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Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: A Concise Exposition



Synopsis

Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky's *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* has long been regarded as a standard source of Orthodox theology. Since its publication in Russian in 1963, it has been used as the main theology textbook at Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary in Jordanville, New York; and since the publication of the first English edition in 1983, it has come to be regarded throughout the English-speaking world as one of the best introductory books on Orthodox theology. Written clearly, simply and concisely, this modern-day classic is accessible not only to theology students but to the contemporary layman in general. As one deeply rooted in the tradition of the Orthodox Church, Fr. Michael quotes abundantly from the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Holy Fathers, being concerned to present, not human opinions, but Divine Revelation, which has been handed down to us as the Church's certain, unchanging teaching. **EXPANDED THIRD EDITION:** In the first English edition, Fr. Seraphim added many substantive footnotes in order to provide clarification on certain points or to introduce helpful information not included in the main text. In this third English edition, yet more notes have been added, primarily consisting of quotations from the Holy Fathers, in order to further elucidate Orthodox doctrines. This edition also includes a new preface, a new bibliography, and an expanded index.

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Customer Reviews

A very complete overview of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, from a traditional Orthodox perspective. While not as broad in its scope as other books, such as "The Orthodox Church" by Bp. Kallistos, the smaller scope of the book does allow for a closer examination of the subjects that are dealt

with, and Fr. Michael Pomazansky does this quite well. This book is a systematic examination of Orthodox theology, and for that some have criticized it; systematic, catechism, etc. are four-letter words for some Orthodox. However, one cannot help but wonder why organization as it happens in this book could ever be considered a bad thing. Perhaps only behind "The Orthodox Church" and "The Orthodox Way," this is the book that I would most likely recommend to anyone wishing to have a broad but intellectually satisfying overview of what the Orthodox believe. I do have two minor issues with the text as it is today. First, it is impossible to tell when footnotes are from Fr. Seraphim Rose (the translator) or Fr. Michael (the author). This has caused a problem at times when I know that Fr. Seraphim feels a certain way about a subject, but I am not sure whether Fr. Michael also feels the same way. A lengthy footnote is sometimes provided, but with no identification as to who is speaking. And second, Fr. Seraphim does seem to insert things into the book that were not originally part of the book. While this is not uncommon in books published by the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, and while these additions are given in appendices, I still feel like it is an unfortunate move sometimes, as in a case like this book where the appendices bring in a controversial tone to the book that would have otherwise been absent. If I lend or give this book to someone and they have questions about Orthodoxy, I'd much rather try and answer questions about icons or Mary, and not controversial subjects like the Dogma of Redemption.

To quote from the 'Translator's Preface', written by Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, 1981: "One of the major advantages of this book is its simplicity of presentation. It was written not for academic theologians, but primarily for pastors, and thus it has a practical approach that is missing in many works of contemporary academic theology. In his theological writings, Fr Michael remains deeply rooted in the tradition of the Orthodox Church, not trying to supercede with his own private opinions any revelation that the Church has handed down to us.... his intent here is to write about exactly what the Church teaches -- what pastors can give to their flocks as the certain, unchanging teaching of the church -- and not about what is "disputed". There is a distinct wholeness in Fr. Michael's approach, which allows for no confusion over the Church's actual teaching. Another advantage of this book, especially for pastors who deal with converts to Orthodoxy from various religious denominations, is that it contrasts the traditional Orthodox teaching with the errors and innovations of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism." And further "Fr. Michael is the last surviving graduate of a pre-revolutionary Russian theological academy (that of Kiev), and is therefore one of the few living contacts we have with the long-standing centers of traditional Russian theology, the direct inheritance of the Byzantine Fathers. Always faithful to the instruction of the Church, his actual

"school" is, ultimately, the Church herself". I love this book. I love this book because while it is scholarly, and in fact is used as a text at the Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, New York, it speaks to the heart. This is terribly important as Orthodoxy is a faith which speaks to the heart. "The soul... naturally seeks a personal God" (God's Revelation to the Human Heart, Fr Seraphim Rose, p6). "Why does a person study religion?... to come into contact with reality" (ibid, p 13), "a person must be in a religious search not for the sake of religious experiences, which can deceive, but for the sake of truth." (ibid, p18) "If you look at a textbook of Orthodox theology, you will find that the truth cannot be found by the unaided posers of man. You can read the Scriptures or any holy book and not even understand what they say.." When in Acts 8 (28-39) the angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip and told him to go south toward Jerusalem, and along the way he encountered the eunuch, the eunuch requested of Philip that he tell him what it meant. "There are several supernatural, mystical elements in this account... there was something else that affected him: not miracles, but something in his heart." (ibid, p 19) "When Philip spoke to the Ethiopian eunuch, something in the eunuch's heart changed." This is the reason the eunuch was baptized and became a Christian. This is how God reveals Himself to mankind, in a personal way, He speaks to our hearts. This book speaks to the heart. It is written in a personal, kind and loving way to tell the truths of the Orthodox Church. It warms the heart and inspires the faithful. That is wonderful, simply wonderful in a teaching book. There are many good theological books out there, very scholastic. However to find one which speaks to one's heart, this is a rare gem. I recommend it highly.

Orthodox Dogmatic Theology is a top-notch introduction to Orthodox Theology for the Orthodox Christian, the Catechumen, or the Outsider (that's me). I keep this on my shelf along with The Orthodox Church by Bishop Kallistos Ware, and The Mystical Theology of the Orthodox Church by Vladimir Lossky. This is a fine translation by Father Seraphim Rose, a gifted and intelligent man who became an atheist as a young man but after his college years, walked into a Russian Orthodox Church and became a Priest, Monk, and Scholar. Don't let the controversy surrounding his views concerning aspects of the intermediate state keep you away from this book. A must read for anyone with an interest in Orthodoxy.

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