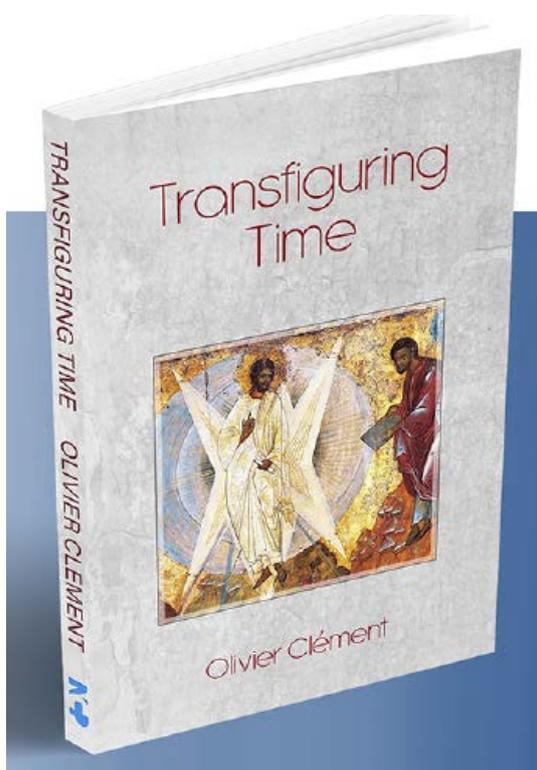


Olivier Clément, *Transfiguring Time (Transfigurer le Temps: Notes sur le Temps à la Lumière de la Tradition Orthodox)*. Jeremy Ingpen, translator. New York: New City Press, 2019.



Reviewed by:

Deacon Stephen Sharman, PhD

Jeremy Ingpen has provided us with a translation of Olivier Clément's important work of theology *Transfigurer le Temps: Notes sur le Temps à la Lumière de le Tradition Orthodox*. In his useful introduction to this translation, Ingpen describes this book as an early but important volume in Clément's work as a scholar and

theologian in which he attempts to understand time and eternity. He calls Clément's book 'a meditation and history' (page 1) and notes that "trained as an historian, the historical approach was central to Clément's way of thinking" (Page 1). Ingpen also describes the difficulties he encountered in translating his author's French into modern English. This reviewer can attest that the translation is not an 'easy read' which suggests that the original French was difficult to translate.

In the first chapters of his book, Clément discusses the understanding of time in Greek, Indian, Buddhist and Egyptian thought. Here he finds circular time where time repeats itself endlessly. He calls this an escape from time. This philosophy of time he contrasts with the understanding of time which he finds in the Old and New Testaments. This he calls linear time where time begins with creation and will eventually have an ending. He refers to "the linear time of the Old Testament and the transfigured time of the New Testament" (Page

24). He places God outside time as the creator of time. The main part of his book is an analysis of the doctrine of time seen through the eyes of the Orthodox Church. This is the great strength of his book which makes it valuable for our times and rewards both the translator and the reader.

There are a number of themes in this book. Clément's discussion ranges widely over many topics. He talks about the Incarnation, the Church, tradition, the waters of Baptism and the relations between the persons of the Holy Trinity to name but a few of his themes. He explores these themes with a depth of knowledge that betrays a wide reading of scripture and tradition joined to a careful analysis. These following quotations will provide a taste of his explorations of time and theology. "The Church greets each person in the words of St Seraphim of Sarov: 'my joy, Christ is risen'." The life-giving Spirit makes the moment of the Resurrection unceasingly present to mankind in and through the Church, through the Sacraments and through holiness of life – which is no less than a person's life become sacrament (Page 107). "By contrast the time of salvation is concentrated in a present born of the presence of God in the heart of our poverty and suffering" (Page 110). "Tradition is the Church itself carrying forward through its whole life what St Irenaeus Calls the hypothesis of the Scripture" (Page 123).

In this study of time, the Incarnation becomes an important them to which the author devotes much time and thought. At one point Clément writes, "in this way, the Incarnation reveals to us the meaning of time, time is the possibility of self-giving (abandon) and of love" (p 65). This author would likely agree with the idea that the Incarnation is the intersection of the linear time of creation with the eternity of God. His stress on the place of the Incarnation in any study of time reveals his status as an Orthodox theologian.

Clément devotes an unexpectedly large amount of time to a study of the Book of Revelation. Ingpen states that this is a neglected book in the Orthodox tradition (Page 3) – historically, very few Orthodox theologians have attempted to analyse or interpret the Book of Revelation.

This book is not for beginners. It requires a working knowledge of Hindu, Buddhist, Egyptian and Greek thought and mythology in order to comprehend

it. Although Olivier wrote this book towards the beginning of his scholarly career, in it he shows the depth and maturity of his theological work.

This reviewer commends Olivier's book to readers; it is a difficult book to read and to understand, but well worth the effort. He thanks Jeremy Ingpen for his translation.

About the reviewer: Father Stephen Sharman is a priest 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*.