

Amsterdam Lectures 2012-13:

The Ways of Modern Orthodox Theology: Part I

Lecture VI: Fr Georges Florovsky and the Neopatristic Synthesis

Georges Florovsky: born in Odessa, son of a priest, in 1894; studied at the University of Odessa, graduated in arts in 1916; lectured there 1919–20. Left Russia for Sofia in 1920; taught at Prague in the Faculty of Law 1922–6. Paris, Institut St-Serge, 1926–48, first as professor of Patrology, then of Dogmatics. Ordained priest 1932.

Involved in the controversy over sophiology in the 1930s.

Ecumenical activity: involved in the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius from the beginning; member of the Faith and Order movement from 1937, and World Council of Churches from its inception in 1948.

1948: left Europe for the United States. Professor and Dean of St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1948–55. Professor of Eastern Church History at Harvard, 1956–64. Visiting Professor at Princeton University, 1964–79. Died 11 August 1979.

Ways of Russian Theology: published 1937

- Call for Russian theology to return to the theology of the Fathers
- Directed against the thinkers of the Russian Religious Renaissance
- Russian theology characterized by Pseudomorphosis, and a 'Babylonian Captivity'
- New way: Neopatristic synthesis, 'Christian Hellenism'

Criticisms of Florovsky:

- too general, not enough detailed guidance
- too narrow if conceived as Christian 'Hellenism'

In search of the Neopatristic synthesis:

- Paris lectures on late 1920s and 1930s

and themes from them and his articles:

- Patristic authority
- Personhood
- Creation out of nothing
- The Meaning of History
- Christocentrism

Bibliography

Works:

14-volume *Collected Works of Father Georges Florovsky*: not very satisfactory. Volumes 1–5 published Belmont, MA, 1972–9; volumes 6–14 published Vaduz, 1987–9.

Also used:

Foreword to Archimandrite Sophrony, *The Undistorted Image: Staretz Silouan 1866–1938*, London, 1958

G. Florovsky, *Puti Russkogo Bogosloviya*, Paris: YMCA Press, 1981 [reprint of 1937].

G.V. Florovsky, *Vostochnye Ottsy IV-go Veka*, reprint: Gregg International Publishers Ltd., 1972 (original: Paris, 1931).

Secondary literature (select):

‘Georges Florovsky (1893–1979)’, obituary by E.L. Mascall and Rowan Williams, *Sobornost* incorporating *Eastern Churches Review* 2:1 (1980), 69–72.

Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual and Orthodox Churchman, ed. Andrew Blane, Crestwood, NY, 1993.

Anastassy Brandon Gallaher, ‘Georges Florovsky on Reading the Life of St Seraphim’, *Sobornost* 27:1 (2005), 58–70.

Paul Gavrilyuk: ‘Harnack’s Hellenized Christianity or Florovsky’s “Sacred Hellenism”: Questioning Two Metanarratives of Early Christian Engagement with Late Antique Culture’, *SVTQ* 54 (2010), 323–44.

Alexander Golitzin, ‘“A Contemplative and a Liturgist”: Father Georges Florovsky on the *Corpus Dionysiacum*’, *SVTQ* 43 (1999), 131–61.

Alexis Klimoff, ‘Georges Florovsky and the Sophiological Controversy’, *SVTQ* 49 (2005), 67–100.