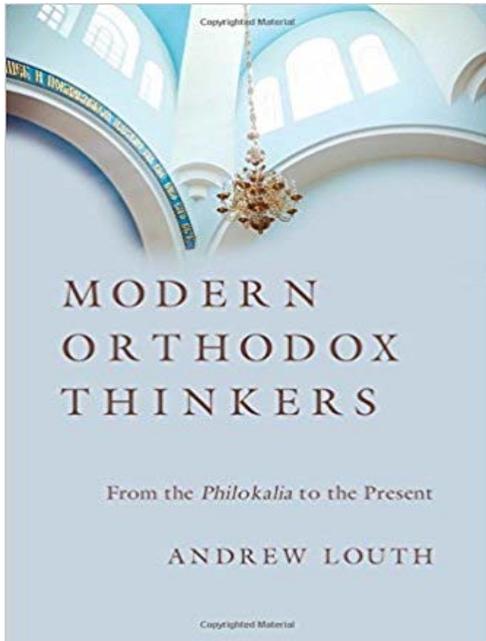


Andrew Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers from the Philokalia to the Present*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015. Pp xvi + 382, ISBN 978-0-8308-5121-8 (print).



Reviewed by: Deacon Stephen Sharman, PhD

The Reverend Dr Andrew Louth has provided us with a highly readable book which will prove to be a valuable resource for students of modern Orthodox theology and history. The book has twenty-one chapters. Fr Louth begins with the *Philokalia* which was edited and arranged by St Makarios of Corinth and St Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain, and published in 1782. Dr Louth is convinced that this event marks the beginning on modern Orthodox theology and makes a convincing case for his argument. He states, “because I want to suggest, and indeed argue, that the *Philokalia* has a kind of emblematic significance for modern Orthodox theology, marking a watershed in the history of Orthodox theology” (p. 1). The remaining chapters of his book are built on this foundation. He returns to the theme of the *Philokalia* in his chapters on Philip Sherrard and Metropolitan Kallistos (chapters 15 and 21) who along with G.E.H. Palmer are modern translators of the *Philokalia*, and consequently, deeply influenced by it.

Each chapter in his book discusses significant Orthodox theologians and their work. Each chapter contains a brief biography of the chosen theologian followed by an analysis of some of each theologian's works and his major theological themes. This pattern probably arises from the book's genesis as a series of lectures. Fr Louth explores the other theologians who influenced each modern theologian's work, and in turn, the influences each theologian had on his contemporaries and succeeding generations. This is, if one likes, an 'apostolic succession' of theologians. As an example of this, one might consider the important influence that Fr Alexander Schmemmann and Fr John Meyendorff had on generations of seminarians of St Vladimir's Seminary in New York, USA (discussed in Chapters 12 and 13). There are occasional references to ecumenical relations. As an example of this, we find references to participation in the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius. Each chapter has an accompanying section in 'Further Reading' where we find good bibliographies and notes. Dr Louth lists the English translations of each scholar's works which is a valuable resource for English speaking readers. Each chapter therefore serves as an introduction to the work of its theologian.

Along the way, we are given accounts of the history of the Orthodox Church in Russia, the Balkans, and the Western world. This book is an example of biography as a means of writing history. For example, in discussing the Orthodox theologians who escaped the Russian revolutions and lived in Western Europe and North America, he also describes the history of the Russian Orthodox Church's life in those countries and so we learn about the parts of the Russian Orthodox Church which remained loyal to the Moscow Patriarchy, those who belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia and those who found shelter under the Patriarch of Constantinople. Here a number of chapters are illuminating especially the chapters on Vladimir Lossky (Chapter 7), Nikolai Berdyaev (Chapter 5) and St Maria of Paris (Chapter 8). As a second example, his chapters on Fr Dumitru Stăniloae and St Justin Popović (Chapters 9 and 10) introduce us to modern Church life in Romania and Serbia, and their experiences under communist rule. As a third example, we have the chapters that describe the state of Orthodoxy under the Bolshevik yoke in the USSR. They discuss the work of Fr Pavel Florensky (Chapter 3) and Fr Aleksandr Men (Chapter 20) This reviewer found this information very useful for understanding the recent history of the Orthodox Church.

There is another important aspect of Fr Louth's book which deserves a brief mention in this review. Most of the theologians whom he discusses come from traditionally Orthodox countries such as Greece (Chapters 13, 14, and 16) or from the diaspora in the West. He does; however, discuss the 'acculturation' of Orthodoxy in the West in his Chapter "18 Spiritual Elders: Mother Thekla (Scharf) and the English Acculturation of Orthodoxy." England is not usually considered to be a traditionally Orthodox country although there is a long history of contacts between England and the Orthodox world beginning with St Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Venerable Bede's much debated knowledge of Greek. Mother Thekla's contribution consisted of an attempt to find Orthodox theological themes in the writings of the major English poets, William Shakespeare, George Herbert, and John Keats, and thereby to find a home for Orthodoxy in England (p 283). Mother Thekla was by birth and breeding a Russian. Fr Louth continues this exploration in his chapters about Philip Sherrard (Chapter 15) and Metropolitan Kallistos (Chapter 21) both scholars of undoubted English background. Two distinctively English gentlemen became eminent Orthodox theologians while remaining culturally English. Dr Louth himself may be added to this number. It is therefore possible to be culturally English and theologically and liturgically Orthodox and so Orthodoxy will eventually find a home and roots in England. This topic requires further reflection.

Inevitably Dr Louth's very fine book will be compared with George M. Maloney, SJ, *A History of Orthodox Theology since 1453* (1976). Both are major contributions to the study of modern Orthodox theology.

This reviewer confesses that he enjoyed reading Dr Louth's book and can recommend it to other readers who are interested in Orthodox theology and Church history. He found in it a number of very interesting personalities who made their own mark on the study of Orthodox theology. Fr Louth's book opens doors for further study and reflection.

About the reviewer. Dn. Stephen Sharman is a deacon at St. Nicholas parish in Narol, Manitoba. He received his PhD from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in 2013. The title of his dissertation was *Visions of Light in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*.