

## Amsterdam Lectures 2012-13:

### The Ways of Modern Orthodox Theology: Part I

#### Lecture I: The *Philokalia* and its influence: Handout

*Introductory Lecture.* This series of lectures, which will extend over the next two years, will give some kind of account of the history of Orthodox theology from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the twenty-first century. We shall end in the present, but where do we begin, and how shall we proceed?

- The date I have chosen to begin with is 1782, the date of the publication in Venice of the anthology of Byzantine ascetical and mystical literature, known as the *Philokalia*, edited by St Makarios of Corinth and St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain. I shall argue that this date—a symbolic, rather than strictly literal, date—marks a turning point in the history of Orthodox theology.
- How to proceed? I shall present a history of Orthodox *thinkers*, rather than a history of Orthodox *thought*, or theology. This year we shall start next month with Vladimir Solov'ev, then continue through Fr Pavel Florensky, Fr Sergii Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdyaev, Fr Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky, St Maria Skobtsova, Fr Dumitru Stăniloae, and end with St Justin Popovich. Next year we shall start with Paul Evdokimov and continue through to Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia. For thoughts—or theology—do not float through some intellectual ether, but are thought by thinkers. I am wary of ways of presenting thought as if it were in some way detached from the thinkers who have these thoughts, thinkers who are men—and also women—human beings of flesh and blood, who belonged to specific places and faced particular problems—in the world in which they lived, in the relationships in which they were caught up, and (most important, though often quite hidden) in the depths of their souls.
- You will notice that this list is *highly selective*. I am not giving an exhaustive account of Orthodox theology over two centuries, but of those Orthodox thinkers who still seem to me to have a great deal to say to us. It is also limited by what is available to me, with limited linguistic resources.

For the rest of this lecture, I want to introduce a number of considerations, some methodological, some historical, that follow on from these principles.

First, the choice of the *Philokalia* suggests various methodological choices:

- *Philokalia* part of a movement of renewal in the Orthodox Church: Kollyvades, renewal of hesychast monasticism, spiritual fatherhood, the Jesus prayer
- As a *theological* turning point, it suggests an attitude to theology that marks a break with the way in which theology had come to be studied in the Orthodox world, partly as a result of the need to relate Orthodox theology to the theological disputes in the West that followed on the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and partly with the way in which theology had begun to be

studied in the Russian world as a result of the Westernizing policies of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great

Seeing the *Philokalia* as a turning point also suggests the introductory history for this course of lectures:

- Mostly Russian, to begin with.
- Khomiakov and Kireevsky: the Slavophiles
- Optina Pustyn' and the turn to the Fathers
- The translation of the Fathers by the Spiritual Academies in Russia
- Outreach into wider Russian culture: Dostoevsky

*Bibliography:*

On the *Philokalia*:

*The Philokalia. A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality*, ed. Brock Bingaman & Bradley Nassif (New York, 2012)

Placide Deseille, *La Spiritualité orthodoxe et la Philocalie* (Paris, 2011)

On the history of Orthodox theology in the modern period, see:

Yannis Spiteris, *La Teologia ortodossa neo-greca* (Bologna, 1992)

Hyacinthe Destivelle, *Les Sciences théologiques en Russie* (Paris, 2010)

[Both these books discuss the kind of nineteenth-century Russian and modern Greek Orthodox theology that I am largely ignoring]

Histories of modern Orthodox theology by Orthodox themselves:

G. Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, 2 vols. (Belmont MA, 1979; Vaduz, 1987)

Christos Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, trans. Peter Chamberis & Norman Russell (Brookline, 2006; from the Greek, Athens, 1992)

On Optina Pustyn' and the Slavophiles:

*On Spiritual Unity. A Slavophile Reader*, trans. and ed. Boris Jakim & Robert Bird (Hudson NY, 1998)

Irina Paert, *Spiritual Elders. Charisma and Tradition in Russian Orthodoxy* (DeKalb, 2010)

There is a great deal of interest from a slightly different geographical perspective in:

Scott M. Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia, Trinity-Sergius, Monasticism and Society after 1825* (New York, 2010)

On Dostoevsky:

Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky. Language, Faith and Fiction* (London, 2008)