



THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE
FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STUDIES

CONTINUING EDUCATION

PROTOPRESBYTER DR DORU COSTACHE

THE ORTHODOX FAITH

WAYS OF KNOWING GOD

FIRST LECTURE: THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

COURSE OUTLINES

- ▶ The area of Orthodox faith
- ▶ The course Ways of Knowing God
 - ▶ The Gradual and Multiple Ways of Divine Revelation
 - ▶ Revelation through Creation and the Contemplation of God's Marks in Nature
 - ▶ Historical Revelation, Theophany and Knowing God through Pondering the Scriptural Witness
 - ▶ The Outpouring of the Spirit, the Experiences of the Saints and the Ecclesial Framework
 - ▶ Tradition and the Authentication of Divine Knowledge
 - ▶ Cataphatic Expressions, the Icon and the Apophatic Reverence

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ Lecture outlines
 - ▶ Our call to know God, the current landscape and the reasons for which people do not know God
 - ▶ How can God be known? The prerequisites of divine knowledge
 - ▶ God's self-disclosure to us and its witnesses

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ We are called to know God, not just to know of God
 - ▶ Clement the Alexandrian: "the human being was made primarily to know God" (*Miscellanies* 6.8)"
- ▶ The current landscape: atheism, agnosticism and indifference
- ▶ Why do people not know God?
 - ▶ Unwillingness
 - ▶ Unworthiness

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ How can people know God?
- ▶ The descending arrow
 - ▶ God desires the salvation of all and that all know the truth (1 Timothy 2)
- ▶ The ascending arrow
 - ▶ One should become worthy of knowing God ("make us worthy, Master, that we may call you, the heavenly God, as Father")

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ The ascending arrow
 - ▶ The prerequisites of knowing God and be saved: faith, grace and good deeds or a virtuous life (Ephesians 2)
 - ▶ The context in which God can be known: the Church (Ephesians 4)

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ The ascending arrow
 - ▶ The monastic answer of Evagrius Ponticus
 - ▶ “Christianity is the teaching of our Saviour Christ which refers to ascetic practice, the contemplation of nature and theology” (*The Practical Treatise 1*)

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ The descending arrow
 - ▶ God has spoken to us and does speak to us
 - ▶ The answers of the apostles
 - ▶ God speaks through the harmony of the universe (Romans 1)
 - ▶ God's gradual and various revelation to the ancestors, through the prophets and finally through Christ (Hebrews 1)
 - ▶ Christ, the Logos/Word of God, reveals the Father (John 1)
 - ▶ God speaks within our hearts through the Spirit (Romans 8)
 - ▶ The Spirit guides us towards the fullness of the truth (John 16)

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ The descending arrow
 - ▶ The answers of Saint Maximus the Confessor (*The Book of Difficulties* 33 & 10)
 - ▶ The three embodiments of the Logos
 - ▶ In the principles of creation
 - ▶ In the scriptural text
 - ▶ In the human nature He has taken
- ▶ The three laws
 - ▶ Natural law
 - ▶ Written law
 - ▶ The law of grace

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ The descending arrow
 - ▶ The answer of Saint John Damascene (*An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 1)
 - ▶ We have not been left ignorant!
 - ▶ We receive the revelation of God in accordance with our capacity
 - ▶ God's revelation through creation
 - ▶ God's revelation through the Law and the prophets
 - ▶ God's revelation through the "only-begotten Son, our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ"

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ The descending arrow
 - ▶ Summarising the “many and various ways” (Hebrews 1) of divine revelation
 - ▶ God speaks through creation
 - ▶ God has spoken in history through the prophets
 - ▶ God’s supreme revelation through Christ
 - ▶ God witnessed to by the apostles and their disciples
 - ▶ The Spirit reveals the fullness of the truth

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ Back to the ascending arrow
 - ▶ Summarising the prerequisites of knowing God
 - ▶ Faith, grace and good deeds
 - ▶ Ascetic practice, contemplation of nature and theology
 - ▶ Charismatic illumination
 - ▶ The ecclesial framework

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ Further ways of knowing God
 - ▶ Father Dumitru Stăniloae: knowing God in the circumstances of life
 - ▶ Father Nicolae Steinhardt of Rohia: the experimental approach
 - ▶ Saint Silouan the Athonite: the charismatic experience

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ Wisdom
 - ▶ One knows God when one wants to know God
 - ▶ One knows God when one becomes worthy of knowing God
 - ▶ It is one thing to know of God and another to know God

THE GRADUAL AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF DIVINE REVELATION

- ▶ The content of the first lecture is developed in the next five lectures
- ▶ Next lecture: Revelation through Creation and the Contemplation of God's Marks in Nature

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- ▶ If you have questions or comments, do not hesitate to contact me
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