

# Ⲡⲓⲓⲓⲓⲛⲁⲩⲏ SUNDAY SESSIONS

## World Religions

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WEEK 4 - EASTERN ORTHODOXY

### Initial Stats

As of 2017, according to Pew Research there are:

- 270 million Orthodox Christians around the world
- 77% of these Orthodox Christians live in Europe (roughly 200 million)

Countries with the most adherents:

1. Russia (~102 M)
2. Ethiopia\* (~47 M)
3. Ukraine (~30 M)
4. Romania (~16 M)
5. Greece (~9 M)

Countries with the highest percentage of adherents:

1. Moldova (~95%)
2. Greece (~90%)
3. Cyprus (~89%)

\*stats refer to Orthodox Christians as a whole, while today most of our time will be spent talking about Eastern Orthodoxy in particular (slight difference which we will address in our next section)

# **History of Eastern Orthodoxy**

## **The Early Church (prior to 1000 AD)**

- Council of Nicea (325 AD)
- Council of Chalcedon

## **The Church of Imperial Byzantium**

- Byzantine Christianity about 1000 AD
- The Great Schism

## **Orthodoxy under the Ottomans (1453–1821)**

## **The Church of Russia (1448–1800)**

**Orthodox Churches in the 19th Century**

**The Eastern Orthodox Church since World War I**

**Sects of Eastern Orthodoxy**

# Holy Books

- **The Bible**
- **Church Tradition**
- **Additional Important Texts**

## Belief and Practice

- **Theosis (Deification)**
  - Related: What is God like?
  
- **Iconography**
  
- **Mysticism in Eastern Orthodoxy**

Repentance, to be sure,  
But of a species far  
less likely to oblige  
sheepish repetition.

Repentance, you'll observe,  
glibly bears the bent  
of thought revisited,  
and mind's familiar stamp

—a quaint, half-hearted  
doubleness that couples  
all compunction with a pledge  
of recurrent screw-up.

The heart's metanoia,

on the other hand, turns  
without regret, turns not  
so much away, as toward,

as if the slow pilgrim  
has been surprised to find  
that sin is not so bad  
as it is a waste of time.

- Scott Cairns, *Metánoia*

- **Worship in the Church**

## Evangelism

- **Justification and Sanctification**

When talking to adherents to Eastern Orthodoxy - particular nominal adherents, “we would do well to emphasize the personal aspect of justification as God’s acceptance of sinners into fellowship with himself, even though we are not perfect. Such acceptance does not need to wait until the completion of a long process of deification. Instead, through his Son Jesus Christ, God has already accomplished all that he requires in order to accept people. It remains simply to receive this gift of God’s acceptance by faith in Christ in order to begin experiencing now the joy of fellowship with him. This fellowship, which begins at the inception of faith, is the *basis* for pursuing a life of Christ-likeness, not the *result* of completing the process of becoming like Christ.”

- Donald Fairbairn

## - **What the Eastern Orthodox Can Learn from Evangelicals (Trevin Wax)**

“One of the major problems facing the Eastern Orthodox, especially in countries where it is the state religion, is religious apathy... The Eastern Orthodox would do well to renew the fervor among their own church members, converting their own flock – many of whom never darken the door of the church.

The liturgy of an Orthodox worship services stresses God’s transcendence, often to the point of making God seem distant and aloof. A renewal of the liturgy and an emphasis on the personal “relationship” aspect preached by evangelicals would help church members to a more biblical view of the God we worship.”

## - **What Evangelicals Can Learn from the Orthodox (Trevin Wax)**

“Evangelicals should admire the stability of the Orthodox Church, even if we disagree with the church structure and emphasis on tradition. We are too often moving from one fad to the next, in a never-ending merry-go-round of “the next big thing!” These fads are not only distracting, but they hurt our witness to those around us.

If the Orthodox can learn from the “immanence of God” shown in evangelical worship, surely we can learn to show the “transcendence of God” in worship. Too often, God is presented as a best friend, a life coach, a buddy to have in time of need. We need the picture of God in His majesty and holiness that an Eastern Orthodox service provides. We should be trying to strike a biblical, healthy balance between these two.