

**THIRD ANNUAL MEETING
OF PAIDEIA**

“The Beauty of a God Who Is Among Us”

June 3 - June 6, 2025

Antiochian Village

Bolivar, PA

With thanks to our co-sponsors, whose assistance has helped make this conference possible:

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**Hagop S. Mekhjian, MD, Chair in
Medical Ethics and Professionalism
Ohio State University**

TUESDAY, JUNE 3

3:00

ARRIVAL and ROOM CHECK-IN BEGINS
(Pick up materials at front desk, Upper Chapel Lobby)

5:30 to 6:30

DINNER
Cedars Dining Room

6:30 to 7:00

VENDOR DISPLAY
Books and other materials available for sale or display
Chestnut Auditorium
(Note: these will remain on display throughout the conference)

7:00 to 7:15

WELCOME: BISHOP THOMAS (JOSEPH) OF CHARLESTON AND OAKLAND
Chestnut Auditorium

7:15 to 7:30

WELCOMING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION OF CO-SPONSORS
Bruce Foltz and David Bradshaw
Chestnut Auditorium

7:30 to 8:45

PLENARY TEXT SEMINAR:
DOSTOEVSKY AND THE AWAKENING TO DIVINE BEAUTY:
Readings from *The Brothers Karamazov*
Chestnut Auditorium

8:45 to 11:00

RECEPTION
Upper Chapel Lobby and Patio

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4

7:30-8:00

MORNING PRAYERS

Sts. Peter and Paul Chapel, beneath the Chapel Lobby

8:00 to 9:00

BREAKFAST

Cedars Dining Room

9:00 to 9:50

First Morning Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• **Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:**

Fr. Thomas Colyandro, “Uncreated Silence and Orthodox Christian Eldership (and Fellowship)”

• **Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:**

Robin Phillips, “The Metaphysics of the Machine and the Quest for Digital Transcendence”

• **Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:**

Fr. Hans Jacobse, “God’s Immanence Displayed Through Prayer that Fosters Healing”

• **White Pine Meeting Room 5:**

David Wilmington, “Guroian’s Divinizing Culture: Squinted Beauty, Dusty Icons, and the Incarnational Ethics of Liturgy”

10:00 to 10:50

Second Morning Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• **Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:**

Fr. Joseph Lucas, “Drawn to God: The Vision of Eternal Well-being in St. Maximus the Confessor”

• **Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:**

C. Clark Carlton, “Dogma as Grammatical Proposition”

• **Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:**

Keith Buhler, “The Beauty of Moderation”

• **White Pine Meeting Room 5:**

Masamichi Inoue, “An Ethnographic Exploration of the Orthodox Church of Japan: The Beauty of a ‘Changing Universal’ through Contextualization and Beyond”

11:00 to 11:50

Third Morning Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• **Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:**

John Burgess, “The Beauty of the Holy Elder”

• **Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:**

Jesse Cone, “Mystery and Ignorance: Anscombe’s Philosophical Defense of the Mystical”

• **Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:**

Pdn. Brian Patrick Mitchell, “Sanity and Fantasies of Church and State: Lessons Learned from the Byzantine Experience”

• **White Pine Meeting Room 5:**

William Weber, “The Beauty of Humility in St. Ignatius of Antioch”

12:00 to 1:00

LUNCH

Cedars Dining Room

1:30 to 2:20

First Afternoon Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• **Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:**

Andrew (Herman) Middleton, “Was the Industrial Revolution a ‘Second Fall’? Revisiting Philip Sherrard’s ‘The Desert Fathers and Ourselves’”

• **Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:**

Jennifer Lockhart, “For the Sake of the Beautiful: The Role of Beauty in Aristotle’s Ethics”

• **Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:**

Timothy Bartel, “Aging Body, Christ’s Body: The Poetry of Mortality in Faltonia Proba and St. Gregory the Theologian”

• **White Pine Meeting Room 5:**

Andrew Roushdy, “I Nicaea at the Crossroad of Soteriology and Anthropology: A Nicene Case for the Role of Human Synergy in the Divine Economy of Salvation”

2:30 to 3:20

Second Afternoon Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• **Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:**

Matthew Pietropaoli, “Tender, Compassionate Gaze: The Turn Toward Suffering and

Contemplation of Divine Beauty”

• **Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:**

Fr. Bogdan Bucur, “Beauty resplendent in the midst of ugliness: Christ and Christian Character in N. Steinhardt’s *Journal of Joy*”

• **Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:**

David Ford, “Male and Female in the Writings of St. John Chrysostom”

• **White Pine Meeting Room 5:**

Chad Whitacre, “The Synaxis of the Gospels and the Twelve Faithful Servants”

3:30 to 4:20

Third Afternoon Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• **Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:**

Fr. Ignatius Green, “Beauty False and True in the Theological Vision of Saint Gregory of Nyssa”

• **Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:**

Daniel Hinshaw, “Beauty as Divine Hospitality”

• **Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:**

Fr. Ambrose Inlow, “Transforming Personal Pain into All-Embracing Love according to St. Sophrony of Essex”

• **White Pine Meeting Room 5:**

Amir Azarvan, “AI, an Unlikely Apologist: Socratic Dialogues for the 21st Century”

4:30 to 5:20

Fourth Afternoon Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• **Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:**

Fr. Alexander Earl, “As Far as East is From the West: Theophanic Realism and Orthodox Culture”

• **Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:**

Fr. Chad Hatfield, “Roland Allen: A Forgotten Missiological Model”

• **Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:**

Rico Vitz, “Beauty beyond Words: Reflections on Humean Atheology and Christian Apophaticism”

• **White Pine Meeting Room 5:**

Sister Sidonia, “Persons at Prayer in Paradise: Light from Georgian Sources on the Reality of Paradise in the Church and in Every Human Heart”

5:30 to 6:30

DINNER

Cedars Dining Room

7:00 to 8:30

PLENARY KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

Andrew Gould, “Lord, It Is Good to Be Here: Building Orthodox Culture in America”

Ajar Amphitheatre

8:45 to 11:00

RECEPTION

Main Lobby and Patio

THURSDAY, JUNE 5

7:30-8:00

MORNING PRAYERS

Sts. Peter and Paul Chapel, beneath the Chapel Lobby

8:00 to 9:00

BREAKFAST

Cedars Dining Room

9:00 to 9:50

First Morning Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:

Fr. Paul Siewers, “Tarkovsky, Dostoevsky, and Frank: Are ‘Existentialist’ and ‘Panentheist’ Helpful Terms in Articulating ‘the Beauty of a God Who is Among Us’ in Orthodox Apologetics in the West Today?”

• Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:

Fr. Anthony Gilbert, “Defamiliarizing Death: The Aesthetics of Martyria”

• Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:

Stoyan Tanev, “Fr. Sergius Bulgakov on the Holy Spirit as Love: A Critical Reflection”

• White Pine Meeting Room 5:

Ralph (Zosimas) Sidway, “Photography, Stillness, and Beauty: Aesthetic and Ascetical Principles to Cultivate Numinous and Iconic Image Making”

10:00 to 10:50

Second Morning Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• **Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:**

Metropolitan Jonah (Paffhausen), “Carnal, Psychic, Spiritual: The Orthodox Psychology of Spiritual Maturity”

• **Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:**

Nicolas Laliberté, “Love and the Holy Spirit in Dumitru Staniloae: The Incarnation of Christ and our Adoption”

• **Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:**

David Gilbert, “Transcendence in Film, the Marx Brothers, and Incarnational Aesthetics”

• **White Pine Meeting Room 5:**

Jordan Henderson, “The God Who Made Him High Priest: Josephus, Alexander the Great, and the Iconoclastic Controversy”

11:00 to 11:50

Third Morning Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• **Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:**

Michael Garten, “Image and Incarnation: Holy Images of Christ in the Pre-Nicene Church”

• **Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:**

Fr. Joseph Thornburg, “Zoe and Bios: An Orthodox Christian Assessment of Genetic Engineering”

• **Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:**

Mary Ford, “‘Let Us Attend’: Beauty, Attention, and Liturgy”

• **White Pine Meeting Room 5:**

Samuel (Cole) Busby, “The Beauty of a God within Us: Appropriating Aristotle’s *Nous* through the Light of the Incarnation”

12:00 to 1:00

LUNCH

Cedars Dining Room

1:30 to 2:20

First Afternoon Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• **Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:**

Seraphim (Bruce) Foltz, “The World a Burning Bush: Notes toward a Symbolic Ontology of Creation”

• **Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:**

Daniel Manzuk, “The Impropriety of the ‘Double-Eagle’ as a Symbol of Orthodoxy, especially in North America”

• **Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:**

Xuan Jang, “Neoplatonism’s Solution to the Problem of Evil and a Necessary Turn towards Byzantine Philosophical Discourse”

• **White Pine Meeting Room 5:**

Mka. Wendy Cwiklinski, “The Beauty of a God among Us: Learning from Different Perceptions”

2:30 to 3:20

Second Afternoon Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• **Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:**

Cyril (Gary) Jenkins, “Why Can’t We Have Emperors Like This Anymore? Emperor St. Justinian’s Navigation between Severus of Antioch and Vigilius of Rome”

• **Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:**

Matthew Stripling, “God’s Presence in Signs, Symbols, and Images”

• **Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:**

Mary Lowell, “Depicting the Invisible: The Appeal and Dread of Imagery”

3:30 to 4:20

Third Afternoon Sessions (Presented Concurrently)

• **Scarlet Oak-Yellow Oak Meeting Room 1/2:**

Michael Kurian, “Under No Tree Does Wisdom Reveal Her Beauty: Orthodox Sophiology in the Book of Susanna”

• **Laurel Oak Meeting Room 3:**

Caitlin Gilbert, “Praying and Thinking about Beauty: On Spiritual Contemplation and the Philosophical Act”

• **Aspen Pine Meeting Room 4:**

David Bradshaw, “Orthodoxy and the Transformation of Marriage”

4:20 to 5:30
**** BREAK ****

5:30 to 6:30
DINNER
Cedars Dining Room

7:00 to 8:30
PLENARY KEYNOTE ADDRESS:
**Edith Humphrey, "The Beauty of God with Humanity:
The Trinity and Theological Anthropology"**
Ajar Amphitheatre

8:45 to 11:00
RECEPTION
Main Lobby and Patio

FRIDAY, JUNE 6

8:30 Orthros
Sts. Peter and Paul Chapel, beneath the Chapel Lobby

9:30 Divine Liturgy
Sts. Peter and Paul Chapel, beneath the Chapel Lobby

11:00
BRUNCH
Cedars Dining Room

12:00
Deadline to remove display items from Chestnut Auditorium

12:30
Check-out

2:30
Building closed

Abstracts and Speaker Biographies

Amir Azarvan, “AI, an Unlikely Apologist: Socratic Dialogues for the 21st Century”

Recent studies have reported that 60% of musicians are using AI to produce music and 86% of students are using it in higher education. Even scholars are turning to this revolutionary technology. According to Haider and colleagues, “academic journals, archives, and repositories are seeing an increasing number of questionable research papers clearly produced using generative AI.” Although there are certainly ethical - and possibly even spiritual - issues arising from the use of artificial intelligence, I explain how AI could be employed to explicate the validity of Christian truth claims. From the logical conclusion that the universe has a Cause that is eternal and incorporeal to the "compelling evidence" for the Resurrection, AI can be put to good apologetical use when engaged in a Socratic manner.

John (Amir) Azarvan is an associate professor of political science at Georgia Gwinnett College and a tonsured reader at St. Mary of Egypt Orthodox Church (ROCOR) in Roswell, GA. His research regularly explores the nexus of faith and politics. His scholarly and op-ed work has appeared in such venues as the *American Spectator*, *Spirituality Studies*, *Pravoslavie (Orthochristian)*, the *Catholic Social Science Review*, and *Inside Higher Ed*. He is the author of the Substack newsletter [Amirica](#).

Timothy Bartel, “Aging Body, Christ's Body: The Poetry of Mortality in Faltonia Proba and St. Gregory the Theologian”

When the Edict of Milan opened up the culture of the Roman Empire to an aspiring generation of Christian poets, this allowed for new meditations on the life of the Christian writer as an incarnate being. In the poems of Faltonia Proba and St. Gregory the Theologian in particular, we find meditations on the aging body. In Faltonia Proba, the aging body is a result of sin and a reminder of death, but also a means of participation in the redemptive suffering of Christ. Through her use of Virgilian images of Hector's slain body, Proba is able to connect the sufferings of the pagan heroes with the sufferings of Christ, and to use both to contextualize the bodily sufferings of herself and her readers. St. Gregory the Theologian, who, like Proba, wrote poems about the sufferings of old age, adds an ascetic dimension to the experiences of the aging body. The body becomes, in Gregory's poems, a site for spiritual struggle against the passions, particularly the passions of loquaciousness and vainglory. Gregory presents his own aging self as a swan, singing out a song to ease his passage into death, disciplined and purified by suffering. This paper will explore the work of both of these patristic poets and put their meditations on the aging body in the context of the contemporary theological conversations concerning aging and the human body.

Timothy E. G. Bartel, PhD, is an Orthodox poet and professor whose scholarship focuses on the relationship between the Church Fathers and the Anglo-American literary tradition. He has published four collections of poems and three monographs on theology and literature, including most recently *The Poets and the Fathers: Theology and Poetry from Gregory Nazianzus to Scott Cairns* (Pickwick Publications, 2024). Timothy currently serves as Provost and Professor of Great Texts and Theology at Saint Constantine College in Houston, TX.

David Bradshaw, “Orthodoxy and the Transformation of Marriage”

Demosthenes famously remarked in a speech to an audience of Athenian men, “Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our households.” This comment expresses well the ancient view of marriage as existing primarily for the sake of pooling economic resources and bearing and raising children. Love and companionship were a much lesser goal, and the Christian ideal of spiritual fellowship and mutual aid in seeking God, or whatever might be its pagan equivalent, did not figure at all.

How did Christianity change these assumptions about marriage? Obviously biblical teaching on the subject, beginning with the creation account in Genesis and culminating with St. Paul’s profound reflections in Ephesians 5, played a critical role. Here I will focus on two other factors that are less frequently noticed: monasticism and the veneration of the Theotokos. Understanding how these worked together to change the way that men and women thought about one another, and thereby also what they saw as the proper role of marriage, can take us a long way toward achieving a properly Orthodox understanding of marriage.

David Bradshaw is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kentucky. He is the author of *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge UP, 2004) and *Divine Energies and Divine Action* (IOTA Publications, 2023), as well as of numerous articles on ancient, patristic, and medieval philosophy. He and his wife Mary attend St. Athanasius Orthodox Church (OCA) in Nicholasville, KY.

Fr. Bogdan Bucur, “Beauty resplendent in the midst of ugliness: Christ and Christian Character in N. Steinhardt’s *Journal of Joy*”

This paper will present some of Fr. Nicolae Steinhardt’s great ethical themes—joy, kindness, nobility, courage, generosity—in the key, as it were, of beauty, as refractions of the mystical encounter with Beauty in Christ.

Bogdan G. Bucur (Ph.D. in Religious Studies, Marquette University, 2007) is an archpriest in the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America and associate professor of Patristics at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. He is the author of two books—*Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses* (Brill, 2009) and *Scripture Re-envisioned: Christophanic Exegesis and the Making of a Christian Bible* (Brill, 2018)—and several articles in the areas of biblical reception history and Patristics. Most recently he coordinated the project of an annotated English translation of Nicolae Steinhardt's *Journal of Joy* (SVS Press, 2025).

Keith Buhler, “The Beauty of Moderation”

Socrates describes in the *Phaedrus* a flight that gods and blessed souls take. In this flight, they contemplate and are nurtured by the form of Moderation. While the “many and mad masters” of erotic love tend toward immoderation, the even crazier, more intoxicating love of divine things tends toward moderation. This paper explores possible applications for cultivating a wild, fanatical love of moderation in activities such as private prayer, public liturgy, and mathematical study.

Keith Buhler (PhD, Philosophy, University of Kentucky) is the founding headmaster of Saint Andrew Academy in Riverside, CA. He is a humanities faculty member at Hildegard College, an active investor, and a father of four. His academic work focuses on virtue. He is very slowly producing on a book on classical education.

John Burgess, “The Beauty of the Holy Elder”

This paper gives attention to a dimension of Orthodox beauty that is too often neglected: the *starets* (holy elder), who manifests God’s beauty, just as an icon does. Although physically the holy elder may be weak or even disabled, he has begun to undergo divine transfiguration. He embodies spiritual freedom and joy. His followers may report that he glows with light or levitates in the altar area, as he conducts the liturgy as though he were in heaven. The holy elder seems to have become transparent to the Uncreated Light of Tabor.

Drawing on accounts of holy eldership from twentieth-century Russia under the Bolsheviks, I argue that the beauty of the holy elder ultimately emerges out of his experience of deep suffering and manifests itself in his capacity for overflowing love and compassion. This beauty corresponds to the beauty of Christ, who at his crucifixion simultaneously manifests his resurrection.

John Burgess is Professor of Theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Holy Rus’: The Rebirth of Orthodoxy in the New Russia* (Yale UP, 2017) and *Why Read Pavel Florensky?* (CUA Press, 2024).

Samuel (Cole) Busby, “The Beauty of a God within Us: Appropriating Aristotle’s *Nous* through the Light of the Incarnation”

In the Incarnation God revealed the poverty of man’s fallen intellect. In Christ the infinite met the finite, the uncreated joined the created, and God became man. The inability for man without grace, to see the truth of God demonstrates that reason alone fails to grasp “what is truly the case.” The juxtaposition between reason and revelation introduces the important distinction in the Orthodox tradition between the discursive reason (*dianoia*) and the *nous* or heart. With the *nous* we come to know God beyond the limitations of concepts and reflection. This distinction predates the advent of Christ yet with the coming of the Church, it was “baptized” and reorganized around the Incarnation. The distinction between *dianoia* and *nous* is found in Plato, but without revelation he failed to grasp the fundamentally hypostatic or personal character of noetic sight. While acknowledging Plato’s contribution to a theory of *nous*, in this paper I explore the paradigm Aristotle offers us for thinking about human *nous* and its relationship to the divine. Using the light of the Incarnation as my starting point, I argue that Aristotle’s theory of *nous* provides a useful model for conceptualizing the interpersonal closeness between God and man.

Samuel C. Busby is a doctoral student in Philosophy and Religion at the University of South Florida in Tampa, FL. His current research focuses on the intersection between Ancient Greek thought and Early Christianity. His dissertation will examine Plato and Aristotle’s use and development of *nous* with its subsequent reception by the Early Church. He hopes to show that the Patristic reception of *nous* offers common ground with contemporary strands of anti-foundationalist thought without the consequent relativism. Instead of grounding truth in sociality or in the power of human thinking, truth is grounded in the Person of Jesus Christ whom the heart comes to know before anything else.

Clark Carlton, “Dogma as Grammatical Proposition”

The question of religious language has dogged Christianity from the beginning. How does one speak meaningfully of a transcendent Creator? If we accept Gregory of Nyssa's dictum that all conceptions of God are idols, then what do we make of dogmatic statements? In this paper I shall suggest that the best way to approach this question is to examine the function of such statements within our ecclesial way of life. Specifically, I shall argue that dogmatic statements function as "grammatical propositions." Implicit in this approach is a distinction between theology proper, which I understand to be coterminous with revelation or prophecy, and secondary forms of discourse such as sermons, exegesis, exhortations, conference presentations, etc.

Employing Wittgenstein's concept of "grammatical propositions," I shall argue that while dogmatic statements may appear to be metaphysical assertions, they actually function as rules which govern these secondary discourses. Viewing dogma in this way (a) avoids the pitfall of thinking that verbal formulae somehow "define" God, and (b) re-emphasizes the relationship between the way we speak and the way we live, for as Wittgenstein insisted, language games are an expression of concrete *lebensformen*.

Clark Carlton is an associate professor of philosophy at Tennessee Tech in Cookeville, TN. A graduate of St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary and the Catholic University of America, he is the author of the *The Faith Series* (second edition, 4 vols., New Lindisfarne Orthodox Press) and numerous articles. He also serves as editorial director of the Ludwell Orthodox Fellowship.

Fr. Thomas Colyandro, "Uncreated Silence and Orthodox Christian Eldership (and Fellowship)"

This year's theme, "The Beauty of a God Who is Among Us," can be thought of in terms of relationships. From a descending perspective, God is incarnational and chooses to intimately relate to the people He created. Purely out of love, He gave us life, sacraments, His presence in prayer, and each other. From an ascending perspective, we as individuals and together as a community of faithful, love God and gift ourselves to one another. But what makes this beautiful and deeply spiritual fellowship possible?

Uncreated silence exists as the unspoken speech of the Holy Spirit, which can be heard in prayer, discerned in spiritual relationships, and lived as pastoral care. This idea is explained using biblical and theological sources, the spiritual and pastoral works of those who are known as Orthodox Christian elders, as well as select case studies of Orthodox and Catholic Christian spiritual leaders in the United States during the 20th and 21st centuries. Additional supporting material will be provided throughout to explain how *uncreated silence* is Pneumatological and analogous to, but distinct from, the uncreated light, which is Christological; how uncreated silence is an apophatic and a spiritual relationality; how uncreated silence relates to the role of Orthodox spiritual eldership, and how *uncreated silence* can apply to the parish context through the sacrament of confession and the idea of fellowship.

Rev. Dr. Thomas Colyandro is an Orthodox priest, a Fellow at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, the director of theological and spiritual studies at St. Athanasius College, and the former assistant director of the Center for Faith & Culture at the University of St. Thomas (Houston). He is on the steering committee of the International Orthodox Theological Association (IOTA) Asceticism and Spirituality Group, a member of the board of directors of the Orientale Lumen Foundation, and an editor at Eastern Christian Publications. Fr. Thomas has written and/or edited nine books and

myriad articles on spirituality and theology as he continues to concentrate on his original work regarding the *uncreated silence* of the Holy Spirit.

Jesse Cone, “Mystery and Ignorance: Anscombe’s Philosophical Defense of the Mystical”

Recent discussions about disenchantment and re-enchantment make much use of the term, “mystery.” In addition, “mystery” and “the mystical” are often thought of as distinctives of Orthodox thought. But how does the Orthodox embrace of the mystical pair with the demands of thought? How are we who are mystically united in Christ to explain our lives to those beholden to the rigors of science and philosophy?

Drawing from a neglected commentary by the Catholic philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe, I put forward a philosophical case for the existence and acceptance of “mystery.” Looking at Parmenides’ *On Nature*, Anscombe suggests that, for mystery to exist, it is inconceivable and irresolvable as a mystery. She also notes that some have arrived at the idea that mystery does not exist by falling into a derivation of the Parmenidean argument.

Mystery must then be allowed for, even if, given its nature, its existence cannot be proved by reason. Mystery must be experienced, as we see in the work of the Christian. Anscombe explores the implications of this conclusion as a pious philosopher. Moreover, this philosophical work carries with it the advantage of curtailing and limiting the role of philosophy. In this regard, Anscombe’s argument provides us with a unique and important boundary for philosophy from within philosophy.

Jesse Cone is a PhD candidate in Philosophy at the University of Dallas and is the Head of School at The Saint Constantine School of Pittsburgh.

Mka. Wendy Cwiklinski, “The Beauty of a God among Us: Learning from Different Perceptions”

What would the emissaries of St. Vladimir think of the experience of present-day Orthodox worship? Would they find “Heaven on Earth,” the place where God surely dwells? From the simple music of a small mission with congregational singing, to the hidden perceptions of worship by those whose communications are limited, to the mudwalled chapel in the midst of an African village, would they find the Beauty of a God Among Us?

Mka. Wendy Cwiklinski holds a degree in Music Education from Northeast Louisiana University. She studied at St. Vladimir’s Seminary and earned an MA in Religious Education from Fordham GSRRE. Focusing on building pan-Orthodox community, she established a website and resource sharing entity known as “Orthodox San Diego.” After writing about Orthodox families with Special Needs, she continues to support them by facilitation of a Facebook group. With OCMC she taught women and youth in Albania and Kenya. Married to Archpriest Jerome Cwiklinski (OCA), they have five children and are the doting grandparents to two grandchildren. They reside in Boise, Idaho.

Fr. Alexander Earl, “As Far as East is From the West: Theophanic Realism and Orthodox Culture”

It is now a commonplace intuition that something has gone wrong with “the West.” There is no shortage of cultural commentary, diagnosis, and even prognosis from all quarters of the cultural

landscape. Yet there is not a truly holistic systematics regarding how the Orthodox differ from these Western models. While the 20th century was rife with Orthodox figures who analyzed and commented on the chasm between East and West—especially in our modes of theologizing and conceiving of the life of the Church—the proposals often centered on nuanced theological debates (the filioque, et al), or definition by negation (“we are not rational, but mystical”). That is not to suggest these contributions are not weighty, but that we need a clear and coherent vision of how exactly the Orthodox Church has preserved what it seems the West has lost. This account needs to amount to more than not-Western. It needs to articulate the positive vision of the Christian East, which once also gave life to the West.

My talk aims to articulate that theophany is the first principle that connects all aspects of Orthodox life and thought and categorically distinguishes it from later Western models (a model that began with Augustine’s rejection of genuine theophany in *De Trinitate*): the sole objective of the philosophical and religious enterprise is (a) the desire to see and become like God, and (b) the recognition that such a desire is only ever made possible by God himself, who already appears in the world and makes himself manifest.

Seen from this vantage, theophany operates in at least four registers or degrees: (1) in the history of philosophy’s attempt to articulate how the world depends on, and points toward, a transcendent paradigm, (2) in the Old Testament and the Second Temple period’s emphasis on the Temple cult as the condition of divine manifestation, (3) in the person of Jesus Christ, the theophany par excellence, and (4) in the spiritual and ascetic tradition of the Orthodox Church, which sees the saint as a walking theophany, the very telos of the former three. Any and all aspects of Orthodox life find their center here: from liturgical theology, to the Church as a fundamentally Eucharistic community, to the role of bishops and their interrelation, and so on. While I can only gesture to the grand explanatory scale of theophany, I suggest that even a glance, from the cleft of a rock, will demonstrate why culture is in fact downstream from a commitment to God-made-manifest. The question we must raise is: how can culture be theophanic?

Fr. Alexander Earl is the assistant priest at St. John of the Ladder Orthodox Church (OCA) in Greenville, SC as well as the Director of the Pacifica Center for Philosophy + Theology in Santa Monica, CA. He holds advanced degrees from St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary and Yale Divinity School.

Seraphim (Bruce) Foltz, “The World a Burning Bush: Notes toward a Symbolic Ontology of Creation”

Beginning with the mathematization of nature in Galileo and Descartes, modernity’s alienation from creation has steadily increased, a condition that Max Weber diagnosed as the “disenchantment” of the world. But recent attempts to “re-enchant” the world have been problematic, merely lending the world a glossy patina, or overlooking the many dark modes of re-enchantment, while typically remaining within the realm of the subjective and psychological. What is needed is a rediscovery of deeper meanings already inherent in the very being of creation, i.e. an ontological approach uncovering modes of being that modernity has obscured.

As pathways for this ontological disclosure, Orthodox Christian experience has always prioritized two interwoven approaches, respectively drawing upon spiritual seeing and spiritual hearing. First, *theōria physikē*, the illumined seeing into nature, has since the Cappadocian Fathers been comprehended both as a fruit of ascetic struggle and as a threshold to union with God. And from St.

Ephraim the Syrian and St. Dionysius the Areopagite to Fr. Pavel Florensky, this illumination of the natures of things has been seen as creation revealing itself as symbol—by which they meant nothing subjective, but rather the flaming-forth of the invisible from within the visible world. At the same time, what is seen must also be heard and heeded as a call, as articulated by St. Maximus the Confessor who understood every being as embodying and expressing its own unique *logos*, each reflecting in its own way the Eternal Logos or Word through which it was created and through which it speaks to us. Such spiritual seeing of God in creation apprehends the glory of God, while this heedful hearing of the call within creation gathers the holy wisdom of God. Thus, when Moses approaches the burning bush, he first sees the invisible God glowing from within the visible reality, but he then listens to the call and heeds it.

What kind of being, then, must creation possess that would allow it this translucent relation to God, expressive of His call? The Icon of the Burning Bush situates the Theotokos deep within Mt. Horeb. Emanating from her are flames of fire wondrously interspersed with green leaves of new growth, while the countenance of Christ the Word addresses us from within her heart. That is, she reveals the crowning capacity of creation to bear and disclose its own Creator. The Mother of God is Herself the Burning Bush, bearing intact and unharmed the Divine Fire, and inviting us back to those highest possibilities of creation that spiritual practice allows us to see and hear—not a superficial re-enchantment, but the re-discovery of holy energies that have everywhere been at work all along.

Seraphim (Bruce) Foltz is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, FL. He is author or editor of six books, including *The Noetics of Nature: Environmental Philosophy and the Holy Beauty of the Visible* (Fordham University Press, 2013), more than thirty articles and translations, and more than fifty encyclopedia articles in six different reference works. He has founded or co-founded four scholarly societies, and his works have been translated into Arabic, Greek, Portuguese, Romanian, and Russian.

David Ford, “Male and Female in the Writings of St. John Chrysostom”

The Church Fathers in general did not speak very much about sexual differentiation in humanity – partly because it was of paramount importance, especially for the earlier Fathers, to convince Christian men, and the surrounding society as a whole, of the absolute equality/sameness of the common human nature shared by men and women, and the concomitant equal dignity, value, and capacity for spiritual growth that women share with men. St. John Chrysostom is a remarkable exception, in that he did emphasize the differing God-given roles ordained for men and women in light of our obvious anatomical and emotional differences. St. John especially insists upon the God-given pattern of male headship in the family and in the Church. We also observe St. John’s high appreciation for the goodness of sexual desire, of female beauty, of saintly OT and NT women, and of the holy estate of marriage – especially as it is meant to symbolize Christ’s love for and service to His Bride, His Church. St. John’s wisdom is especially needed today, as strong elements in our current society are adamantly trying to minimize the natural, God-given sexual differences in humanity, an effort that is at the heart of the major heresy of our time: unisexism.

Dr. David C. Ford is Professor of Church History at St. Tikhon's Orthodox Seminary, South Canaan, PA, where he has taught for 35 years. He has published a major study entitled *Women and Men in the Early Church: The Vision of St. John Chrysostom*, and translated Chrysostom's *Letters to Saint Olympia* and *Sermons from the Life of St. John Chrysostom*, both in the Popular Patristics series from

SVS Press. He has also gathered and translated many especially powerful passages, all by Chrysostom, on about 60 themes; this work is called *Sing to Your Soul* (St. Tikhon's Monastery Press), in three volumes.

Mary Ford, “Let Us Attend’: Beauty, Attention, and Liturgy”

Many have noted that today the most valuable “commodity” is our attention. News media, advertisers, and generally anything to do with digital or electronic media have created a hyper demand for our attention. The addictive nature of these almost omnipresent demands is well documented. Others, like Iain McGilquist, have deepened our understanding of how attention works, for example, the different kinds of attention each hemisphere of the brain has. Meanwhile, the saints, following Christ in particular, and Holy Scripture more broadly, have always urged the necessity of “watchfulness,” certainly a form of attention.

Having such things in mind, I'd like to explore them in relation to our liturgical services. What kinds of attention do our services reflect and cultivate? Here, I want to focus on beauty of various kinds as a way of inviting our attention such as visual beauty in the iconography. Can we learn from such considerations how better to protect our attention, so essential for prayer, and to increase our ability to pay sustained attention in worship? Now, more than ever before, and we should use every help available to us.

Mary Ford was Associate Professor of New Testament for 33 years at St. Tikhon's Orthodox Seminary, retiring in May of 2022. She taught courses on the Johannine writings, Hermeneutics, Introduction to Orthodox Spiritual Life, and an assortment of other courses. She is the author of *The Soul's Longing: An Orthodox Christian Perspective on Biblical Interpretation* and co-author of *Marriage as a Path to Holiness: Lives of the Married Saints*. Her original theme for her doctorate was on using stories to communicate theology, and she has had a lifelong interest in that topic, including collecting folk tales from many cultures.

Michael Garten, “Image and Incarnation: Holy Images of Christ in the Pre-Nicene Church”

Critics of Orthodoxy claim that the iconodule theology and practice of the Seventh Ecumenical Council was nonexistent in the first three centuries of Church history. In my book *Early Icons, Volume 1* (2024) I document evidences from early Christian literature and archeology which show that Christians from the first three centuries venerated images. But another criticism is that our incarnational theology of images is absent from the early Church, including what we might call the “Image-Incarnation Principle” (that portraying God is made licit because of the Incarnation) and the capacity of images of Christ to manifest His power and presence. In this paper I will give five arguments that an incarnational theology of images was present in the pre-Nicene Church: (1) from surviving portrayals of Christ in human form in the ante-Nicene period combined with high Christology; (2) from the incarnational character of the early portrayal of Christ as Good Shepherd; (3) from Clement of Alexandria's theology of symbol and his seal of the Fisherman; (4) from Eusebius' attestation to the wonder-working statue of Christ at Panaeas; (5) from the theology of image in Saint Justin Martyr and the first century text *The Epistle of Barnabas*.

Michael Garten is an Orthodox educator, husband, and father. He graduated from Biola University's Torrey Honors Institute (2009, B.A. Philosophy) and did a year of graduate studies at Northern Illinois University. He has taught and designed curriculum for high school Sunday School and helped found and run several Orthodox schools. Michael is the author of *Early Icons: Christian Image Veneration Before 325 AD* (Independent Publishing, 2024), the first of a multi-part series of books vindicating the very early origin of this Orthodox practice.

Fr. Anthony (Gaelan) Gilbert, Defamiliarizing Death: The Aesthetics of *Martyria*

Drawing on a range of sources (ancient and modern *acta martyrum*, patristic treatises, iconography, and sociohistorical analyses of late antique ecclesial growth and anti-fragility), this paper will explore how martyrdom—defined as suffering unto death in witness to (faith in) Christ's resurrection—defamiliarizes the phenomenon of death. For those who are themselves witnesses of martyrdom, such ‘making strange’ results in a rhetoric of otherworldly beauty that invites repentance and conversion. Why? Because martyrdom bears witness to a new vision of death as something no longer to be feared, nor to be directly sought, but to be embraced as ‘given’ in an apophatic phenomenological sense: a threshold of mystery whose meaning, rooted explicitly in free *mimesis* of Christ's life-giving death, exceeds the limited perspectives of both science and secularism, but still in a way which demands a faithful interpretive choice in response. At the same time, martyrdom challenges a secular understanding of life as merely a biochemical finitude preceding oblivion, making instead the radical declaration of life in Christ as an infinite plenitude whose condition is only nascent prior to the ‘birth’ of death.

Fr. Anthony Gilbert, PhD is the priest and pastor of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Grand Rapids, MI. He is Adjunct Professor of Literature and History at Hellenic College Holy Cross and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Christian Literature at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary.

Caitlin Gilbert, “Praying and Thinking about Beauty: On Spiritual Contemplation and the Philosophical Act”

The philosophical act, as described by Josef Peiper, can be understood and harmonized with the kind of contemplation called for by the Orthodox Fathers. By way of St. Gregory of Nazianzus’ reflections on thinking about God in his *Theological Orations*, this paper will explore the experience and contemplation of beauty (and the beauty of the infinite) as one of the essentially humane activities that best reflect the image of God in man.

Cate Gilbert is the Vice President for Schools and a Professor of Great Texts at Saint Constantine College and School in Houston, TX. Saint Constantine provides a rich Orthodox, classical education focused on the great texts of the Christian tradition, educating children as young as three years old to young adults pursuing their Bachelor's degree. Alongside her role at Saint Constantine, Caitlin is the wife of a philosopher, the mother of four young children, and a PhD student in history.

David Gilbert, “Transcendence in Film, the Marx Brothers, and Incarnational Aesthetics”

Many Christian philosophers in the past century have advocated for incarnational aesthetics. In the philosophy of film, following Schraeder (1971), the category of the “transcendent” designates a certain kind of slower-paced, intentionally reflective, and even religious kind of film. The films of Andrei Tarkovsky, Terrence Malick, and Carl Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* come to mind. These films invoke reverence and render most other films spiritually mundane in comparison. There are also a small subset of films in the history of cinema which bear paradoxical properties. On the one hand, they defy many standards of excellence in film: they lack apparent order, narrative cohesion, depth of characterization, believability, and generally should not succeed. And yet, on the other hand, they are esteemed as great films. They are beloved, ranked among the greatest ever made, frequently redistributed, and also consistently invoke emotions of awe. I'm thinking here of Marx Brothers films and *Singing in the Rain*, among others. They should not work, but the wholes exceed the mereological sum of their parts. Using these categories as jumping off points, this paper

will explore the interplay of the everyday and the transcendent in an Orthodox, incarnational aesthetic of cinema.

Biography TBD

Fr. Ignatius Green, “Beauty False and True in the Theological Vision of St. Gregory of Nyssa”

False and true Beauty—and the criterion by which we are able to distinguish them—play an important role in the unfolding economy of salvation, a theme St. Gregory of Nyssa returns to throughout his writings. Closely connected to this centrality of beauty are concepts he inherited and made his known, especially the reciprocity or unity of virtue, θεοπρέπεια, and σκοπός. We will trace this complex interplay of themes and concepts, revealing how Nyssen uses beauty to articulate the central themes of the Gospel, to refute opponents of the faith, and to call Christians to authentic spiritual life.

Fr. Ignatius Green is the Senior Editor of St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, where he also serves as Associate Editor of the Popular Patristics Series and a member of the editorial board of the *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*. His PhD work focuses on St. Gregory of Nyssa, and he is the translator of St. Gregory’s *Catechetical Discourse* (SVS Press, 2019) and a new liturgical translation of the Septuagint Psalter (SVS/STM Press, 2024). He is the rector of Holy Apostles Orthodox Church (OCA) in Columbia, SC.

Fr. Chad Hatfield, “Roland Allen: A Forgotten Missiological Model”

TBD

Jordan Henderson, “The God Who Made Him High Priest: Josephus, Alexander the Great, and the Iconoclastic Controversy”

The first-century Jewish historian Josephus tells a story in his *Jewish Antiquities* of Alexander the Great coming to Jerusalem and prostrating before the Jewish high priest Jaddus. When asked why he has bowed before Jaddus, Alexander responds that he had not in fact prostrated before him, but before the God who had made him high priest. Alexander’s line of reasoning here would be familiar to many Orthodox Christians. When we bow before and kiss the Holy Gospel, the hand of a priest, or an icon, we understand the honor and reverence which we show to “pass on” to God. As St. Basil the Great famously says, “The honor given to the image passes on to the archetype.” This way of understanding the showing of reverence to sacred objects was continually appealed to by the iconodules in the iconoclastic controversies of the eighth and ninth centuries, notably by St. John of Damascus. I will argue that Josephus’ story of Alexander bowing before the high priest was also used by iconodules to argue against iconoclasm. I will argue this based on the presence of this story in the florilegium known as the *Sacra Parallela*, an illuminated manuscript with over 1,600 illustrations, whose prototype has often been attributed to St. John of Damascus.

Dr. Jordan Henderson is a scholar of ancient Mediterranean religion, specializing in Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian historiography. He is the Dean and Professor of Biblical Studies at St. Athanasius College. His forthcoming book, *Defeat and Deliverance: Prefigurements of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome in Josephus’ Depictions of Past Invasions of Jerusalem*, will be published later this year as part of Brill’s Supplements to the *Journal for the Study of Judaism* series.

Daniel B. Hinshaw, “Beauty as Divine Hospitality”

Throughout recorded history, hospitality (in Greek, *philoxenia*—literally, the love of strangers) has been understood to be an encounter between a host and a stranger-guest, who may even be divine. In antiquity, *xenos* and its Latin cognate, *hospes*, had the dual meanings of both guest and host in recognition of a fundamental reciprocity inherent to the encounter.

Increasingly, human beings live within an attention economy where a multitude of influences compete for our attention. How does the divine Host attract guests who are estranged, wandering, and distracted amid such chaos? Beauty is both the invitation and the welcoming kiss of peace that draw the guest toward the divine Host’s embrace.

At the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:2–3), Moses turned aside drawn by the wonder and beauty of a bush burning but not consumed. Whereas the traditional encounter of hospitality is initiated by a guest seeking food and shelter, the divine Host takes the initiative as He seeks the guest. Respecting the guest’s freedom, the divine invitation is often couched in subtle manifestations of beauty— small Theophanies. How beauty marks hospitality as divine is the subject of this presentation.

Daniel B. Hinshaw, M.D. is professor emeritus of surgery and consultant in palliative medicine at the University of Michigan. He has taught palliative care to medical professionals and clergy in multiple international settings. Besides many scientific articles and chapters, he is the author of several books: *Suffering and the Nature of Healing* (2013), *Touch and the Healing of the World* (2017), an historical novel, *Neither Bond nor Free* (2019), *Thriving in the Face of Mortality: Kenosis and the Mystery of Life* (2023), and *Journey to Simplicity: The Life and Wisdom of Archimandrite Roman Braga* (2024).

Fr. Ambrose Inlow, “Transforming Personal Pain into All-Embracing Love according to St. Sophrony of Essex”

There are three kinds of pain in the modern understanding of the soul: bodily “somatic” pain (akin to the field of psychiatry), psychological pain, and what St. Sophrony calls “metaphysical pain,” “ontological pain,” or “spiritual pain” (akin to the field of theology). In this paper, we will first look at the differences and commonalities between these three forms of pain. Being able to identify between them and begin to take appropriate paths for remedy would be most beneficial for us. Secondly, we will look at the question of how personal pain directly relates to the potential of developing the virtue of love. How are pain and love connected? St. Sophrony speaks of the “hell of love.” What does he mean by this term? This will help us not seek ways to impulsively run away from, or irrationally find ways to escape from, certain pains. Some pain can aid in creating virtue. How can we discern this?

Lastly, we will briefly show how St. Sophrony teaches how to transfer the energy of somatic, psychological, and ontological pain into the virtue of “all-embracing love.” This was the universal way of Christ and is the way of the Christian life. Through this process, we hope to briefly lay the conceptual foundation of how adversity, trauma pain, and tragedy can be transformed and ultimately aid in cultivating ontological love for all mankind.

Fr. Ambrose Inlow is the rector of Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Syracuse, NY (OCA). Father of four children, graduate of St. Tikhon's Orthodox Seminary, he has studied, written, and given conference presentations on many of the Greek Fathers, especially on St. Maximos the Confessor. Most recently he has been enchanted by the writings and spiritual tradition of St. Sophrony of Essex.

Masamichi (Marro) Inoue, “An Ethnographic Exploration of the Orthodox Church of Japan: The Beauty of a ‘Changing Universal’ through Contextualization and Beyond”

Rectifying colonialist legacies of the Christian missions in the 16th-20th centuries, Catholic and Protestant theologians advocate contextualization to present Christianity in ways respectful of local cultures. Meanwhile, Orthodox Christianity has long exercised contextualization outside Western colonialism to express the beauty of a “changing universal,” the universal Christian Faith grounded in diverse cultures across time and space. Examples of this changing universal are provided from a preliminary ethnographic-historical investigation of the Orthodox Church of Japan. However, Inoue also problematizes—and ultimately “throws away”—contextualization (particularly its contemporary variants) as concept and practice; situated in 21st-century Japan defined by the disintegration of the context—the nation—itsself, he instead explores how the Orthodox tradition fosters something beyond contextualization to rearticulate the beauty of a changing universal today. The significance of an ethnographic method in exploring this “something” is highlighted.

Masamichi (Marro) Inoue is Professor in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures & Cultures at the University of Kentucky, having taught various courses pertaining to Japan, Asia, and the world. Professionally trained in cultural anthropology (Duke, 1999), he has investigated U.S. military base issues in Okinawa from an ethnographic-historical perspective. His second book on this subject was recently published. He has also conducted fieldwork-based ethnographic research with a police department on a U.S. university campus. Baptized in May 2024, Inoue is developing a new ethnographic project on the Orthodox Church of Japan as a service to God.

Fr. Johannes Jacobse, “God's Immanence Displayed Through Prayer that Fosters Healing”

TBD

Fr. Johannes Jacobse is the priest of St. Peter Antiochian Orthodox Church in Fort Myers, FL. He is the spiritual advisor to the Antiochian Men of the Miami Diocese and the founder of the St. Paisios Brotherhood, a ministry geared toward Orthodox young men seeking to stabilize their lives.

Cyril (Gary) Jenkins, “Why Can’t We Have Emperors Like This Anymore? Emperor St. Justinian’s Navigation between Severus of Antioch and Vigilius of Rome”

In July 551 Pope Vigilius excommunicated bishop Theodore Ascidas for his support of an imperial edict, a document the bishop, according to Vigilius, had known the pope did not approve. Vigilius had been in Constantinople (and would be for some more years) attempting to champion his own position, that Christ had spoken through Pope St. Leo in the Tomus of Chalcedon, that Chalcedon stood as an unmovable benchmark of Faith, and that Chalcedon having not condemned Theodoret of Cyrr, he must not allow this to happen either. Justinian, conversely, had adopted the language of “one of the Holy Trinity had suffered in the flesh” (language initially used by the Miaphysite Peter the Fuller), and did so in order to show that Chalcedon, if truly a Cyrillian council, must more strongly delineate the one Actor in the Incarnation. As part of his imperial efforts, he wished to separate Chalcedon from the Nestorianizing interpretations embraced by Theodoret, as well as Ibas of Edessa (the writings of these two were part of the Three Chapters), efforts aimed at ameliorating the concerns of the Miaphysites. This essay investigates how emperor St. Justinian finally succeeded in getting the Latin West to accept his definitions, and those of the Council of 553, which refined the meaning of

Chalcedon, despite Vigilius's resistance. Sadly, the emperor's efforts did not bear much fruit in the east.

Dr. Cyril (Gary) Jenkins is the Director of the St. Basil Center for Orthodox Thought & Culture at Eastern University in St. Davids, PA, the Van Gorden Professor in History at Eastern University (retired), co-editor-in-chief of *Rule of Faith: A Journal of Orthodox Thought and Culture*, executive editor of Basilian Media & Publishing, and a Reader at St. Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church in Emmaus, PA. He also hosts two podcasts on Ancient Faith Radio. His most recent publication is *A Perilous Realm: Confronting Dragons, Angels, and Saints in the Ordering of the Soul* (Basilian Media & Publishing).

Michael Kurian, "Under No Tree Does Wisdom Reveal Her Beauty: Orthodox Sophiology in the Book of Susanna"

The theme of the Divine Wisdom or Sophia has been the subject of a great deal of controversy in the Eastern Orthodox tradition due to its apparent roots in the speculative theosophical esotericism of Vladimir Soloviev and other German Romantics. This paper, following the example of Sergei Bulgakov but also modern theologians like Marcus Plested, seeks to embellish the patristic and biblical roots of Sophiology in order to reclaim the project. This paper seeks to move towards this goal this by formulating a rigorously orthodox approach to the divine wisdom while also critiquing and re-working useful German Romantic and Idealist reflections on nature and aesthetics. After formulating an orthodox Sophiology, a scriptural meditation on the theme of divine wisdom in Daniel 13 or the "Book of Susanna" will be preformed to show how an orthodox Sophiology offers new insight into scripture, epistemology, and Christian spirituality.

The first part of the paper will offer a historiographical reconstruction of the concept of divine wisdom, distinguishing between orthodox and heterodox approaches to Sophiology. This will involve tracing and critiquing the influences behind Soloviev and seeing how Pavel Florensky and Sergei Bulgakov advance the concept. The second section will attempt to argue for the usefulness and the orthodoxy of Sophiology, which far from being an intrinsically modernist, feminist, gnostic or speculative project, can actually empower thoroughly Orthodox approaches to the Incarnation, creation, and biblical hermeneutics. The section on hermeneutics will show that Sophiology properly understood, adumbrated by faithful such as St. Nikolai Velimirovic and the aforementioned Dr. Plested, opens up scripture in new ways while also revealing the hand of God present in all forms of genuine human striving for Wisdom. Philosophy, understood as love of Wisdom, is therefore a central object of both critique and redemption in this work as both Sophiology generally and the application to Daniel 13 will show. The elders accuse Susanna, an icon of Wisdom, of having sensuously revealed herself under some tree in the garden. If we take the trees to represent schemas of knowledge formed by crafty philosophers, we will see that there will be no unveiling of Sophia under trees of our own creation – rather she is revealed only in the hopeful patience of things beloved by God, namely, love itself, order, nature, and silence.

Michael Kurian is a graduate of Rice University in Houston, TX where he received an M.A. in Religion with a focus area certificate in the study of Gnosticism, Esotericism, and Mysticism. His other primary interests are in Christian spirituality, analytical psychology, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and continental philosophy. He comes from an Indian family which traces its conversion back to St. Thomas and he is passionate about furthering dialogue between Byzantine and Oriental Churches.

Nicolas Laliberté, “Love and the Holy Spirit in Dumitru Staniloae: The Incarnation of Christ and our Adoption”

The question of the place of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity is one of the great questions in the ecumenical dialogues of the twentieth century. The Romanian theologian St. Dumitru Staniloae engaged actively in these dialogues, seeking a language with which he could articulate an Orthodox understanding of the Holy Spirit which could be understood and received by the traditions of Western Christianity. In doing so, Staniloae turned to St. Augustine, who described the Holy Spirit as the “Love” between the Father and the Son. Without necessarily accepting all of Augustine’s theology, Staniloae was able to use this language (echoed later by St. Gregory Palamas) to express the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and His eternal resting on the Son, as well as His manifestation or shining out from the Son both eternally and in time. This articulation of the Holy Spirit’s eternal place in the Trinity allows Staniloae to develop a robust theology of the Spirit’s role in the incarnation as well as His continued presence in the Church.

Biography TBD

Jennifer Lockhart, “For the Sake of the Beautiful: The Role of Beauty in Aristotle’s Ethics”

According to Aristotle, “Actions that accord with virtue are [*kalai*] and for the sake of the [*kalon*]” (NE 1120a24). It would be hard to underestimate the importance of the concept of the *kalon* for apprehending the structure of Aristotle’s ethics, given its role as the key motivation for virtuous action. Yet, the word is notoriously difficult to translate. *Kalon* has been variously translated with the “noble” or the “fine,” but *kalon* could also be rendered as the “beautiful.” Some Kantians have purported to find a similarity between this form of motivation and that of Kant’s morally worthy action which is performed “for the sake of duty.” In this paper, I argue that acting for the sake of the *kalon* is radically different from acting for the sake of duty due to (a) the close connection between the *kalon* and erotic desire and (b) the non-juridical nature of this form of motivation. I will suggest that a failure to recognize the difference between the sense of compulsion proper to the *kalon* and that proper to duty has led to an unfortunate moralization of Aristotle’s ethical thought. It is difficult to recover Aristotle’s concept of the *kalon*, but considering the sense in which the word means “beautiful” can help us to better grasp the governing motivation of Aristotle’s virtuous agent. I conclude by discussing the charge that a recoil from moralization leaves us with a problematic aestheticization of virtue.

Jennifer Lockhart is an Associate Professor of philosophy at Auburn University. She holds a BA in philosophy from the University of Georgia and a PhD in philosophy from the University of Chicago. She is currently finishing a book project on asceticism and virtues for which she was awarded a Faculty Fellowship from the Orthodox Christian Studies Center at Fordham University in 2023-24.

Mary Lowell, “Depicting the Invisible: The Appeal and Dread of Imagery”

The icon is, above all, theology. Its function consists not in aesthetic contemplation, but in participation in the act of worship. (Archpriest Anatoly Volgin)

For Orthodox Christians the veneration of icons expresses a relationship between the seen and unseen. Through imagery that engages our senses and intellect, we affirm the immediacy of an intangible reality that is coextensive with our materiality. This interpenetration rejoices the iconodule but repels the aniconic for whom representations of sacred persons is idolatrous. The claim is that

Orthodox Christians worship crafted products as the embodiment of what they represent. To thus accuse, the iconoclast must assign the icon an ontology which is impossible for a material object, an absurdity no Orthodox worshiper entertains. Because “the icon is, above all, theology,” there is an authentic intellectual and spiritual basis that keeps the image and what it represents in their proper places. The relationship between iconography and persons depicted is founded on their existence lived in time and situation, whether saints and martyrs or the Incarnate Christ. Our relationship to persons depicted, however, extends beyond historical record to eternity where, by faith, we join with the depicted in ceaseless praise. Consequently, the icon is both a material referent for the spiritual world and, in the activity of worship, an invitation to participate in heavenly things.

Mary Lowell is the founder and manager of Hexaameron, a non-profit ecclesial arts education organization, established in 2003. In addition to her articles on iconography in on-line journals such as *Orthodox Arts Journal* and *Another City*, she has written two books on religious art: *Revelations: Visions of the Second Coming from the Old and New Testaments*, published by Viking Penguin Press in 1994, and *Treasure in a Box: A Guide to the Icons of St. Andrew*, published in 2019 by Archway Publisher, a subsidiary of Simon & Schuster.

Fr. Joseph Lucas, “Drawn to God: The Vision of Eternal Well-being in St. Maximus the Confessor”

This paper will examine in detail the eschatology of St. Maximus the Confessor in light of his Epistle 1 (not previously translated into English) and his vision for redeemed human nature. Although it is sometimes assumed that his views are an extension of those of Origen—and to some extent, St. Gregory of Nyssa—thus pointing to a final *apokatastasis* in which all sentient beings will be cleansed of evil and obtain a perfect gnosis of God, we will demonstrate that St. Maximus in fact provides a clear corrective to Origenism. St. Maximus posits that, although all things will be cleansed on the last day as if by fire, and evil (which has no ontological reality) will be no more, the judgment of God will remain a sifting of persons that results in a spectrum of eternal outcomes. The glory of the Logos that draws all things to himself will be experienced as eternal well-being for those who love God, but eternal ill-being for those who do not. For those who were fixated upon evil during their lifetime, their natural desire for God will be set against a hypostatic orientation away from him and towards non-being. The key to this approach is the Neo-Cyrrilline theology that St. Maximus employs, elaborated in his theology of will and self-determination, hence solving the dilemma in earlier writers concerning the natural impulsion of created *ousia* towards the Uncreated *ousia*. To support these conclusions, we will summarize the whole of St. Maximus' corpus for clues to his eschatological framework and compare these to his description of the final judgment in Epistle 1.

Archpriest Joseph Lucas is the Rector of Christ the Saviour Orthodox Cathedral in Miami Lakes, FL and Adjunct Professor of Theology at St. Thomas University in Miami Gardens. He received his PhD in Theology at Radboud University (Nijmegen) and his MDiv from St. Tikhon's Seminary (South Canaan). He is the author of *How to Read the Holy Fathers: A Guide for Orthodox Christians* (Ancient Faith, 2025).

Daniel Manzuk, “The Impropriety of the ‘Double-Eagle’ as a Continued Symbol of Orthodoxy, particularly in North America”

My article seeks to address the true roots of the Double-Eagle and of the ‘symphonia’ Church-State model it came to represent. Beginning with a look at its pre-Christian origins, selection as a symbol

by the State and not Church, its post-Imperial application to the Church, to its unfortunate continued use as a symbol of the Church; all despite the symphonia's clear contradiction with the Church-State model we learn from Scripture and from Church History. My thesis being that, both historically and Biblically, a too-close relationship between Church and State has been universally detrimental to the Church... not to mention frequently to the State itself. And that the proper relationship between the two is not in the example of the supposedly holy kings of Israel and Judah, but in the relationship between the holy Prophets and those kings; loyal in all just things, but peacefully but zealously critical when it goes off track. Special emphasis is given to the fact that, in pluralistic societies like those in North America, this is not only the proper but also the only practical model for the relationship between Faith groups and the State. Finally, acknowledging the mistake of accepting symphonia as the Church-State model, the Church should consign its symbol, the 'Double-eagle,' to history.

Daniel Manzuk is a tonsured Reader at St. Mary's Cathedral in Minneapolis. He is a graduate of St. Vladimir's Seminary with a Masters in Divinity. He has had about fifteen articles published in THE WORD Magazine within the last two decades, as well as one posted on the Antiochian Archdiocese website. He has also served the Church as a hymnographer (the akoluthia for St. John Kochurov currently posted by the OCA, his Akathist and the Antiochian Vespers and Liturgy variables for American Thanksgiving), a supply choir director in the OCA Chicago Deanery and his current parish; as well as a Church School teacher for Middle/High Schoolers and contributor to Orthodoxjourneys.com.

Andrew (Herman) Middleton, "Was the Industrial Revolution a 'Second Fall'? Revisiting Philip Sherrard's 'The Desert Fathers and Ourselves'"

The first part of the paper revisits an article published posthumously in 1997, where Philip Sherrard argues that the scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, followed by the Industrial Revolution, constituted a kind of "second Fall." While there is a danger of dualism in Sherrard's thought, much of his argument is sound and worthy of reconsideration. The second part of the paper engages with contemporary cultural criticism (Wendell Berry, Jacques Ellul, etc.) and considers the ways in which Orthodox Christians can benefit from the critique of the modern world offered by these thinkers.

Herman Middleton received his PhD in Theology from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His doctoral dissertation, *The Theological Anthropology and Cosmology of C. S. Lewis: An Orthodox Patristic Evaluation*, was a reflection of his interest in Christian cultural criticism, as well as his desire to understand the foundational problems underlying the modern experiment. Continuing this enquiry, he started "Gadfly Academy / You Are Not A Machine," an online platform focused on addressing a key concern of modernity: what does it mean to be human? He is also author of *Precious Vessels of the Holy Spirit: The Lives and Counsels of Contemporary Elders of Greece* and an Orthodox YouTuber (*Protecting Veil* and *Collective Wisdom Project*).

Pdn. Brian Patrick Mitchell, "Sanity and Fantasies of Church and State: Lessons Learned from the Byzantine Experience"

The collapse of liberal democracy in the woke West and the revival of Russia as a culturally Christian superpower have inspired both positive and negative appraisals of the Orthodox Church's traditional regard for church-state relations. The positive appraisals have sometimes claimed monarchy, even

autocracy, as the Orthodox political ideal, while the negative appraisals have assumed democracy to be ideal and faulted Orthodoxy for being anti-democratic and therefore also anti-liberal. This presentation will argue that both of these appraisals are mistaken because, from an Orthodox perspective, there can be no political ideal. The presentation will examine patristic and Byzantine thinking about politics to show that Orthodox political thought has always been fundamentally pragmatic compared to modern Western thinking arising out of the medieval conflict between feudalism and papalism. The paper will then illustrate the divergence of traditionally Orthodox and modern Western thinking by contrasting two contemporary statements on church and state by two ecclesiastical authorities, the first being *The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* published by the Moscow Patriarchate in 2000, the second being *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*, published by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 2020.

Protodeacon Brian Patrick Mitchell is a former Washington bureau chief of *Investor's Business Daily* and the author of seven books on politics and religion, most recently *Origen's Revenge: The Greek and Hebrew Roots of Christian Thinking on Male and Female* (Pickwick, 2021). His 2006 book *Eight Ways to Run the Country* has been used to teach politics at Yale and Catholic University of America. He holds a PhD in theology from the University of Winchester and serves at St. John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Cathedral (ROCOR) in Washington, D.C.

Metropolitan Jonah (Paffhausen), "Carnal, Psychic, Spiritual: The Orthodox Psychology of Spiritual Maturity"

St. Paul lays out a schema that was taken up by many of the Fathers that explains levels of maturity, not physical maturity but maturity of mind and heart, rational and noetic. These three categories are carnal, "psychic" meaning "soulish" but mistranslated "natural," and spiritual or noetic. This schema has a direct relationship to conscious awareness, and how we understand and interpret what is read or heard. It also is a way of understanding ourselves, and in what ways we need to grow. Another paradigm is that the carnal mode is sensual, the "psychic" or soulish mode is ego-centric, and the spiritual mode is noetic.

The paper will draw upon the writings of Nikitas Stithatos and St. Maximos the Confessor to describe in more detail these levels and the means of progressing from the lowest to the highest.

Metropolitan Jonah is a retired Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, serving St. Herman of Alaska Church in Stafford, Virginia, and Abbot of St. Demetrios Monastery in Spotsylvania, VA, under the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. He was educated at St. Vladimir's Seminary with an M.Div. and M.Th. in Dogmatics. He began his monastic life at Valaam in Russia and also established the Monastery of St. John of San Francisco in Manton, CA. He teaches for the Midwest Pastoral School of the ROCOR Chicago Diocese, and lectures and gives retreats. He also assists the Metropolitan with pastoral matters, as requested. There are many videos of his classes on YouTube, at StJohnDC, and on oKyrios.

Robin Phillips, "The Metaphysics of the Machine and the Quest for Digital Transcendence"

From the simulation hypothesis to merge theory to the quasi-spirituality of transhumanism, our society is now awash in a network of theories that invest computation with a quasi-transcendence. What is emerging is a new metaphysic echoing the quest of the Presocratic philosophers who hoped

to find a single explanatory principle to simplify the universe. Yet instead of water or motion or atoms, contemporary thought leaders are increasingly looking to the language and logic of the digital ecosystem as the fundamental substrate for all reality. Accordingly, our machines are becoming the sacred icons through which we access ultimate reality. This new spirituality of the machine offers hope for transcendence without undermining the materialism on which it ultimately depends. This paper explores the nature of the new philosophies, while also showing how the metaphysics of the machine is driving engineering and policy decisions at the highest level of innovation, with economic and political consequences that impact us all.

Robin Phillips is the Library Director and professor of World Literature at Washington Heritage University in Fairfax, Virginia. He also serves as adjunct professor of American History at Laurel Ridge Community College. He works as a ghost-writer, in addition to writing for a variety of publications, including *Salvo*, *Touchstone*, the Colson Center, *World Magazine*, and *The Symbolic World*. Phillips is the author of *Gratitude in Life's Trenches: How to Live the Good Life When Everything is Going Wrong* (Ancient Faith, 2020) and *Rediscovering the Goodness of Creation: A Manual for Recovering Gnostics* (Ancient Faith, 2023) and co-author with Joshua Pauling of *Are We All Cyborgs Now? Reclaiming Our Humanity from the Machine* (Basilian Media & Publishing, 2024). He operates the substack "The Epimethean" and blogs at www.robinmarkphillips.com.

Matthew Pietropaoli, "Tender, Compassionate Gaze: The Turn Toward Suffering and Contemplation of Divine Beauty"

It is my contention that one manner in which we attend to the heights of Divine Beauty is by being similarly attentive and responsive to the depths of suffering.

This paper will proceed as follows. In part one, I will discuss briefly why the attempt to come to Beauty divorced from suffering is mistaken, since it does not arise from the deepest recesses of the heart. Next, in part two, I will reflect on insights from Pavel Florensky and Dostoyevsky, as well as from Victor Frankl, which illustrate precisely this connection between suffering and Beauty. The experience of the apparent absence of purpose and goodness as displayed in suffering might, paradoxically, position us as more profoundly receptive to transcendent Beauty. Finally, in part three, I will articulate the notion that our attending sympathetically to suffering—i.e., the enactment of what St. Isaac the Syrian terms a "compassionate heart"—is exactly the sort of deepening gaze requisite to be in the presence of Divine Beauty. Hence, I hope to show that one way we come toward "the Beauty of a God who is Among Us" is by attending to the suffering that arises from turning away from such a God. Beauty, thus understood, manifests a cruciform pattern, since it holds together the profound sorrow of sin as well as the redemptive and infinite goodness of God.

Matthew Pietropaoli received his PhD in Philosophy from the Catholic University of America. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Providence in Great Falls, MT.

Andrew Roushdy, "I Nicaea at the Crossroad of Soteriology and Anthropology: A Nicene Case for the Role of Human Synergy in the Divine Economy of Salvation"

"What was decided at Nicaea remains forever inviolable; for it was sealed not by human authority but by the Spirit of God" (Oration 32, Saint Gregory the Theologian). Here, in the United States, we are inundated by a novel theological milieu which rejects a meaningful human participation the Divine Economy of Salvation in favor of the doctrine of *sola fide*. As Christians all around the world celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council, the case will be made that the

Ancient Christians of the Nicene and Ante-Nicene Era possessed a profound awareness of the role every individual Christian must play in the Divine Economy of Salvation.

This paper seeks to expound upon Nicene anthropological soteriology in contradistinction to contemporary American soteriological reductionism. Beginning with the Apostolic Christian literature and moving through to the literature immediately following the First Ecumenical Council, the paper will examine how the earliest Christian literature proffers a dramatically distinct understanding of the Fall and redemption through the Incarnation of the Divine Logos. It will be demonstrated that the understanding of the Fall in the Nicene literature is that of an excommunication between Creator and created rather than punitive retribution upon the progeny of the First Adam because of his personal transgression. The literature suggests that the First Adam and Eve experienced an incarnation from celestial to terrestrial beings, and that the only remedy to their corruption through incarnation was for the Logos to enact a reversal by regeneration through his Incarnation. Having accomplished this, special attention will then be paid to the anthropology and morality which springs from this soteriology, specifically, the necessity for a spirituality which commingles justification and sanctification into one cohesive doctrine and practice of salvation. Ultimately, this paper hopes to explain why human synergy is necessary for salvation in the Nicene soteriological anthropology in opposition to a minimalistic soteriology which necessarily results in a minimalistic anthropology.

Andrew Roushdy lives in Wisconsin as a graduate student and research assistant in philosophy at Marquette University. Simultaneously, he is a doctoral candidate in dogmatic theology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki as well as a doctoral candidate in religious education at Fordham University. He graduated from Holy Cross School of Theology as a seminarian in 2020 and currently serves in the United States Navy Reserve as a Chaplain Candidate Program Officer.

Sr. Sidonia, “Persons at Prayer in Paradise: Light from Georgian Sources on the Reality of Paradise in the Church and in Every Human Heart”

St. Ephraim the Syrian said that “love opened Paradise,” and every year on the Feast of Theophany, during the prayer at the Great Blessing of the Water the Priest proclaims, “Today, Paradise is opened.” On this same feast, in the Svaneti region of the Republic of Georgia, the heads of families go to the church and ask Christ to open the gate and send their departed relatives from Paradise, to visit their homes. In their prayers, they refer to Paradise as a place where the rain is milk and the snow is cotton, and after praying, they escort the souls of their relatives home, spreading milk and honey on the path.

Questions on the nature of Paradise have received some scholarly discussion, in terms of cosmology and chronology, but there is much to be explored regarding the reality of Paradise, what and where it is, how it was closed and opened again, and how, in Christ, every human being can return and remain there. These questions also relate to the eschatological nature of Liturgy, and of all aspects of life in the Church.

Alongside common Orthodox hymnography, such as that for the Holy Cross, for the Lord's Great Feasts, and for the Theotokos, Georgian folk songs and rituals describe Paradise, its characteristics, and the wondrous things that grow within it. The lives of the first documented Georgian saints include important events surrounding the Crucifixion and Christ's opening of Paradise. Georgian monastic literature, including the writings of Ioane P'etrits'i, as well as Greek and Syriac patristic sources that have had a prominent place in Georgia, such as those of Sts. Ephraim the Syrian and

Maximos the Confessor, provide philosophical and theological teachings about Christ's work and Paradise on earth. Finally, Georgian musical characteristics provide sonic icons relating to Paradise, the means to perceive it, and the journey into it. A study of all these sources together, along with the words of contemporary Elders, will show the ontological reality of several facets of Paradise, especially regarding the role of every member of the Body of Christ, as a locus for Paradise, as a resident of Paradise, and as a cultivator of the same.

Sr. Sidonia is a nun at the Sacred Monastery of St. Nina (Georgian Patriarchate) in Union Bridge, MD. After receiving a B.A. in Music and Medieval Studies at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN, she carried out postgraduate work in Orthodox chant studies at the University of Limerick, Ireland, culminating with a Ph.D. in Arts Practice, which explored the theology of Eastern Orthodox chant through a multidisciplinary approach, including Holy Week services, ethnomusicological field work in the Republic of Georgia, textile arts, iconography, patristics, performance, and pedagogy. Besides daily choral singing, her current work includes vocal coaching, publishing postdoctoral research, facilitating chant workshops and discussions, handiwork, and teaching children at the monastery's summer camp.

Ralph Sidway, “Photography, Stillness, and Beauty: Aesthetic and Ascetical Principles to Cultivate Numinous and Iconic Image Making”

The invention of photography two centuries ago enabled for the first time the recording of “real-world” images. The digital imaging and smartphone revolutions in the new millennium have made photography easy and ubiquitous, our collective consciousness now saturated with billions of snapshots in a glossy, photo dystopia, melded with a dark underside of *porneia*, degrading the human form and leveraging dopamine addiction for selling everything and edifying nothing, but always stoking the passions.

This commoditization of photography — whether via snapshots or ‘dark shots’ — challenges us to provide an opposite ethos we may term ‘intentional’ or even ‘neptic’ photography. Just as we have seen edifying Orthodox Christian films produced in recent years, we should expect to see — and should encourage and support — similar endeavors in still photography, creative ‘leaven’ proceeding from an Orthodox Christian culture nurtured in prayer, stillness and beauty, incarnating the Gospel through numinous images which bring the viewer to a haven of *hesychia*.

This paper will explore the paradox unique to such ‘neptic’ photography: how to use real-world images to point to that which is beyond images, so well expressed as one of the primary themes of the 2025 PAIDEIA Conference: “The shining forth of the invisible within the visible.” Incarnational clues, aesthetic principles and photographic techniques will also be discussed, with example images provided from classic 20th century photographers as well as from the author’s recent book, *The North American Thebaid*.

Ralph H. (Zosimas) Sidway is a graduate of Transylvania University, Lexington, KY (BA, Philosophy) and is a member of St. Symeon Orthodox Church (OCA) in Birmingham, AL. His photographs were first accepted into juried exhibits in 1983 and thereafter in galleries across Kentucky and Southern Indiana. His images have won numerous awards and been featured in a variety of publications and coffee table books. His books include *Pursuing the Light: Forty Years of Photography* (2014) and *The North American Thebaid: Orthodox Christian Monasteries in the United States and Canada* (St. Tikhon’s Monastery Press, 2025), the latter including a preface further exploring themes of the current paper.

Fr. Paul (Alfred) Siewers, “Tarkovsky, Dostoevsky, and Frank: Are ‘Existentialist’ and ‘Panentheist’ Helpful Terms in Articulating ‘the Beauty of a God Who is Among Us’ in Orthodox Apologetics in the West Today?”

Twentieth-century filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, nineteenth-century Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, and inter-war Russian exile-philosopher S.L. Frank share an interest in what Dostoevsky in his novel *The Idiot* offered, that “beauty will save the world,” related to Orthodox theology. However, they do so in three different genres of modern discourse—film, the novel, and popular academic writing. Dostoevsky and Frank’s work has separately been characterized at times, mainly by non-Orthodox commentators, as “Christian existentialist,” a term applicable by parallel to Tarkovsky’s films. Another Western term from outside the milieu of Orthodox terminology, “Christian panentheism,” could be applicable to the approach of all three to “the beauty of a God Who is among us” as well. Yet both terms, “existentialist” and “panentheist,” are open to debate and critique from within Orthodox circles, due to their secular intellectual associations. In three brief case studies, looking at a short segment each from the bleak satire of Dostoevsky’s *Demons*, Frank’s *The Unknowable* (blurbed as the greatest work of Russian philosophy but if so perhaps paralleling Charles Peirce’s as that of “the greatest American philosopher whom Americans don’t know”!), and Tarkovsky’s most overtly Orthodox-related film, *Andrei Rublev*, this paper will seek to start a conversation on whether the terms existentialist and panentheist are helpful in a qualified “Christian” way to Orthodox apologetics in Western intellectual circles today, or not, and if so, how best to try to “baptize” such terms to talk about beauty in Orthodox apologetic theology.

Fr. Paul Siewers, Ph.D., is a priest at St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco Russian Orthodox (ROCOR) Mission in Lewisburg, PA and Associate Professor of Literary Studies at Bucknell University. The author or editor of four books, including *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), he is also former Urban Affairs Writer at the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

Matthew Stripling, “God’s Presence in Signs, Symbols, and Images”

God, while remaining absolutely transcendent, manifests Himself in the world. In this paper, I would like to consider three modes of God’s manifestation: sign, symbol, and image. I will argue that these should be understood as three distinct ways in which God appears within creation. By sign, I mean something that indicates or refers to something else by pointing away from itself and towards another. For example, a created object is a sign of a creating subject, pointing towards the latter as cause. Symbols also indicate; but, unlike signs, symbols resemble what they indicate. This gives symbols a substituting function. For example, a sacred object symbolizes a divine reality such that the reverence due to the divine reality is directed at and through the symbol. Finally, images, unlike signs, do not point away from themselves to something else. And unlike symbols, images are not merely similar to what they image. Rather, in the image, we have a true presence of that which is absent and not merely an indication of or substitution for it. Such an analysis of images helps make sense of Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man in our image.”

Matthew Stripling received his PhD in philosophy from The Catholic University of America in 2023. Currently he is living in Crawfordsville, IN with his wife and five children. In August, he will begin the M.Div. program at St. Tikhon’s Orthodox Theological Seminary under the Antiochian Archdiocese.

Stoyan Tanev, “Fr. Sergius Bulgakov on the Holy Spirit as Love—A Critical Reflection”

The objective of this paper is to engage in a critical reflection on a topic that appears to be significantly understudied in Orthodox theology, the Holy Spirit as love. It will focus on one of the key works of Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, trying to identify some of his key theological insights but staying away from his sophiological inspirations. The critical reflection will be done in parallel to a comparative reflection on the theological contributions of two other theologians who have significantly engaged with Bulgakov's works, Fr. Dumitru Staniloae and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Recent scholarship suggests that Staniloae shaped his integrative theological vision as a reaction to Bulgakov's sophiology. This makes him the second major Orthodox theologian, after Fr. Georges Florovsky, in the history of 20th century Orthodox theology, who has contributed to shaping modern Orthodox theology by "reacting" to Bulgakov's sophiology. Staniloae's creative appropriation of Bulgakov's theological insights is something that is very little studied. The key questions addressed in the paper are: (a) What can we learn about the Holy Spirit as love by reading Bulgakov's *The Comforter*? (b) Which themes in Bulgakov's understanding of the Holy Spirit as love may have affected Staniloae's view? And how do some of the works of von Balthasar contribute to the elaboration of this topic?

Stoyan Tanev, PhD in Physics and in Theology, MSc, MEng, MA Theology, is Associate Professor of Technology Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. He is also Adjunct Professor in the Faculties of Theology at St. Paul University in Ottawa and Sofia University in Bulgaria. His theological interests are in contemporary issues in Orthodox theology and the dialogue between science and theology. He is the author of *Energy in Orthodox Theology and Physics: From Controversy to Encounter* (Pickwick Publications, 2017) and served as guest editor for two special issues of *Analogia: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies*, "Science and Orthodox Theology," Vol. 12/13, 2020, and "Physics and Theology," Vol. 21, 2024.

Fr. Joseph Thornburg, "Zoe and Bios: An Orthodox Christian Assessment of Genetic Engineering"

From James Watson and Francis Crick and their discovery of the double helix of DNA in 1953 to Francis Collins and the sequencing of the human genome in 2001, mankind has continued its persistent pursuit of uncovering the layers of complexity and beauty in all living things. Many mysteries have been unraveled since the discovery of "life's code." One particularly salient example in our day is CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats). CRISPR allows one to program a protein to find a specific gene and remove it and/or replace it with another. CRISPR is not the first gene-editing tool, and it will not be the last; in fact, there are multiple CRISPRs, or CRISPR-associated sequences, shortened to "Cas." Cas9 is the most popular and will be discussed in this paper.

As a gene-editing tool, the precision of CRISPR/Cas9 is unmatched compared to prior technologies. Moreover, it is relatively inexpensive and generally easy to use. While there are great opportunities for medicinal healing, there is also the potential for grave misuse of a kind seen only in science fiction novels or films. Because this technology is moving quickly and the potential is so great, Orthodox Christians—pastors, lay-leaders and young people alike—need to be well-informed of the science motivating CRISPR and grapple with its ethical ramifications. This technology must be approached with caution, but there appear to be permissible uses of this tool which ought to prompt gratitude toward God. And there seem to be clear applications of CRISPR that should be rejected outright (especially by Orthodox Christians), such as embryonic gene editing. This paper seeks to start a conversation about gene-editing technology and the theological and ethical guideposts that should inform our assessment of it.

Fr. Joseph Thornburg was born and raised in Southern California, where he met his wife Presbyteria Marina when they were children. Raised as Evangelicals, they eventually embraced the fullness of the faith in the Orthodox Church and were married in 2013 and have been blessed with two children. He attended college at California Baptist University, where he received a B.A. in Christian Studies with a Minor in Philosophy. He was sent to St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York, where he received his M.Div. in May of 2023 and was ordained to the holy priesthood. His areas of interest are in Church History, Philosophy of Religion, Apologetics, Bioethics, and Culture.

Rico Vitz, “Beauty beyond Words: Reflections on Hume, St. Maximos, and the Nature of Religious Language”

God's nature is beyond human comprehension. Consequently, human language is limited in what it can express about “the Supreme Being.” David Hume believes that these claims pose a serious challenge to Christian faith. But does he offer an argument for his belief? At first glance, the answer seems obvious: Yes, that's an essential element of his philosophical project—especially, e.g., his *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*. But is this reading of Hume correct? In this session, I will argue that the answer is not obvious and that it might not even be “Yes.” Reading Hume's views in light of those of St. Maximos, I will suggest that although he does pose an argument against various theological views of his milieu, he does not offer an argument against Christianity *per se*. I will conclude by suggesting why understanding this academic debate is relevant for contemporary evangelization.

Rico Vitz is Professor in the Honors College at Azusa Pacific University. He is the author of *Reforming the Art of Living: Nature, Virtue, and Religion in Descartes's Epistemology*, co-editor of *Hume's Moral Philosophy and Contemporary Psychology* and of *The Ethics of Belief: Individual and Social*, and the editor of *Turning East: Contemporary Philosophers and the Ancient Christian Faith*. He has served as the Executive Vice President-Treasurer of the Hume Society and as a member of the Executive Committee of the Society of Christian Philosophers. His current research focuses on compassion, community, and culture in the works of David Hume and classical Confucianism. He and his family are members of St. Peter the Apostle Orthodox Christian Church in Pomona, California.

William Weber, “The Beauty of Humility in St. Ignatius of Antioch”

The beauty of humility is found within St. Ignatius himself, and it radiates out from him into his writings and exemplary life—and then, hopefully, out from these into us. Yet he begins each of his epistles by calling himself “Godbearer.” His detractors see this as arrogant. How are they not right? To answer this question, this presentation will examine his fear of perishing, love of suffering, meekness in spiritual warfare, lack of God, support of St. Polycarp, and not shaming his opponents. Then particular attention will be given to Ignatius' exhortations to voluntary submission to authority and mutual submission to each other. Finally, his own life will be shown to be a sacrificial and humble offering.

William Weber is a retired educator, with a background in administration and the classroom in public, private, and church settings. He is the author of *Dying to Reach God: A New Translation and Commentary on the Writings of St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. Polycarp of Smyrna, Second-Century Christian Martyrs* (Resource Publications, 2024). He and his wife Lindsey have published articles in THE WORD magazine (Antiochian) on their pilgrimages to Greece. They are members of St. Michael Orthodox Church in Louisville, KY, and serve at its mission in Elizabethtown.

Chad Whitacre, “The Synaxis of the Gospels and the Twelve Faithful Servants”

The Church knows many synaxis icons, representing groups of saints. In this talk, I will present a sketch for a Synaxis of the Gospels, discussing its composition and significance for us today. Part of my proposal is the recognition of a group of saints I call the Twelve Faithful Servants, each having received from Christ Himself a version of the pronouncement, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” I have been commissioning their icons, five of which I intend to present at the conference.

Chad Whitacre is a parishioner at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church (OCA) in McKees Rocks, PA with a B.A. in Ancient Languages and Biblical Studies from Wheaton College, IL, and a career in software development. His current professional role is Head of Open Source at Sentry. He can be found online at chadwhitacre.com and gospeldesk.org.

David Wilmington, “Guroian’s Divinizing Culture: Squinted Beauty, Dusty Icons, and the Incarnational Ethics of Liturgy”

In both *The Orthodox Reality* and *The Melody of Faith*, Vigen Guroian emphasizes the significance of man’s call to be a sub-mediator of God’s grace and divinization in and for Creation as a consequence of his creation *imago dei*. This mediating role grounds and invigorates Guroian’s definition and presentation of human culture throughout his work. Even more emphatic, however, is his insistence on the centrality of Liturgy as the formative event-place for (1) encountering and understanding reality, (2) the healing of and formation toward a true anthropology, and (3) forming an Orthodox culture.

This network of ideas finds solid support in as venerable a source as St. Maximos the Confessor, as we see expressed in Thunberg’s work on Maximos’ anthropology, *Microcosm and Mediator*, as well as in Maximos’ own work, including the *Commentary on the Our Father* and *Chapters on Love*. This paper will bring these theological sources together in conversation in order to explore an Orthodox vision of the nature and performed character of the Beauty that will, so we hear, save the world. Drawing from St. Maximos, Guroian, and Thunberg, I will suggest that understanding and living out these three key elements in harmony can help us form and perform a particularly Orthodox embodiment of Beauty: an anthropology of εικόνα and ὁμοίωσιν, the Incarnate two-natured Christ (which reveals the full consequence of our anthropology), and the culture-creating Liturgy.

David M. Wilmington, Ph.D. taught at the undergraduate and graduate levels for 9 years before becoming Academic Dean and Humanities Teacher at Petra Academy in Bozeman, MT. He has also designed multi-year Masters curricula integrating theology, ethics, arts, and history while delivering guest lecture series (in Singapore and as an Ignatius Brady Lecturer for St. Bonaventure Univ.) and serving as an Area Editor (Music) for the De Gruyter *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*. He has published on trinitarian theology, virtues ethics, mystical theology, and popular culture - often drawing from and pointing to music (especially jazz improvisation) as a fruitful model for educating and cultivating faithful Christians in any vocation.

Xuan Yang, “Neoplatonism’s Solution to the Problem of Evil and a Necessary Turn towards Byzantine Philosophical Discourse”

This paper seeks to address how the existence of evils can be reconciled with a shared commitment among Neoplatonic and Christian philosophers that God is the cause of all things. It focuses on how Plotinus, Proclus, and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite tackle this problem of explaining evil. The consistent strategy among them exonerates the Good from responsibility for evil by admitting that

evil “exists” as a non-being. As Proclus and Dionysius both gradually realize, evil has no nature, so discussions about evil necessitate that philosophical discourse concentrate not on its essence but on its locale in the will, power, and energy of created beings. To this end, Byzantine philosophy can help us better explain and locate evil by providing a discourse based on the distinction between essence and energy.

Xuan Yang is a Ph.D. student in Philosophy at the University of Kentucky, with a strong interest in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, particularly Neoplatonism and Byzantine thought. He is currently a catechumen at St. Matrona Orthodox Church (ROCOR) in Lexington, KY.