

## Amsterdam Lectures 2011-12:

### Eastern Orthodox Theology: a Personal Introduction

Lecture VII: Sacraments and Icons: the place of matter in the divine economy.

#### 1. Sacraments and the body

A chief captain of angels  
Was sent from heaven  
to say to the Mother of God, 'Hail!'  
And as, at his bodiless voice,  
Lord, he saw you embodied,  
he was astounded and stood still... (Akathist Hymn)

#### 2. The place of matter in the Divine economy

I do not venerate matter, I venerate the fashioner of matter, who became matter for my sake and accepted to dwell in matter and through matter worked my salvation, and I will not cease from reverencing matter, through which my salvation was worked... (John Damascene, *On images* I. 16)

#### 3. Sacraments or Mysteries?

Scriptural passages referred to: Matt. 13:11, Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; Eph. 5:32, 1 Tim. 3:16 (in which the Greek *mysterion* is translated into Latin as *sacramentum*); Col. 1:26–7.

- Mysteries and the Mystery of Christ
- Sacraments: the invisible manifest in the visible; 'Truly visible things are manifest images of things invisible' (Dionysios the Areopagite, *ep.* 10).
- Signs and Symbols:  
A man can not only smell roses (some beasts may do that, for lavender is said to be appreciated in the Lion House) but he can and does and ought to pluck roses and he can predicate of roses such and such. He can make a *signum* of roses. He can make attar of roses. He can garland them and make anathemata of them. Which is, presumably, the *kind* of thing he is meant to do. Anyway, there's no one else can do it. Angels can't nor can the beasts. No wonder then that Theology regards the body as a unique good. Without body: without sacrament. Angels only: no sacrament. Beasts only: no sacrament. Man: sacrament at every turn and all levels of the 'profane' and 'sacred', in the trivial and in the profound, no escape from sacrament (David Jones, *Epoch and the Artist*)  
Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolykos*
- The twofold nature of human kind and the making of images/signs/symbols

#### 4. Seven Sacraments?

- Western Medieval notion, not really at home in Orthodoxy.
- Interrelatedness of the sacraments: e.g., Baptism + anointing with oil + anointing with *myron*, chrism + clothing in a white garment + giving of baptismal cross + giving of lighted candle + Holy Communion
- Sacraments and the structure of the Church: Baptism, Eucharist, Ordination, Monastic consecration
- Sacraments and the life of faith: Baptism, Eucharist, Confession, Marriage, Sacrament of healing, Funeral rites

#### 5. Examples of sacramental symbolism

- Water and oil in baptism
- Receiving communion and the vision of Isaias (Isa. 6: 1–13)

#### 6. Symbols and reality

- Sacramental change; the Real Presence in the Eucharist
- Sacramental change, and Transfiguration in the Spirit

#### 7. Signs, symbols again

- Other ‘sacraments’, mentioned by the Fathers: e.g. the Lord’s Prayer, the Sign of the Cross; on the latter see: Andreas Andreopoulos, *The Sign of the Cross. The Gesture, the Mystery, the History* (Brewster MA: Paraclete Press, 2006)

#### 8. Icons

- Objects of devotion rather than objects of art
- Images, essential for humans of body and soul to come to understand the spiritual realm
- Incarnation
- Holy materialism