite Egypt, Syria, and Ethiopia break with Constantinople (right)

**483** Emperor Zeno's Henotikon tries to reconcile monophysites but fails

**553** The Second Constantinople Council fails to reconcile monophysites

**662** Exiled Maximus the Confessor dies

**680** After Third Council of Constantinople, all attempts to reconcile the monophysites cease (right)

**692** "Quinisext" Council codifies canon law of Eastern church

**726** Byzantine Emperor Leo III starts campaign against icons (iconoclasm); persecutes those who defend icons (right)

- 749** John of Damascus, first systematic theologian of the East and defender of icons, dies
- 787** Second Council of Nicea condemns iconoclasm
- 811-843** Iconoclastic campaign revived by imperial court but fails
- 862** Mission of Cyril and Methodius to the Slavs
- 867** Photius, patriarch of Constantinople, accuses Rome of heresy because of the filioque
- 988** Vladimir, prince of Kiev, embraces Christianity; conversion of Russia follows (right)
- 1014** Rome introduces filioque into its liturgy; pope no longer commemorated at Constantinople
- 1022** Death of Simeon the New Theologian, Byzantium's greatest mystic
- 1054** Papal legates excommunicate patriarch of Constantinople, who in turn excommunicates the legates
- 1204** Crusaders sack Constantinople (right)
- 1274** Union of Lyons rejected by the Orthodox
- 1338** Gregory Palamas defends Hesychasm in his Triads
- 1438** Council of Florence attempts to reunite East and West
- 1453** Turks conquer Byzantium (right)

### **Events in the West**

- 257-60** Cyprian, Pope Sixtus II martyred in Valerian persecution
- 285** Roman Empire divided east and west
- 312** Donatist Schism begins
- 350** Goths converted to Arian Christianity
- 386** Augustine's conversion
- 395** Alaric the Visigoth begins military campaigns; eventually sacks Rome (410) (right)
- 432** Patrick's mission to Ireland (right)
- 440** Leo I becomes pope
- c. **503** Baptism of Clovis, king of the Franks
- 540** Benedict writes his monastic **Rule**

**590** Gregory the Great becomes pope

**732** Battle of Tours stops Muslim incursions in Europe (right)

**754** Boniface, missionary to the Germans, martyred

**800** Charlemagne becomes Holy Roman Emperor (right)

**1093** Anselm becomes bishop of Canterbury

**1095-1099** First Crusade

**1115** Bernard founds monastery at Clairvaux

**1141** Hildegard of Bingen begins writing

**1208** Francis renounces wealth

**1274** Thomas Aquinas dies

**1303-1378** "Babylonian Captivity": Roman popes at Avignon

**1415** Jan Hus burned

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## Eastern Orthodoxy: A Gallery of Impact Prayers

Five men who still define Orthodox spirituality.

Gregory and Federica Mathewes-Green

### Dionysius the Areopagite

400s?

#### *Mystery writer*

The true identity of the author known as Dionysius the Areopagite is unknown. Yet somehow this is appropriate; his writings are not concerned with things earthly, material, or historical, but are suffused with the mysterious—the otherworldly and eternal.

He was initially identified as the Dionysius converted by Paul in Athens, following the sermon at the altar "To an unknown God." Later he was thought to be St. Denis, the third-century bishop of Paris and Frankish patron saint. Scholars now believe this great spiritual writer lived in the fifth century and was perhaps a Syrian monk. Hence, many now call him the "pseudo-Dionysius." His true identity may never be known.

While scholars ponder this mystery, Dionysius pondered other mysteries, producing four treatises and ten letters that were among the most valued works in both East and West all through the Middle Ages.

Perhaps most influential was *Mystical Theology*, which addressed the relationship between God and the human soul. In *Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius described the nine ranks of angels, who serve as intermediaries between the divine and the earthly. (In an angel-obsessed time such as ours, that classic work may be waiting to be rediscovered.) In *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, Dionysius examined how the church's sacraments enable believers to become "deified." Finally, *Divine Names* described the being and attributes of God. In such words, Dionysius took mystical theology beyond its previous limits.

In such works, Dionysius used a theology of negation, also called "apophatic" theology. He explored the nature of God by peeling away human illusions, describing "not what he is, but what he is not." Such an approach recognizes both that God has revealed himself but also that human language is ultimately incapable of describing God. Instead of working like a painter, who builds up a painting by adding color to canvas, the "negative theologian" works more like a sculptor, removing stone to reveal a deeper reality.

While others, like Gregory of Nyssa, had used this method, Dionysius's writings helped spread it across Europe. The anonymous writer of the English book *The Cloud of Unknowing*, among other medieval mystical writers, owes a great deal to this mysterious author of mysticism.

### Maximus the Confessor

c.580-662

#### *Silenced witness*

After a long life of standing against the arcane heresies of the seventh century, Maximus met his fate. In Constantinople he was brought to trial on charges of opposing a theological document supported by the emperor. His right hand and his tongue were cut off, punishing him for his written and spoken judgments. He was then carted to each of the 12 districts of the city and publicly whipped. At last the venerable

abbot, 82 years old, was carried on a rough journey to a city on the Black Sea, where he died—a wordless "confessor" of theological orthodoxy.

A lifetime before, Maximus held an honored role in the imperial court that was later to condemn him. As a young man, he served as principal secretary to Emperor Heraclius, but he resigned that post, probably because he was uncomfortable with a shade of heresy in the emperor's opinions.

The problem was "monothelism," which held that Jesus had only one will, the divine (rather than both human and divine wills). Joining a monastery in the Holy Land, Maximus began writing treatises against monothelism, as well as guides to the mystical and monastic life.

Maximus dwelt particularly on the theme of *theosis* (commonly translated, "deification"), that is, human participation in the divine life. He taught that, since the center of all earthly history is the Incarnation, by which God dwells among us, the goal of human life is for us to dwell in God. With God's help, we can actually "become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Redemption in Christ allows for the possibility of the full restoration of the image of God in the individual.

Several early church Fathers taught that "Christ became man that man might become God," but Maximus developed the concept fully.

His opposition to monothelism cost him his life. From the age of 60 until his death, Maximus was engaged in debates, tried by tribunals, banished, recalled, and dragged about the Mediterranean basin in the throes of this controversy. It is this wordless, suffering confession of Maximus that has rung through Orthodox history like a bell.

## **John of Damascus**

**c.655-c.749**

### ***Image-conscious theologian***

Visitors to an Orthodox Church are confronted with many unfamiliar elements of worship—incense, Byzantine chant, the custom of standing—but perhaps the most perplexing is icons, especially how Orthodox worshipers bow before icons and kiss them. Isn't this idolatry?

This question raged through the Christian world in the eighth and ninth centuries, and occupied the attention of two of the seven ecumenical (worldwide) church councils. The strongest defense of the practice came from a Christian living in the heart of the Islamic empire—John Mansur, a high official in the court of the caliph in Damascus.

The question didn't have so much to do with bowing and kissing, which are just one culture's way of showing respect (the sight of two Middle Eastern men kissing in greeting likewise looks strange to Westerners). The basic question was this: Are we allowed to paint pictures of Jesus, and other biblical figures, at all? Or is it forbidden by the Second Commandment? As Islam spread through the known world, bringing its absolute interdiction of images, Christianity was feeling the heat.

Yet the main threat to icons came not from the Islamic caliph but from the heart of the Byzantine Empire—indeed from the emperor himself, Leo III, who between 726 and 729 commanded the destruction of all religious likenesses, whether icons, mosaics, or statues.

In response John argued that icons were venerated but not worshiped. The distinction is crucial: a Western parallel might be to the honor with which a favorite Bible is read, cherished, and treated with honor—but certainly not worshiped. John insisted that worship was directed only toward God.



Second, John drew support from the writings of the early Fathers like Basil the Great, who wrote, "The honor paid to an icon is transferred to its prototype." That is, the actual icon was but a point of departure for the expressed devotion; the recipient was in the unseen world.

Third, John claimed that, with the birth of the Son of God in the flesh, the depiction of Christ in paint and wood demonstrated faith in the Incarnation. Since the unseen God had become visible, there was no blasphemy in painting visible representations of Jesus or other historical figures. To paint an icon of him was, in fact, a profession of faith, deniable only by a heretic!

At some point, John left the court and lived out his days at the St. Saba monastery in the hills west of the Dead Sea. There John's writing bloomed, both theological treatises and hymns; he is recognized as one of the principal hymnographers of Orthodoxy. But his fellow monks grumbled that such elegant writing was a distraction and prideful, and John was sometimes sent to sell baskets humbly in the streets of Damascus, where he had once enjoyed a high post.

John has been honored by East and West throughout church history, and in 1890 was named a doctor of the church by the Vatican.

## **Simeon the New Theologian**

**949-1022**

### ***Cranky mystic***

No one ever accused Simeon of being easy to get along with. First he refused the life of prestige at the Byzantine court that his parents had dreamed of for him. A school dropout, he cut a dashing figure in the streets of Constantinople in the latter part of the tenth century: "His clothing, his manner, and his bearing were so ostentatious that some people had evil suspicions about him."

That's Simeon's own assessment; no one could accuse him of being easy on himself, either. Yet even while living this dissolute life, his conscience was pulling him in another direction, and he unaccountably found himself searching for someone to guide him into a deeper spiritual life.

Simeon found his mentor in another Simeon, the saint known as Simeon the Studite. This monk resided at the monastery at Studion, in Constantinople. The young Simeon threw himself into the wise monk's advice with characteristic abandon, fasting, praying, and weeping all night for his sins.

During one of these all-night prayer sessions, he experienced the vision of the Divine Light, a recurrent feature of Orthodox spirituality. A biographer writes that it "suffused him, filled him with joy and made him lose all awareness of his surroundings."

What goes up must come down in the case of so volatile a personality. Simeon returned to his worldly ways for six or seven years, though with ambivalence: he interrupted his revels to consult with his beloved spiritual father, and then seemed to forget the elder Simeon's advice as soon as he left his cell.

At last a final break was made, and Simeon gave God all the glory, in a passage reminiscent of St. Augustine: "I did not see you—indeed, how would I have been able, where would I have found the strength to lift up my eyes, covered and choked as I was by the mire—you took me by the hair and forcibly drew me out of there."

Simeon joined the monastery at Studion but soon quarreled with his superiors, who felt the young man obeyed his spiritual father more readily than the abbot. Simeon moved to a smaller monastery nearby, where the real work of growing in faith began.

In Simeon's writing, the emphasis was on a personal encounter with God, an encounter, he believed, that should occur in every Christian's life, not just in that of monks and nuns. Simeon lived in an age when rigid formalism was threatening the life of the Spirit; Simeon called for personal commitment—yet without abandoning public liturgical life.

## **Gregory Palamas**

**c.1296-1359**

### ***Doctor of energies***

Constantine Palamas was a devout man and an example to his family, even after death. As he lay dying, Constantine was tonsured a monk; after his death, his widow, two daughters, and three sons all entered the monastic life. One son, Gregory, showed particular promise. The emperor, jealous for his gifts, offered him riches and honor if he would serve him at court. The emperor's loss was the gain of Orthodox theology for centuries to come.

Gregory soon found himself embroiled in a controversy with an Italian-Greek monk named Barlaam, a controversy that revealed some key theological differences between the East and West.

In the West, theologians taught that the experience of God was always mediated. That is, the believer does not encounter God directly but rather through creation and especially through the sacraments. Eastern theologians, as far back as the fourth century, taught that the experience of God (through prayer or sacraments) was a direct knowledge of divinity, unmediated and uncreated. The Eastern Fathers elaborated on this idea by speaking of two separate aspects of God—divine essence and divine energies.

Gregory, in particular, argued that God was absolutely unknowable and transcendent in his essence; no human can ever know the inner being shared by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, the unknowable God was made known in Jesus Christ and is directly encountered in his energies. The energies of God (sacraments, grace, the miraculous experience of Divine Light) are as much God as is the essence of God. However, energies are accessible to the believer and essence is not.

Thus Gregory, while protecting the transcendence of God—a key theme in Orthodox thought and worship—was able to talk about a genuine encounter with God. The teaching won gradual acceptance, and was confirmed by a church council in 1351. Nine years after his death, he was canonized as a Father and doctor of the church, making his theological insights official teaching of the Orthodox Church.

***Gregory and Frederica Mathewes-Green worship at Holy Cross Antiochian Orthodox Church, outside Baltimore, where Gregory is priest. Frederica is author of Facing East: A Pilgrim's Journey into the Mysteries of Orthodoxy (Harper San Francisco, 1997).***

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Issue 54: Eastern Orthodoxy

## What the Orthodox Believe

Four key differences between the Orthodox and Protestants.

Daniel B. Clendenin

***Most Americans think of religion in terms of the "Big Three"—Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. But the Orthodox? Who are they? Like Protestants, they're not one monolith with uniform beliefs. On the other hand, there are distinctives that set them apart from Protestants.***

***Daniel Clendenin, on staff with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at Stanford University, has studied those distinctives, especially in their Russian Orthodox form. He has set them down in detail in Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective (Baker, 1994), and here in summary.***

Orthodoxy has suffered from cultural invisibility in America. It simply does not register on most of our cultural radar screens. Some confuse it with Catholicism. But Orthodoxy is distinct from Catholicism and enjoys a unique history and theology. The Russian Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky (d. 1958) once referred to the "dogmatic dissimilarity" between the Christian East and West.

What did Lossky mean? Let me summarize four ways in which faithful Christians, Orthodox and Protestant, have each tended to do theology differently.

### Praising the Unknowable

During my first semester as a visiting professor at Moscow State University (1991-1992), I taught a seminar on C. S. Lewis's ***Mere Christianity***. The book had been translated into Russian, and its notable influence in the lives of many Western Christians made it a sure bet, I thought, to have a significant spiritual and intellectual impact. I could not have been more wrong.

Toward the end of the term, one student complained that Lewis was "too logical and rational." A year later in another seminar on Lewis's ***The Problem of Pain***, a student made a similar comment: "I do not like Lewis's position that we must use logic to discuss the question of evil. Problems relating to God transcend human logic." These remarks point to a fundamental difference between the theologies of the Orthodox and Protestants.

In one of the most important texts of Orthodoxy, ***Exposition of the Orthodox Faith***, John of Damascus (655-749) observed, "It is plain, then, that there is a God. But what he is in his essence and nature is absolutely incomprehensible and unknowable. ... All that is comprehensible about him is his incomprehensibility." This is a fine example of what has been called apophatic theology (from the Greek ***apophasis*** or "denial"). Apophatic theology tries to describe what God is not. For example, the theologian who says "God is not finite; he is not limited in time or space" is practicing apophatic theology.

Lossky says apophaticism is "the fundamental characteristic of the whole theological tradition of the Eastern Church." He once defined it as "the breakdown of human thought before the radical transcendence of God ... a prostration before the living God, radically ungrasp-able, unobjectifiable, and

unknowable."

In Orthodoxy this incomprehensible mystery of God is a cause for praise and celebration, and theology is an extension of spirituality or worship. The aphorism of Evagrius of Pontus (346-399) expresses this nicely: only the one who prays is truly a theologian, for the true theo-logian prays truly.

By way of contrast, for Protestants the mystery of God is often a cause for analysis and explanation. We tend to be uncomfortable with mystery and are even trained to expunge it by finding answers. As heirs of the European Enlightenment, we believe that all truth claims, including theological propositions, must pass the test administered at the bar of reason.

One thinks, for example, of the influential legacy of René Descartes (1596-1650), who attempted to ground all thinking in "methodical doubt" and to accept nothing as true unless he perceived it as clear, distinct, indubitable, and certain.

In the words of the contemporary German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg: "Every theological statement must prove itself on the field of reason and can no longer be argued on the basis of unquestioned presuppositions of faith." In this Western intellectual scheme, theology is best understood as a form of knowledge or even a "science."

At the risk of exaggeration, we might say that in the West, theology is done with books in the library; in the Orthodox East, theology is done with liturgy in the sanctuary.

### **Theology in color**

In his book *The Illuminating Icon*, Anthony Ugolnik points to two conversion stories to illustrate another basic difference. In the *Russian Primary Chronicle* (twelfth century), the story is told of Prince Vladimir of Kiev: he embraced Orthodoxy (in 988) after his emissaries described to him the liturgical beauty of worship they experienced in the Orthodox Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople. By way of contrast, Augustine (354-430), in his *Confessions*, recounts how he heard the voice of a child telling him to "take up and read" a Bible that lay open at Romans 13:13. The contrasting conversions signal a key difference: in the Orthodox East, aesthetics play a major role in theology; the West prefers to work primarily with texts.

One can sense this difference simply by entering an Orthodox church: icons and frescoes cover virtually every square inch of the walls. The priest is resplendent in his vestments; his sonorous voice chants the liturgy. Bells chime, candles flicker, and incense fills the air.

Icons epitomize all this. Former librarian of the Library of Congress and Russian scholar James Billington once referred to icons as "the most revered form of theological expression" in early Russian Orthodoxy. Orthodox theology, he said, tends to "crystallize in images rather than in ideas." Icons are thus a "theology in color," which is why when an Orthodox priest was once asked why he did not do more doctrinal teaching in his church, he responded, "Icons teach us all we need to know."

Protestantism, on the other hand, insists upon the written word. During the Reformation, the spoken sermon gradually replaced the Catholic Eucharist as the defining moment of the liturgy for Protestants. John Calvin (1509-1564) said, "Images cannot stand in the place of books," and he whitewashed the walls of Reformed churches in Geneva. According to the Puritan John Foxe (1516-1587), "God conducted the Reformation not by the sword, but by printing, writing, and reading."

No wonder that the Orthodox Alexei Khomiakov (d. 1860) once complained that in Protestantism "a scholar has taken the place of the priest." Likewise, the Orthodox theologian Sergei Bulgakov (d. 1944) once described Protestant Christianity as a "professorial" religion in which the central figure is the

scholar-professor.

### **Away with *sola scriptura***

When Martin Luther burned the books of Catholic canon law at the Elster Gate of Wittenberg on December 10, 1520, he did so to dramatize a point that has become fundamental to Protestant identity: Scripture has a unique and normative value, and whatever value "tradition" has, it is secondary and derivative. Indeed, Luther wrote, "What else do I contend for but to bring everyone to an understanding of the difference between the divine Scripture and human teaching or custom, so that a Christian may not take the one for the other and exchange gold for straw, silver for stubble, wood for precious stones?"

Hence the great watchwords of the Reformation—***sola scriptura***! This does not mean Protestants neglect tradition, only that tradition is submitted to the higher authority of the Bible.

Furthermore, Protestants insist that God speaks to the reader of the Bible in a direct manner rather than being mediated by the church. Just as the Reformers placed Scripture above tradition, they placed the Scriptures above the church. It was the Word of God that gave birth to the church, Calvin insisted, and not the other way around.

Most Orthodox believers understand things differently. According to the late Orthodox theologian John Meyendorff (d. 1992), "The Christian faith and experience can in no way be compatible with the notion of ***sola scriptura***" and the rejection of all ecclesiastical authority except Scripture. This elevation of the Bible above the church, the consequence of which is private interpretation, George Florovsky (d. 1979) once called "the sin of the Reformation."

Positively, Orthodoxy believes that the Spirit of God speaks to his people through apostolic tradition. This tradition is expressed through Scripture, to be sure, but also through the seven ecumenical councils, and to a lesser degree, the church fathers, liturgy, canon law, and icons.

Furthermore, contrary to Calvin, the Orthodox note that the church existed some 300 years before the ecumenical councils and the formation of the scriptural canon. The Reformed idea of "Scripture alone" seems privatistic (allowing each person to interpret truth on his or her own) and therefore dangerous. By way of contrast, converts to Orthodoxy vow 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."

### **Becoming like God**

The central issue raised by the Reformation was how a person could stand just before a holy God—How can I be saved? For traditional Protestants, the answer to this question is expressed in Paul's doctrine of "justification by faith alone." The perfect righteousness of Christ is credited to me by faith alone and not by any work I do. Because of Christ's righteousness, God declares me just. Calvin called this doctrine "the hinge upon which true religion turns." According to Luther, Christianity stands or falls with this doctrine.

The background for justification is distinctly legal or forensic. Having offended the majesty and honor of God, a just penalty must be paid. Calvin describes justification by faith just so: "Just as a man, deemed innocent by an impartial judge, is said to be justified, so a sinner is said to be justified by God when he asserts His righteousness."

It is fascinating to observe the total absence of the doctrine of justification by faith in large segments of

Orthodox history and theology. Instead, the idea of **theosis** or "deification" takes center stage. The startling aphorism—attributed to many early church fathers, including the champion of trinitarianism, Athanasius—summed it up well: "God became man so that men might become gods."

In fact, **theosis** enjoys the support of Scripture, as in 2 Peter 1:4: "[God] has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature . . ." Put another way, the Son of God **descended** and became a man, that we humans might **ascend** and become like Christ. The legal framework for understanding the work of Christ is played down and our mystical union with God is emphasized.

But what does it mean to "become God"? First, Orthodoxy categorically repudiates any hint of pantheism; theosis does not mean the essence of our human nature is lost. Rather, theosis speaks to believers' real, genuine, and mystical union with God whereby we become more and more like Christ and move from corruption to immortality. As we avail ourselves of God's grace and live lives of spiritual vigilance, we hope for what Maximus the Confessor (580-662) described as the "glorious attainment of likeness to God, insofar as this is possible with man."

As Lossky observed, there is indeed a "dogmatic dissimilarity" between Christian thinkers in the East and West. I for one am thoroughly Protestant, but I am grateful to God for what I can learn from the Orthodox about our common pilgrimage of faith.

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Issue 54: Eastern Orthodoxy

## An Exercise in Wonder

Orthodox writers on the deep mysteries of the Christian faith.

various Orthodox writers

### The transcendence of God

God cannot be grasped by the mind. If he could be grasped, he would not be God.

—*Evagrius of Pontus (d. 399)*

One day some of the brethren came to see Abba Antony, and among them was Abba Joseph. Wishing to test them, the old man mentioned a text from Scripture, and starting with the youngest, he asked them what it meant. Each explained it as best he could. But to each one the old man said, "You have not yet found the answer."

Last of all, he said to Abba Joseph, "And what do you think the text means?" He replied, "I do not know." Then Abba Antony said, "Truly, Abba Joseph has found the way, for he said, 'I do not know.'"

—*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers (sixth century)*

Imagine a sheer, steep crag, with a projecting edge at the top. Now imagine what a person would probably feel if he put his foot on the edge of this precipice and, looking down into the chasm below, saw no solid footing nor anything to hold on to.

This is what I think the soul experiences when it goes beyond its footing in material things, in its quest for that which has no dimension and which exists from all eternity. For here there is nothing it can take hold of, neither place nor time, neither measure nor anything else; our minds cannot approach it.

And thus the soul, slipping at every point from what cannot be grasped, becomes dizzy and perplexed and returns once again to what is connatural to it, content now to know merely this about the Transcendent, that it is completely different from the nature of the things that the soul knows.

—*Gregory of Nyssa (d. about 395)*

### The mystery of the incarnation

God became man so that men might become gods.

—*Athanasius (d. 373)*

He whom none may touch is seized;

He who looses Adam from the curse is bound.

He who tries the hearts and inner thoughts of man is unjustly brought to trial;

He who closed the abyss is shut in prison.

He who closed the abyss is shut in prison.

He, before whom the powers of heaven stand trembling, stands before Pilate;

The Creator is struck by the hands of his creature.

He who comes to judge the living and the dead is condemned to the cross.

The destroyer of hell is enclosed in a tomb.

O thou who dost endure all these things in thy tender love, Who has saved all men from the curse,

O long-suffering Lord, glory to thee.

*—Vespers liturgy for Good Friday*

I know that he who is far outside the whole creation

Takes me within himself and hides me in his arms,

And then I find myself outside the whole world.

I, a frail, small mortal in the world,

Behold the Creator of the world, all of him, within myself;

And I know that I shall not die, for I am within the Life,

I have the whole of Life springing up as a fountain within me.

He is in my heart, he is in heaven:

Both there and here he shows himself to me with equal glory.

*—Simeon the New Theologian (d. 1022)*

### **The paradoxes of prayer**

Speech is the organ of this present world. Silence is a mystery of the world to come.

*—Isaac the Syrian (d. about 700)*

The brethren asked Abba Agathon, "Amongst all our different activities, Father, which is the virtue that requires the greatest effort?"

He answered, "Forgive me, but I think there is no labor greater than praying to God. For every time a



man wants to pray, his enemies, the demons, try to prevent him; for they know that nothing obstructs them so much as prayer to God. In everything else that a man undertakes, if he perseveres, he will attain rest. But in order to pray, a man must struggle to his last breath."

**—The Sayings of the Desert Fathers (sixth century)**

Think of a man standing at night inside his house, with all the doors closed; and then suppose that he opens a window just at the moment when there is a sudden flash of lightning. Unable to bear its brightness, at once he protects himself by closing his eyes and drawing back from the window.

So it is with the soul that is enclosed in the realm of the senses; if ever she peeps out through the window of the intellect, she is overwhelmed by the brightness, like lightning, of the pledge of the Holy Spirit that is within her. Unable to bear the splendor of unveiled light, at once she is bewildered in her intellect and she draws back entirely upon herself, taking refuge, as in a house, among sensory and human things.

**—Simeon the New Theologian (d. 1022)**

The further the soul advances, the greater are the adversaries against which it must contend.

Blessed are you, if the struggle grows fierce against you at the time of prayer.

Do not allow your eyes to sleep or your eyelids to slumber until the hour of your death, but labor without ceasing that you may enjoy life without end.

**—Evagrius of Pontus (d. 399)**

Let all multiplicity be absent from your prayer. A single word was enough for the publican and the prodigal son to receive God's pardon. ... Do not try to find exactly the right words for your prayer: how many times does the simple and monotonous stuttering of children draw the attention of their father!

Do not launch into long discourses, for if you do, your mind will be dissipated trying to find just the right words. The publican's short sentence moved God to mercy. A single word full of faith saved the thief.

**—John Climacus (d. 649)**

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

**—The Jesus Prayer (seventh century)**

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Issue 54: Eastern Orthodoxy

## The Counsels of Christ

The Orthodox believe Jesus' voice can still be heard in the seven ecumenical councils.

Stanley Samuel Harakas

Jesus Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the Church "into all truth" (John 16:13). According to the Orthodox, this promise finds its most complete fulfillment in the ecumenical councils.

At ecumenical (from the Greek word for "worldwide") councils, bishops and clergy from across the church gathered to produce two types of rulings. Canons deal with administrative matters and can be changed by later councils. *Horoï*, doctrinal formulations, cannot; they permanently express authentic Orthodox teaching.

Through the centuries, Orthodox leaders have gathered in dozens of councils to discuss doctrine and practice. But the Orthodox believe there have been only seven truly *ecumenical* councils. Here are the main theological teachings and some sample canons passed by each council.

### 1. Nicea (325)

- 318 bishops
- Opposed the teaching of Arius by affirming that Jesus Christ is fully divine.
- Issued the first version of the Nicene Creed.
- Passed 85 canons: Rome is the first see of Christendom; various restrictions are to be placed on Christians who denied the faith under persecution; prayer should be offered standing.

### 2. Constantinople (381)

- 150 bishops
- Affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit, thus formulating the doctrine of the Holy Trinity: One God in three persons (*hypostases*), Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Completed final version of Nicene Creed (also called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed).
- Passed seven canons: bishops should not interfere in matters of other dioceses; the bishop of Constantinople is second only to Rome.

### 3. Ephesus (431)

- 200 bishops
- Rejected the teaching of Nestorius, affirming that Jesus Christ was one person with two natures.
- Declared Mary the *Theotokos*, "Birthgiver of God."
- Passed eight canons: bishops deposed by Nestorian bishops are to be reinstated; it is forbidden to alter the Nicene Creed.

### 4. Chalcedon (451)

- 630 bishops
- Opposed monophysite views, which held that the divine nature of Jesus Christ overwhelmed his human nature. Taught that the divine and human in Christ were united without confusion, change,

division, or separation.

- Passed 30 canons: clergy and monks forbidden from involvement in business or the military; women cannot be ordained deaconesses before the age of 40; priests and deacons are not permitted to seize the material goods of their bishop once he dies.

## 5. Constantinople II (553)

- 165 bishops
- In light of continuing controversies about the person of Christ, it re-affirmed the teachings of the previous ecumenical councils regarding Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- No canons passed.

## 6. Constantinople III (680)

- 170 bishops
- Opposed the monothelete (single divine will) teaching about Christ, and affirmed that Jesus Christ had both full human and divine wills, united harmoniously under the leadership of the divine will.
- No canons passed.

## 5. & 6. Quinisext Council (692)

- 327 bishops
- Also known as the Council in Trullo because it was held in the *trullus*, or domed room of the emperor's palace in Constantinople.
- It is viewed as an extension of the Fifth-Sixth Ecumenical Councils, thus the name.
- Passed 102 canons: obligatory clerical celibacy condemned; Saturday fasting during Lent forbidden.

## 7. Nicea II (787)

- 367 bishops
- Held in the midst of the more-than-century-long icon controversy (725-842). Concluded that only God can be worshiped, but icons can be honored as a means of expressing devotion to what was depicted in them.
- Passed 22 canons: bishops, priests, and deacons cannot be appointed by secular authorities; women cannot stay in bishops' houses or men's monasteries.

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Issue 54: Eastern Orthodoxy

## A Taste of Glory

For the Orthodox, worship is heaven on earth.

Paul Meyendorff

In 987, Prince Vladimir of Kiev is said to have sent emissaries to different countries to learn about the religion and worship of each. He was searching for an appropriate faith for his people.

The emissaries went first to the Volga Bulgars. These Muslims they reportedly found disgraceful, sorrowful, and having a "dreadful stench." And among the Germans (Western Christians), the ambassadors reported they saw "no glory." In Constantinople, they were taken to Hagia Sophia, the cathedral church of the capital. Their report:

"We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor 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. For we cannot forget that beauty."

Prince Vladimir was convinced, and his subjects accepted Greek Christianity and were baptized.

This account from the Russian *Primary Chronicle*, though legendary, nonetheless conveys this: the Russians were converted not by theological arguments but by the sheer splendor of Byzantine worship.

This liturgical tradition, followed even in the most remote parish, more than anything else still defines Orthodoxy. A brief "tour" of an Orthodox service will help the non-Orthodox grasp this truth more deeply.

### The dance of worship

A western visitor to an Orthodox church is immediately struck by the building. Icons of saints and biblical scenes cover the walls and ceiling, sometimes entirely. A screen covered with icons, called the iconostasis, separates the sanctuary (where the altar sits) from the nave (where the congregation gathers).

Over the nave soars a large central dome, from which an austere image of the *Pantocrator* (Christ seated on his throne of glory) gazes down on the gathered assembly. Images of Christ and the *Theotokos* (Mary, "Birthgiver of God,") flank the central doors of the iconostasis.

The images are large, bold, formal, lacking any sentimentality. They intend to convey this: you stand in the presence of the living God, together with the saints and the righteous of every age. Before a single word has been uttered, then, the congregation forms itself into a mirror image of the heavenly assembly of all believers, who together sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy ..." (Rev. 4:8).

As the service begins, the visitor is transported into a new and unfamiliar world. The smell of incense fills the church. The central doors of the iconostasis are opened and the priest, vested in resplendent robes, intones the opening benediction. The deacon chants the opening litany, and the choir and people respond, *Kyrie eleison* ("Lord, have mercy"). Nearly the entire service is chanted

or sung.

At each petition, the people make the sign of the cross and bow, offering their prayers physically, as well as mentally. They stand throughout the long service, as Orthodox churches generally lack pews.

The clergy move in and out of the sanctuary in what appears to be a precise dance. Acolytes process with candles. Singers juggle the numerous music and hymn books. The faithful move back and forth, placing candles on stands before icons.

All this appears to be complex and chaotic, but to the worshipers it is all natural. Everyone knows his or her role in the assembly.

The visitor is also struck by the hymns and prayers. Some are chanted aloud for all to hear, others recited almost inaudibly. Westerners, accustomed to brief, simple, direct prayers, are often taken aback by the elaborate, flowery, and highly poetic language of the Byzantine liturgy. These texts, most composed between the fourth to the eleventh centuries, represent the highest achievement of medieval Greek Christian culture.

Prayers and hymns are largely built on scriptural material. The eucharistic prayer composed by St. Basil the Great, for example, contains at least 44 direct biblical citations in the preface alone.

### **The kingdom comes**

Long before printed books, universities, or seminaries, this liturgy educated and formed the faithful. Scripture is read and expounded upon, hymns convey church teaching, and icons corroborate that teaching. A peasant in the Carpathian Mountains of Ukraine who may never have heard of the Council of Chalcedon (451), which affirmed the two natures of Christ, will know from memory an Orthodox hymn paraphrasing its decrees.

This liturgical tradition has developed continuously, yet in all ages, Orthodox worship has sought to offer the faithful a unique vision and experience. The Orthodox believe that, through the Holy Spirit, Christ descends to give us his Word and his body and blood. At the same time, we are transported to where he is, so that every time the church gathers for worship, we experience a foretaste of the kingdom.

***Paul Meyendorff is professor of liturgical theology at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Crestwood, New York.***

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 54: Eastern Orthodoxy

## We Do Not Wish to Blur the Faith

The spiritual head of Orthodoxy speaks some frank words to Protestants.

interview with Bartholomew I, archbishop of Constantinople

*The bishop of Constantinople is also called the ecumenical patriarch and holds honorary primacy among the bishops of Orthodox churches. The current ecumenical patriarch, Bartholomew I, will make a pastoral visit to the United States this summer, marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America. Christian History conducted a fax interview with Bartholomew I, the unedited transcript of which is reproduced here.*



[Click to Enlarge...](#)

### What is the purpose of your upcoming visit to the U.S.?

The occasion for our visit to the United States is the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding, in 1922, of our Archdiocese of North and South America by the visionary Patriarch Meletios (Metaxakis). Patriarch Meletios, equipped with a first-hand understanding of the American milieu, undertook the task of organizing the canonical structure of the Church for the Greek Orthodox immigrants in the New World. In accordance with the tradition and canon law governing the Orthodox Church, he placed them under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Holy Mother and Great Church of Christ, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

As to the nature of my prospective visit to the United States: it is clearly pastoral. The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople has both the privilege and responsibility of being the Protothronos, "the First Throne," of the Church. As such, it is a visible symbol of unity for Orthodox of every land and nation—and a source of unceasing intercession for them all. Therefore, it is self-evident that the coming visit will have a pan-Orthodox character.

One should remember that the Orthodox Church has never deviated from that consciousness and fundamental perspective of agape—love and unity. We are called to exercise the "ministry of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:18), and we look forward to a return of the holy churches of Christ to unity in him. At every divine liturgy, shortly before holy Communion, the Orthodox Church throughout the world prays for "the unity of all," that is, eschatologically speaking, the restoration of the unity of all mankind.

As Ecumenical Patriarch, we understand the broader meaning of this "ministry of reconciliation," and we actively pursue it by our pilgrimages around the world as we continue to reach out to all people, without regard to creed, color or ethnic origin.

### **To many Western Protestants, Orthodoxy feels dated, a quaint relic of a previous age. To others, it feels as if one has to become Eastern before becoming Orthodox. How do you respond to such perceptions?**

You portray what is unfortunately an accurate picture, i.e., that the Protestant world (and not only it) is largely ignorant of Orthodoxy. Even theologians of great credibility have passed on rather demeaning misconceptions about Orthodoxy, as if it were a liturgical, or better yet, some ritualistic fossil. Unfortunately, such misconceptions, borne out of either ignorance or even polemical intentions, have been handed down unexamined for generations. Even the best efforts of the ecumenical movement, which aim at better understanding within the Christian family, have not succeeded completely at correcting this.

Another mistaken perception is contained in the very way you pose the question about the "East" and Orthodoxy. From an historical point of view, it is true that Orthodoxy has had an enormous impact on Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean basin. But let us not forget that Orthodoxy has had an historic and vibrant presence in the West since the middle of the eighteenth century, including the Greek colony in New Smyrna (modern day St. Augustine, Florida), the missions to Alaska, and the first parish founded in the continental United States in New Orleans (1864), which embraced Orthodox from every ethnic background.

Let us further remember that the Church is called not to identify Herself with civilizations and cultures but to transform them!

### **Can Orthodoxy become popular in the West? If so, how?**

The mission of the Church is not to become "popular" but to preach the authentic Gospel of salvation and bear witness to the Resurrection of Christ. The work of Church is essentially prophetic and often far from being "people-pleasing."

The 2,000-year experience of the Church confirms that wherever the grace of God accomplishes her prophetic mission in truth and love, the Church gathers together the scattered children of God, and as a tender-hearted mother loves and, in return, is loved. We believe that is the case of Orthodoxy's witness and presence in the West.

Our Church is becoming "popular" precisely because she is the historical Church; she continues to preach the authentic gospel of salvation and bear witness to the Resurrection of Christ and has never tolerated nor accepted classes or categories within her fold. She is the Church of the people of God, coming from the people and ministering to the people in a "populist" way, rather than from "on high." In spirit, we are one family and one body of Christ.

**Orthodoxy has experienced some of the most severe persecution in church history, both from Islam and Communism. How has that affected Orthodoxy, for good and for ill?**

It is well known that the Church has been persecuted since the Day of Pentecost. The persecutors have been many, then and now. Christ has always been and continues to be "a sign of contradiction" (St. Luke 2:34), and with him, his Church. If there were no persecution, that would indeed be strange! We have always trodden the way of the Cross; there is no other path for the disciple of Christ. The Church's course through the ages has always been fraught with dangers and Her foundations are grounded in the sacrifice of men, women, and even children, whose very bones bear witness to the faith.

Recent times have seen a differing degrees of persecution from atheism, religious fanatics, and others, but we must not forget that the Church always emerges from these trials spiritually fortified and confirmed in the knowledge of her true path.

And we cannot help but acknowledge the pain caused by the acts of reprisal and inhumanity perpetrated by some Orthodox towards those who have wronged them. This only strengthens our resolve to pursue a dialogue of peace and reconciliation among our first responsibilities.

**Orthodoxy is a small minority in the West. You would think that the various Orthodox bodies, especially in the U. S., would join together to present a unified Orthodox witness. Yet all around there seems to be suspicion, jealousy, and lack of trust among the Orthodox. What contributes to that?**

Indeed, Orthodoxy is nearly an imperceptible minority in the West, and a consolidation of efforts would no doubt advance the witness of Orthodoxy in the West, to the benefit of the West. However, we must proceed cautiously in order to avoid the temptation to pursue any perceived worldly "power." Our aim is simply to strengthen the unity of the Church, to augment and edify the body of Christ.

To this end, the question of the Orthodox diaspora has been included in the agenda of the preparations for the eventual Holy and Great Synod of Orthodoxy. Along with these preparations, steps are being taken to overcome some obstacles from the past and promote a more substantial and visible unity. But the unity is essentially there, perhaps not always as visible to some because of the jurisdictional distinctions and ethnic and cultural pluralism.

**What are the greatest challenges facing Orthodoxy today?**

Orthodoxy shares the same challenges which all Christians and religions face: unbelief, secularism, decrease of spirituality, loss of hope. In particular, Orthodoxy faces the consequences of a long domination by atheistic regimes in lands which were by long held tradition Orthodox, and the resulting cultural discontinuity and spiritual vacuum.

Above all, Orthodoxy is confronted with the zeal of many Western Christians, especially from America, who, hastily attempting to fill that vacuum, are spiritually pilfering the house of their brethren. It would have been better for these zealots, their sponsors and supporters, to have spent some time studying Orthodoxy and to learn from real life experience, rather than only in theory, what it means to be a disciple of Christ and to witness the gospel in martyrdom.

We must never forget that the greatest persecution of Christians in history occurred in this century, hidden behind Iron and Islamic Fundamentalist Curtains, while the Western Christians lived in freedom and ignorance of the martyrdom of their brothers and sisters.

**The Orthodox claim to constitute the only true Church. This claim, naturally, makes Catholics and Protestants balk. How should we understand this claim? What, according to the Orthodox, is our status before God?**

We do not hold that exclusivity means judgment or exclusion. The idea that membership in a visible Church organization is requisite for membership in heaven is based on a false paradigm—that we somehow parallel the kingdom of God in this world. The kingdom is not an exterior reality, rather it is interior, at least until the end of time.

In identifying the Orthodox Church as the Church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ through His Holy Apostles, we by no means circumscribe or limit the kingdom of God. We know well the words of the Lord, that the Spirit blows where he will, and we acknowledge that the power, mercy and love of God are well beyond our comprehension.

While affirming that "He that is not with Me is against Me" (St. Luke 11:23), we also affirm that "He that is not against us is for us" (St. Luke 9:50). This historical antinomy is ever present in the life of the Church. But it nevertheless does not blur the definition of the faith, the canonical boundaries of the good order of the Church, or our desire to call all mankind to the knowledge of the truth. We prefer the spirit of genuine love and concern and avoid the kind of triumphalism that has caused so much alienation and division throughout the ages.

**What is the most important message you will try to get across to Western Protestants when you visit the U.S.?**

We are coming to America to bring a message of restoration and renewal through our blessed hope in the Risen Christ.

We are coming to America to speak the truth in love, for perfect love casts out fear and is the perfect path to unity in that same risen Christ.

We are coming to America to bring to our brothers and sisters in the Lord the lively faith that has been lived in the lands of the New Testament, indeed from where the New Testament itself was composed and compiled.

We are coming to America from with the same creed and confession forged in our own God-protected cities of Nicea and Constantinople that is a veritable synopsis of the Christian gospel that anyone can learn, live and through the living, inherit life everlasting.

We are coming to America because in America the faith that began at Jerusalem has spread out to the uttermost ends of the earth. Just as America began at Jamestown but received her constitution in Philadelphia, so does Constantinople complete the mystery inaugurated in Jerusalem.

We are coming to America bringing that same firm foundation, which has endured from the beginning, to share that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have heard with our ears and our very hands have touched: the mystery of God incarnate, alive forever in his people, his body, his Church.

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 54: Eastern Orthodoxy

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## Eastern Orthodoxy: Christian History Interview - An Evangelical Appraisal

The strength of Orthodoxy, it turns out, is also its greatest temptation.

interview with Harold O.J. Brown

***For many Protestants, Orthodoxy is an unsettling mix—a culturally foreign faith that at times feels very Protestant.***

***Harold O. J. Brown, professor of theology Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, has been fascinated with Orthodoxy since his graduate school days, when he studied Irenaeus and other early church fathers. He is a member of Evangelical Free Church and a leading commentator on theology and society. He has written a number of books, including, Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present (Baker, 1988). He talked with Christian History about his views on Orthodoxy.***

**What about Orthodoxy do you appreciate most?**

The Orthodox have a tremendous sense of the continuity of the people of God, that is, tradition. Also, they have a deep respect for Scripture; their services are primarily Scripture verses added one to another. And, of course, there is the beauty and majesty of Orthodox services.

Not as well-known is the freedom allowed in Orthodoxy. Though it retains a great many traditions, it doesn't make non-scriptural matters mandatory. For example, in 1951 the Roman Catholic Church decreed the Assumption of the Virgin Mary to be a doctrine necessary to believe for salvation. The Orthodox have for centuries celebrated this belief (that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven at the end of her life) in their Feast of the Dormition ("falling asleep") of Mary. But they have never made it mandatory to believe.

**What does strong tradition and liturgy give the Orthodox?**

Stability. I have an Orthodox friend who teaches at a well-known seminary. While studying at Harvard Divinity School, he became intellectually skeptical about the truth of the gospel. But because he was an Orthodox priest at the time, every Sunday he had to lead the liturgy, which is saturated with Scripture and sound theology. On Sundays, he had to act as though he believed it.

Eventually, he worked through his intellectual doubts, and he partly credits the weekly liturgy. It kept pulling him back into the Christian world until his faith was made whole again. Most Protestant students who begin doubting their faith do not have such a tradition to steady them.

**One Orthodox historian has said that the Orthodox have more in common with evangelicals than with Catholics. Do you agree?**

In many ways, yes. First, the Orthodox place Scripture at the forefront of their faith. Tradition for them is a handing down of things entrusted to the church, and Scripture is the primary thing entrusted to the church. They regard tradition as an interpretation of Scripture, not as an independent source of religious truth.

Furthermore, great emphasis is placed on the person of Christ, on his work and on the mystery of his Incarnation and Resurrection.

Also, the Orthodox do not accept the universal supremacy of the pope. They acknowledge the pope as the head of the church of his jurisdiction but not of the whole church.

**A small but significant group of evangelicals have recently converted to Orthodoxy, including Franky Schaeffer.**

### **What is the attraction for them?**

Besides the things already mentioned, they have been troubled by the chaos of Protestantism. They see mainline denominations playing fast and loose with doctrine, questioning everything from the Virgin Birth to the Trinity.

They're troubled also by the disorderly behavior of evangelicals who run from one fad to another. Protestantism to them feels rootless, without a connection to the people of God through the centuries.

The Orthodox have deep roots, which keeps them steady on many issues. For example, since the courts permitted abortion, Protestants have debated what they believe about abortion. The Orthodox, however, have a tradition that long ago determined abortion was wrong. So they weren't confused by *Roe v. Wade* and have been able to speak with a clear, strong voice on the matter.

In addition, Protestantism tends to be rational and word centered. There's an awful lot of talk in Protestant worship. The Orthodox have a liturgy that enlists beauty—in icons, hymns, and symbolism—and promotes contemplation and nurtures at a deep level the feeling that God is truly present.

This was one reason Franky Schaeffer, for example, joined the Greek Orthodox Church. He felt that evangelicals didn't have sufficient appreciation for the role of art and beauty in the Christian life.

### **What features of Orthodoxy trouble you most?**

One of the things I admire most: tradition. Sometimes customs become merely dead tradition that stifles the church. For example, the liturgy of the Russian Orthodox Church is still sung in Old Church Slavonic, a language hardly anyone knows today. This makes it difficult for Russians to hold on to their youth and to attract new people to their church.

We have to be fair: Protestants can also cling to outmoded traditions, but this seems to be a greater temptation in Orthodoxy.

Another concern would be icons. Orthodox theology on this point is good: the Orthodox say they do not "worship" icons but only "honor" or "reverence" them. I'm sure this is true for many Orthodox. But it's not hard to imagine that countless Orthodox worshipers don't see the difference and that, in many cases, icons are simply worshiped.

Finally, Orthodoxy is still an ethnic faith. There are exceptions, but often to be Orthodox means also to be Greek or Serbian or Russian. And sometimes being **Greek** Orthodox (or whatever) is more important than being an orthodox Christian.

### **Why have you remained Protestant in spite of your obvious respect for Orthodoxy?**

In spite of the real confusion in Protestantism, there is still a considerable unity at the center: most Protestants affirm the Incarnation, the Trinity, and a host of ethical imperatives. Besides, Orthodoxy (and Catholicism, for that matter) endures its share of chaos; the conflicts that erupt between Orthodox churches and theologians are just as confusing as in Protestantism.

True unity has to do with staying within the doctrine and teaching of the apostles, and in a fellowship of people who believe that, no matter their church tradition. You can't promote unity of belief merely by going to some church with a particular label. In the end, it is the Holy Spirit, not human organization, who keep us in the truth.

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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## Eastern Orthodoxy: Recommended Resources

Eastern Orthodoxy

editors

### Books

No better overview of Orthodoxy can be had than Timothy Ware's *The Orthodox Church* (Penguin, 1993) and his *The Orthodox Way* (St. Vladimir's, 1979, 1996). We've also found helpful Ernst Benz's *The Eastern Orthodox Church: Its Thought and Life* (Doubleday, 1963).

Robert Payne's *The Holy Fire: The Story of the Early Centuries of the Christian Church in the Near East* (St. Vladimir's, 1957, 1996) presents ten fast-paced, engaging narratives on the lives of key Eastern Fathers.

To get a better understanding of the Great Schism, see Steven Runciman's *The Eastern Schism: A Study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches During the XIth and XIIth Centuries* (Oxford, 1955), which is more readable than the title suggests.

A thorough yet accessible examination of Orthodox doctrine can be found in Jaroslav Pelikan's *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*, Volume 2 of his magisterial *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (University of Chicago, 1974). Daniel Clendenin's *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective* (Baker, 1994) looks at the tradition with Protestant eyes.

*The Jesus Prayer*, by a monk of the Eastern Church (St. Vladimir's, 1987), introduces readers to a unique contribution of Eastern Orthodoxy to Christian spirituality.

For those curious about icons, Michael Quenot's *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom* (St. Vladimir's, 1991) is a splendid introduction. Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky's *The Meaning of Icons* (St. Vladimir's, 1989), revised edition, has large color plates and detailed explanations of icons.

In the world of fiction, Feodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* contains sketches of Russian Orthodox monasticism and spirituality, especially in the character of Zossima the elder.

### Catalogues

Orthodox material is hard to come by, but two Orthodox distributors will send catalogues (gratis) of their Orthodox books, icons, CDs, calendars, etc.:

—St. Vladimir's Seminary Press (800-204-2665), which is connected with the New York Orthodox seminary of the same name.

—Light and Life (612-925-3888), a Minneapolis publisher.

### Films/Videos

*The History and Holy Sacraments of Orthodox Christianity* (Gotelecom, 1992), are three half-

hour videos that introduce the history and beliefs of Greek Orthodoxy. Call 1-800-888-6835 to order.

### **The Web**

The Orthodox are Internet savvy, and a number of sites are worth exploring. The place to begin is ***The Orthodox Christian Page in America*** (<http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/>). From there you can access home pages of various Orthodox communions, as well as current news, links to icons (which you can download), classic readings, online magazines, and mail lists.

### **Christian History Back Issues**

***The Russian Millennium***, looks at the [Russian side of Orthodoxy](#); ***Heresy and Doctrine in the Early Church***, details doctrinal foundations; ***Worship in the Early Church***, examines liturgical background; and ***John Chrysostom***, looks at one of Orthodoxy's greatest saints.

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