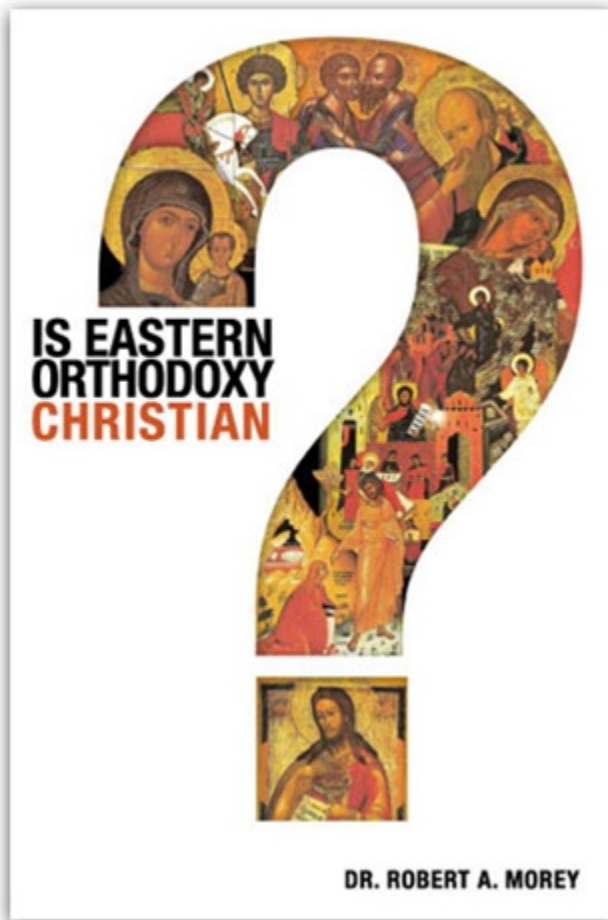


Eastern Orthodoxy Christian?



Is Eastern Orthodoxy Christian?

by Dr. Robert A. Morey

Scholar, theologian, apologist, and pastor, Dr. Robert A. Morey, defines, documents, and refutes the group of religions that go by the name "Eastern Orthodoxy," in his latest book [*Is Eastern Orthodoxy Christian?*](#) With a title that intentionally begs the question, the book serves as a helpful resource for Christian apologists and evangelists that desire to defend the faith and win the lost for Christ. Dr. Morey's many years of intense academic research and personal interviews with Eastern Orthodox theologians and followers have become the basis for the subjects addressed in this 200 page book. With six short chapters, two comprehensive appendixes, and hundreds of footnotes, *Is Eastern Orthodoxy Christian?* by Dr. Robert Morey will be among the top picks for 2008.

Chapter one: *In the Beginning*

In the first chapter, Dr. Morey documents how much like Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy began well when the Jews from Egypt received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10). When they returned to Egypt, they shared their faith in Jesus the Messiah and founded a church on Egyptian soil. However, much like the early Roman Church again, the infant Jewish church began to attract the attention of local pagans. Eventually, the pagans outnumbered the Jewish Christians and drove out the Messianic church founders because of their protest of the importation of pagan religious ideas and rituals into the church.

Dr. Morey documents the step-by-step levels of apostasy of the Egyptian Gentile church such as the solicitation of church offices in order to promote and maintain political control of the region. The inclusion of pagan priests and the infiltration of Greek philosophers led the church to become seeker-friendly, or as Dr. Morey notes on pg. 20, "the first emerging church."

Chapter two: *What is Orthodoxy?*

Dr. Morey answers the question, "What is Orthodoxy?" Describing the distinctive doctrines and rituals, this section delineates:

- Protestant converts to Orthodoxy
- Those born Orthodox
- Liberal Orthodoxy
- Conservative Orthodoxy
- Fundamentalist Orthodoxy

Chapter three: *The Hellenization of Eastern Orthodoxy*

With an extensive section on the Hellenization of Eastern Orthodoxy, Dr. Morey provides documented proof that is beyond refutation that from its beginning, Eastern Orthodox theology was molded and shaped by pagan doctrines and rituals. Dr. Morey describes how the worldview of Origen and those who followed him was thoroughly pagan. He illustrates how instead of Christianizing the dominant Hellenistic philosophies and religions around them, they succeeded in Hellenizing Christianity (pg. 41). In this section, you'll learn:

- How Alexander the Great played a role
- The role and influence of the Alexandrian School led by Origen
- How the apologists paganized the Egyptian Church
- How the humanism of the philosophers displaced the Bible
- How Justin Martyr's admiration of Socrates, Plato and Heracleitos, led him to say, "Those who lived according to reason (Logos) are Christians, even though they were accounted atheists. Such among the Greeks were Socrates and Heracleitos, and those who resembled them." (pg. 43)

- Orthodox theology's dependence on Platonic philosophy seen in the works of: Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and more
- What Apophatic theology is and where it came from
- Irrefutable biblical arguments against Eastern Orthodoxy's rotten pillars (pgs. 48-51).
- The Septuagint myth (5 myths)
- The Orthodox canon of Scripture
- The fraudulent Orthodox fathers

With plenty of Scripture interwoven throughout the book, the chapter on the Hellenization of Eastern Orthodoxy is worth at least ten times the price of the book alone! Bound to be a Christian apologist's favorite go-to resource, Chapter 3 provides enough irrefutable biblical and historical arguments to defend the faith in our day, and beyond.

Chapter four: *The Deification of Man*

Not beating around the bush at all, Dr. Morey begins this chapter with, "The historical origins of the doctrine, experience, and techniques of deification have been traced back by Orthodox scholars to the ancient Eastern mysticism found in Hinduism and Buddhism. This is well-documented and beyond refutation." (pg. 67)

By documenting the irrefutable historical connection between Eastern Orthodoxy and Eastern mysticism, Dr. Morey argues that the experience that is called "deification" is the same experience recorded in many non-Christian religions. In this fascinating chapter, you'll learn:

- That Orthodoxy numbers the Buddha among its saints.
- That the shocking statement above comes from the foreword of one of Orthodoxy's own well-respected scholar Vladimir Lossky's book *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*.
- About mystical gnosis and the monological prayers of the Hesychasts (Orthodox mystics or "Desert Fathers").
- That deification (apotheosis) is experienced by Hinduism, Buddhism, Sufism (a mystical form of Islam)
- That Orthodox scholars argue that Satan *did not lie* when he told Eve that she would be like God in Gen. 3:5, rather, Satan told her the truth!
- That Eastern mysticism was brought to the West by Alexander the Great, a god himself

A special section of this chapter is dedicated to the *Divine Essence/Divine Energy* dichotomy. Developed by Palamas, one of the pillars of Eastern Orthodoxy is the distinction between the "essence" of God and "energy" of God.

"The distinction between the imparticipable essence of God and his participable energies was passionately defended by Palamas as the theoretical basis of a strongly realistic view of the participation in the divine." (pg. 75)

Dr. Morey (pgs. 74-86) spends these twelve pages having lots of fun interacting with Eastern Orthodoxy's claim that man can "become God" in terms of merging with His energies. But man does not "become God" in the sense of merging with His being or essence. By taking the necessary time to explain to the reader just how relevant an accurate understanding of the Divine Essence/Divine Energy distinction or dichotomy is, Dr. Morey:

- Explains how this is an attempt to avoid pantheism
- Answers the question, "Where did this dichotomy come from?"
- Asks, "Is this 'essence versus energy' dichotomy a valid concept?"
- Explains the Greek dichotomies of Plato, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Aristotle.
- Provides much needed logical arguments against it
- Explains how some Protestant converts reduce deification to merely moral, metaphorical, and figurative, rather than ontological to escape being charged with pantheism
- Discusses the *Orthodox Study Bible*
- Refutes the Eastern Orthodox claim that Mary's vagina is referred to in Ezekiel 44:2
- Demonstrates that the historical-grammatical hermeneutic is how Jesus and the Apostles interpreted Scripture
- Exegetes 2 Peter 1:4 from the Greek, Eastern Orthodoxy's strongest biblical argument (pgs. 94-97).

This chapter will provide the Christian with plenty of ammunition when dealing with Eastern Orthodox people. This chapter is probably the most difficult material to comprehend, but continuing in the same tradition of his previous 44 books, Dr. Morey simplifies big concepts into bite-sized fragments.

Chapter Five: Iconolatry

Dr. Morey begins this chapter with, "In the pre-Christian world of Greco-Roman philosophy, Platonists and Stoics rejected crude worship of idols. The artistic representations of angels, gods, goddesses, heroes, kings, pharaohs, and even Caesar were reinterpreted. Instead of objects to be worshipped (i.e. idols), they were 'windows' through which you could contact divine energies present in those beings. Thus, the wall murals, the icons, and the statues were not viewed as being anything in and of themselves." (pg. 109) Dr. Morey also says, "The first icons were not invented by the Jews or the Christians. The making of icons, their veneration by prayers, candles, incense, etc. and even icon processions, were performed by the pagan Egyptian priests long before Christianity arrived in Egypt."

Dr. Morey quotes Pavel Florensky (1882-1937) and points out that "the Egyptians took the icons of pagan deities and merely renamed them as icons of Christ, Mary, and the saints." In this chapter that establishes the pagan origins of icons, you'll learn:

- That the first icons were the mortuary effigies or Faiyum funeral masks of notable people, such as Pharaoh.
- That the materials used and the style of painting of these icons did not change from pagan to Christian.
- That the pre-Christian pagan veneration of icons was acceptable because of the concept of magic.
- That the incompatibility of Christianity and magic is grounded in the Jews rejection of magic, especially contact with the dead (Deut. 18:9-22)
- That a magical view of icons was dominant in Eastern Christianity by the fifth century

Dr. Morey concludes this chapter with, "The connection between the pre-Christian pagan doctrine of deification and icon/relic worship in Eastern Orthodoxy is obvious. When the pagans took over the Orthodox Church, they brought their belief in apotheosis and their worship of icons/relics with them. The icon worship practiced today in every Orthodox Church was originally practiced by pagans before Jesus was born." (pg. 116)

Chapter Six: Final Summary

Sadly, Chapter Six is like the flight home from a long vacation. The end is near, but Oh, what a journey. In the final summary, Dr. Morey gives a sweeping historical overview of Eastern Orthodoxy as a true gospel-preaching church at its beginning that soon became a pagan temple. Dr. Morey traces this back to the politicians and priests who "stole the church from Messianic Jews." Under the pagan leadership, they brought in pagan philosophy, magical beliefs, and superstitious rituals into the church.

Dr. Morey recounts how again and again, God raised up men who called upon the Eastern Church to renounce its idolatrous worship of Mary, the saints, icons, and relics. After these reforms failed due to the ignorance of the people and the power of the politicians and priests, God called the Orthodox to repentance one last time. Dr. Morey is referring to the Orthodox Reformer Cyril Lucaris (1572-1638). Having studied Reformed Theology in Europe, God was pleased to open his heart to the Gospel and he accepted Christ as his only hope of heaven. Dr. Morey ends the final chapter with the drama of:

- Cyril's return to Constantinople
- Cyril's desire to call the Eastern Church to repentance
- Cyril's election as Ecumenical Patriarch (spiritual head of Orthodoxy)
- Cyril's issue of a new confession of faith in 1629, and again in 1633
- The doctrines in Cyril's creed (contained many great truths of the Reformation)
- Orthodoxy's rejection of Cyril's creed
- The murder of Cyril and his body dumped in the Bay of Bosphorus

- The murders of Cyril's followers
- The flee to Europe of Cyril's surviving followers
- The Reformation of the Eastern Church stopped by bloody hands
- The condemnation of Cyril's confession in 1638 (Synod at Constantinople)
- The condemnation of Cyril's confession again in 1642 (Synod at Jassy)

The final chapter ends with "The Eastern Church finally and clearly rejected the biblical Gospel that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone." What a sad story. May God be pleased to once again call the Eastern Church to repentance. May He also be pleased to grant it.

Appendix A: The "Fathers" on Apotheosis (Deification)

Just when you thought the curtains were being pulled, Dr. Morey comes back out for a double encore! Getting right back in the swing of things, Dr. Morey provides Christian apologists and evangelists with arguably the most powerful refutation outside of Scripture. From my own personal dealings with Eastern Orthodox people, I have come to recognize their dependency on the "Fathers." When evangelizing them, they will often quote this "Father" and that "Father" until blue in the face.

Appendix A informs us, "Most, if not nearly all of the writings attributed to the 'fathers' of the Orthodox and Catholic Church have been discredited as frauds." Dr. Morey also discusses the unreliability of the creeds. This is essential in understanding how to deal with Orthodox theologians that attempt to prove that deification was a doctrine of the early church. In looking at the quotes attributed to church fathers, Dr. Morey discusses:

- Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165) at length - The First Apology Chapter 21
- Iraneus (A.D. 130-202)
- Hippolytus (died A.D. 235)

Then, Dr. Morey moves forward to the later fathers.

"Once we leave the early fathers, we enter the Hellenistic atmosphere of the Orthodox Church. It is thus no surprise that such 'fathers' as Origen believed in many Platonic ideas such as the preexistence of the soul and the deification of man. Plato, Neo-Platonism, Plotinus, etc. not only filled their minds but governed their theology." (pg.138)

In this next section, he looks at:

- Hilary of Poitiers (A.D. 300-336)
- Athanasius (A.D. 293-373)
- Basil the Great (A.D. 330-379)
- Gregory Nazianzen (A.D. 335-394)
- Augustine, (A.D. 354-430) Bishop of Hippo
- John of Damascus (A.D. 676-749)

Dr. Morey says, "One man's 'father' is another man's heretic. Creeds come and go in popularity, and often reflected imperial politics more than biblical theology. Thus what constitutes 'tradition' is relative."

Appendix A ends with these words from Dr. Morey: "The Bible is the only solid rock on which doctrine can stand. The Word of God is infallible and inerrant and does not depend on the fallible and superstitious opinions of uninspired men."

Appendix B: *Early Confession of the Christian Faith*

In Chapter Six: Final Summary, Dr. Morey told the story of the Orthodox Reformer Cyril - the Patriarch of Constantinople, and how he issued a new confession of faith that had him murdered, stopping the Reformation of the Eastern Church. Here, in Appendix B, Dr. Morey provides an English translation of that confession, eighteen chapters of biblical theology. It really is a sad story.

Bibliography and End Notes

Bibliography: over 40 titles

End Notes: 134

***This review was based on a pre-release manuscript. Page numbers and citations may not reflect the actual post-edited print copy.**

Editorial Review and Summary:

[Is Eastern Orthodoxy Christian?](#) by Dr. Robert Morey, is an absolute must for the Christian apologist and evangelist. The Eastern Orthodox religion has recently stormed across Protestant Evangelicalism, sweeping away thousands of converts. Today, Eastern Orthodox professors are teaching young and naïve Protestant Evangelicals in Evangelical universities and seminaries, *and converting them to Eastern Orthodoxy!*

I firmly believe that the Scriptures teach that God is sovereign over all, including man's salvation and preservation. It is on the same basis that we should strive to put the arguments in the ears, trusting that only God can drop the argument down to the heart. This book will certainly equip you with the ability to make sound arguments based on true premises. By using the education that this book provides in evangelism and apologetics, you will be able to irrefutably expose the rotten pillars of Eastern Orthodoxy. Perhaps by God's sovereign grace He may save some.

For more advanced learners, an audio series is available based on a lecture series that Dr. Morey gave in 2007 titled, Meeting the Challenge of Eastern Orthodoxy. I attended those lectures at CBUS, and I've been eagerly awaiting the release of this book. Now that it is here, and available for sale, I recommend picking up a few, reserving one for your own personal study.

One advantage in [purchasing multiple copies](#) of the book is because, usually, Protestant converts to Eastern Orthodoxy like to read, and read a lot. So, this book acts like a big fat tract that *will* get read, and as I mentioned earlier, perhaps by God's sovereign grace He'll save some. There will also be mass discussions on the internet. So, [get your copies today](#) and get up-to-speed so you can participate intelligently in these highly influential discussion forums. See biblicalthought.com for forum and blog listings discussing this book and its topics.

Stephen Macasil

biblicalthought.com

*To purchase “[Is Eastern Orthodoxy Christian](#)” go to the following website: www.faithdefenders.com and click shop.