

## ФІЛОСОФІЯ РЕЛІГІЇ

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DOI <https://doi.org/10.24195/spj1561-1264.2022.4.14>**Dankanich Artem Serhiiovych**

Doctor of Philosophical Sciences,  
Associate Professor at the Department of Philosophy,  
Oles Honchar Dnipro National University  
72, Gagarin Ave., Dnipro, Ukraine  
[orcid.org/0000-0003-0824-1936](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0824-1936)

### PAUL TILLICH'S PERSPECTIVE ON EASTERN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

*Topic.* Orthodox Christianity is still an important and influential branch of historical Christianity. Its impact is traced not only in the culture of eastern Europe but also in Christian art and contemporary theological debates. Orthodox Churches claim to be the one true version of Christianity founded by Christ himself and his disciples in the first century A.D. The fundamental emphasis in Eastern Christianity is the salvation of the soul and restoration of the fallen creation. This process requires constant purification through church activities such as sacraments, fasting, and prayer.

*Aim.* Consideration of Paul Tillich's interpretation of Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

*Methodology.* Implementation of the hermeneutic method on the basis of the principle of value-free orientation.

*Results.* According to Paul Tillich, Eastern Christianity early became a religion of mysticism and sacraments. It represents the type of religion that emphasizes the presence of the Holy, the sacramental and mystical union with the Divine. This is an intuition of the Divine as it is here and there manifest as the spiritual depth of all things in nature and history. Therefore, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Tillich concludes, is a religion of visual beauty, of liturgical perfection, of theological speculation, of mystical elevation.

A distinctive feature of this type of Christianity is the following: it is not a religion of social and political action and transformation. Having surveyed the theological basis of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Paul Tillich comes to the conclusion that this type of Christianity became a non-social, sacramental, and mystical type of religion which deteriorated into magical superstition and gave way to Islamic legalism and fanaticism. Russian Orthodoxy after centuries suffered the same fate as the other Eastern churches. It was conquered by another social movement of puritan character and fanatical faith, namely Marxism.

**Key words:** Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Paul Tillich, theology, worldview, perspective, sacraments.

**Introduction.** Paul Tillich was one of the most gifted Christian thinkers of the twentieth century. His unique style and original method of philosophizing are evident in his openness to history and culture. Tillich is not a systematic theologian of classical protestant discourse in this respect. His way of apologetics is not typical and cannot be considered as a way of particular doctrinal defense. Rather it is about a wide dialogue with contemporary culture and society. It should be noted that Tillich's apologetics is not denominational. He always transcends classical approaches and particular debates concerning soteriology, ecclesiology, or anthropology. In this regard, Tillich represents a homogeneous Christian tradition and the way of his analysis is in line with this initial point. Although a protestant by birth and religious experience, Paul Tillich transcends the protestant view of Christian history. His acclaimed «History of Christian Thought»

embodies this principle from the very first passage. In this study Tillich proposes to trace the history of Christian thought, from its Hellenistic origins to twentieth century existentialism, from the perspective of an ideological viewpoint.

His primary focus is not in criticism of the early church or the scholastics, but in portraying the evolution of Christian ideas. In this sense, Christian history is portrayed as a way of development, as theological struggle and charismatic personalities. Of course, this approach is not fully historical, but its advantages are evident. As a rule, historians study events, data, and causes and their impact on social and cultural life. As we have mentioned above, Tillich's focus is on ideas and worldview. Here we see his unique reading of Christian history, which essentially differs from the classical historical method. And, of course, he pays special attention to Eastern Orthodox Christianity. But his attention is based not on polemics, but rather on objective analysis in a respectful manner. For this reason, it is important to trace Tillich's viewpoint of the eastern church and its theology.

**Aim and objectives.** Analysis of Paul Tillich's perspective on eastern orthodox Christianity in the context of historical and philosophical research.

**Methodology.** In this paper a hermeneutic method is used with a focus on the hermeneutical circle and the principle of value-free orientation.

**Results.** In this paper we will discuss Paul Tillich's understanding of Eastern Orthodox Christianity with a special focus on its theological and cultural origins and peculiarities. To this end it is important to analyze Tillich's views as presented in the following works:

1. «Systematic Theology» [3];
2. «History of Christian Thought» [4];
3. «Theology of Culture» [2];

Tillich's magnum opus «Systematic Theology» is rightly considered one of the most influential theological writings of the twentieth century. In this book Tillich gives a few descriptions of Greek Orthodoxy that are important to our research. First, he points out that Platonism or mythological literalism interprets the spiritual community as an assembly of so-called spiritual beings, angelic hierarchies, saints and the saved from all periods and countries, represented on earth by ecclesiastical hierarchies and sacraments. This idea, Tillich rightly claims, is in the line of the Greek Orthodox mindset [3, p. 164]. The next point of Tillich's analysis is the concept of universality. Greek Orthodoxy, Tillich states, identifies the universal spiritual community with the reception of the Christian message by Byzantine culture [3, p. 171]. Byzantine culture embodies the synthesis of Orthodoxy and the state. This model is widely known as caesaropapism.

Of course, Tillich could not ignore the essential differences between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. According to Tillich, the Greek Orthodox church considers itself to be the church of the living tradition, in contrast to the legally defined and papally determined tradition of the Roman church [3, p. 184]. This remark is often repeated among Eastern Orthodox theologians in the context of its polemics with Roman Catholics.

The next point of Tillich's consideration is the concept of the Trinity. According to Tillich, the Eastern Orthodox model of the Trinity has a subordinational element. Underneath Greek Orthodoxy's understanding of the Trinity lies one of the most fundamental and most persistent traits of the classical Greek encounter with reality. Tillich explains this principle in the following way: the interpretation of reality in grades leading from the lowest to the highest and conversely [3, p. 290]. It should be noted here that this profoundly existential understanding of reality comes from Plato's Symposium, from there to Origen and through him to the Eastern church and to Christian mysticism. Since Eastern Orthodoxy is a religion of sacraments, Tillich classifies this church as a sacramental one. He writes that strongly sacramental churches, such as the Greek Orthodox, have a profound understanding of the participation of life under all dimensions in the ultimate aim of history. The sacramental consecration of the elements of all of life manifests the presence of the ultimately sublime in everything and points to the unity of everything in its creative ground and its final fulfillment [3, p. 377]. It should be noted that Tillich does not bypass the link between Orthodoxy and the great councils. He rightly states that the Greek Orthodox

churches derive their claim to superiority from the first seven ecumenical councils with which they live in an essentially unbroken tradition [3, p. 378].

Undoubtedly, Tillich's appraisal of Eastern Orthodox Christianity in the «Systematic Theology» is accurate enough. But his analysis is fragmentary and incomplete. For this reason, it is necessary to focus on his «History of Christian Thought». In this acclaimed study, Tillich examines early Christianity, the christological controversy, and the theological struggle of the first centuries AD. Furthermore, he analyzes the theological heritage of the Cappadocian Fathers – Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus. Concerning their heritage and impact, Tillich states that after Christianity became victorious under Constantine and after the Nicene dogma became fixed, it was possible again for theology to attempt a union of Greek philosophy and Christian dogma. According to Tillich, the theology of the Cappadocian Fathers no longer had the freshness of the first great teachings made by the Apologists and Origen. On the contrary, it was much more determined by the ecclesiastical situation and the Creed of Nicaea [4, p. 96]. Tillich also acknowledges the great contribution of the Eastern Greek fathers to the Trinitarian dogma. He explains that they, especially Gregory of Nazianzus, made sharper distinctions within the concepts that were used in the Trinitarian dogma. Three series of concepts were used by the Cappadocian Fathers:

- 1) essence (ousia) and nature (physis);
- 2) substances (hypostaseis) and properties (idiotetes);
- 3) persons (prosopa, personae).

Therefore, divinity is one essence or nature in three forms or three independent realities. They claim that all three have the same will and the same nature and essence. In such a model, the Father has the property of being ungenerated, while the Son has the property of being generated. The Spirit has the property of proceeding from the Father and the Son. But all these properties are not differences in the divine essence. They involve only their relation to each other. This complicated and speculative formula, however, offered the formula which made the reunion of the church possible [4, p. 96].

Commenting on the theological heritage of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Tillich notes that Byzantine culture effected the spiritualization of all reality. Moreover, the Byzantine picture of Jesus is not an idealized picture. Here we see divine majesty which is visible throughout. So, Tillich writes, «...I would say that the Eastern church represents something that we have lost. Therefore, I am especially happy that Eastern Orthodox churches could be taken into the World Council of Churches, thus making communication with them possible again. We should not imagine that we have nothing to learn from them. It may happen that with centuries of more intimate contact, the dimension of depth may again enter Western thinking...» [4, p. 116].

It is essential to emphasize that Tillich's analysis of Eastern Orthodox Christianity in «Systematic Theology» and «History of Christian Thought» is primarily theological. Sociological and cultural review of Eastern Orthodoxy Tillich presented in his acclaimed «Theology of Culture».

At the beginning of his survey of Eastern Orthodoxy, Tillich compares the present status of the church (1960s) in a totalitarian and in a democratic society, in Russia and in the United States. He writes: «The lack of adequate information concerning the situation of the Eastern Church makes it difficult to give more than a few hints. According to information received by the World Council of Churches, for example, the religious life in the Russian Orthodox Church is by no means at an end, but it is greatly restricted in range and influence. Education, public discussion, and propaganda of every kind by the Church are prohibited. The number of church buildings has been drastically reduced. But there is no persecution, as there was in some phases of Soviet history. Today the political authorities are not interested in the propaganda of that religious atheism that attacked the Eastern Orthodox Church in Russia with the fanaticism with which hostile churches used to fight each other. On the contrary, the Soviet authorities are interested in using the Church as a way of satisfying psychological needs which otherwise could become dangerous to the political structure. The Orthodox clergy has been criticized for accepting this role. And there is no doubt that in a situation like that in which the Eastern Church finds itself today, human weakness makes its appearance as it did in the periods of persecution in the early Church» [2, p. 179].

In order to explain such a state of affairs with the Orthodox Church in the USSR, Tillich aspires to find its historical background. Interestingly, Tillich finds the explanation for the mass persecution of Orthodox Christians in the USSR in the very nature of Eastern Christianity. Of course, he doesn't advocate soviet officials and their unjust religious policy. On the contrary, he tries to find the reasons that have caused such conditions for the Orthodox church in the Soviet state.

According to Tillich, there is a tradition in Eastern Christianity which is called cesaro-papism. It is the identification of the highest ecclesiastical authority with the authority of the emperor or the king. The ruler, Tillich notes, is considered the Christ of his nation. Constantine was buried with the symbolic tombs of the twelve apostles around him. The Czar was the protector of the Holy Synod and therefore the ruler of the Church. All this is important for an understanding of the present predicament of the Russian Orthodox Church. It is nothing new in its tradition that the earthly ruler rules the Church also. Interestingly, Tillich states, this fact does not have the significance that it has in the West. The Eastern Church is a Church of sacramental mysticism. It is not a Church with social and political ideals. Besides, the points of a possible conflict are limited. No Czar could easily have changed one letter of the liturgical tradition, but if a bishop had used the Christian doctrine for criticizing the social and political structure of the State, the Czar would have annihilated him instantly.

Comparing Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism, Tillich points out that organized Protestantism means something more than this in the democratic society of the United States. He writes «... in contrast to the mystical, sacramental self-restriction of Eastern Orthodoxy, it is a social power of the highest degree. Through the democratic processes, it influences political decisions, social ideals, ways of life, and international actions. And this is equally true of the Roman Church, which, as the largest single Church in this country and as a tightly organized authoritarian group, is more powerful than any particular Protestant denomination and, in some respects, than all Protestants together. It is the principle of tolerance that makes this power possible, and it is one of the paradoxes of Protestantism in this country that it must be tolerant towards those who by their very nature must destroy tolerance at the moment when the tolerant processes of democracy have brought them into power...» [2, p. 181].

As we have seen above, Tillich attempts to trace the historical peculiarities of Eastern Orthodoxy and the conditions of religion that became possible in Soviet Russia. Tillich sharply raises the question: «...How was it possible that Marxism should have overcome most of the eastern part of the Christian world, and how did it happen that Marxism was transformed into Stalinism a few decades after its victory?» [2, p. 181].

Of course, there are many answers to these questions and none of them excludes the others. According to Tillich, the right way to understand these processes depends on getting into the very heart of the eastern Christian religion. Tillich's conclusion can be summed up in the following way. He claims that Eastern Christianity early became a religion of mysticism and sacraments. It represents the one type of religion that we find everywhere in history, the type which emphasizes the presence of the Holy, the sacramental and mystical union with the Divine, the intuition of the Divine as it is here and there manifest as the spiritual depth of all things in nature and history. It is a religion of visual beauty, liturgical perfection, theological speculation, and mystical elevation. It is not a religion of social and political action and transformation. It transcends the given state of things without trying to change them [2, p. 182].

Tillich emphasizes that if a religion neglects its social and political implications, a reaction of the neglected side occurs and may be not only victorious over but also destructive of the whole sacramental system. He gives the following historical examples. The first involves the Muslim invasion of the Byzantine Empire. This happened, he says, when the Islamic invasion overwhelmed vast sections of the Byzantine Empire, especially those where sacramentalism had deteriorated into magical superstition, for instance, in Egypt. In comparison with this type of deteriorated Christianity, Islamic puritanism and legalism were superior. Its main interest was the organization and education of societies, often on the lowest level of culture. Some of the Byzantine emperors tried to save their empire from the onslaught of Islam by purifying the Christian cult of the superstitious use

of pictures of Christ and the saints, the so-called icons. However, Tillich notes, these attempts neither saved the empire from Islamic radicalism and fanaticism nor did they prevail in the Church against the traditionalists.

The second historical example is pictured by Russian Orthodoxy. According to Tillich, the Russian Orthodox Church became a non-social, sacramental, and mystical type of religion, and after centuries it suffered the same fate as the other Eastern churches. It was conquered by another social movement of puritan character and fanatical faith, namely Marxism. Marxism, in the frame of this chapter, means neither Stalinism nor Leninism, nor Marxism after Marx. Tillich notes that he is not talking about the genuine impulses in the thinking and acting of Marx himself. Understood in this sense, Marxism is a movement of social justice against a conservative system of political and ecclesiastical hierarchies which were identical at the top and worked together on every level. Like the iconoclastic emperors of Byzantium, the Czar tried to avert the threat, partly by suppressing potential foes, and partly by social reforms. But it was too late. The system broke down under the impact of communist radicalism. Interestingly, Tillich states, it was a conquest from within, not by an irreligious system but by a religion of social justice in secular terms. It was that type of ultimate concern for which justice is the measure of truth, as it was for the prophets, for Jesus, for Mohammed, for some radical sects of the Reformation on the Continent and in England, for the bourgeois revolutionaries of the eighteenth century, for the founders of the United States, for the pre-Marxian socialists, and for Marx himself. Without this background, Tillich claims, the meaning of the Russian Revolution cannot be understood.

**Conclusions.** In conclusion, it is important to point out that despite Tillich's critical remarks concerning the political condition of Eastern Orthodox Christianity under the Muslim and then the Marxist model of power, his analysis is delicate and respectful. He rightly indicates that Greek Orthodoxy is a religion of platonic origin with an emphasis on the role of hierarchies, living spiritual tradition, and sacraments. The ultimate foundation of Orthodoxy is not ethics or social doctrine, but rather the way of spiritual consecration and deification. For this reason, it was unable to resist the social legalism of Islam and the Marxists' socio-political program with a focus on social justice. As a result, Eastern Orthodox Countries were captured by strong social forces that determined the condition of Eastern Orthodox Christianity for ages.

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**Данканіч Артем Сергійович**  
кандидат філософських наук, доцент,  
доцент кафедри філософії  
Дніпровського національного університету імені Олеся Гончара  
пр. Гагаріна, 72, Дніпро, Україна  
orcid.org/0000-0003-0824-1936

## **ПОГЛЯД ПАУЛЯ ТІЛЛІХА НА ПРАВОСЛАВНЕ ХРИСТІЯНСТВО**

*Актуальність проблеми. Православне християнство все ще є важливою та авторитетною гілкою історичного християнства. Його вплив простежується не лише в культурі Східної Європи, а й у християнському мистецтві та сучасних богословських дебатах. Православ'я стверджує, що є істинною версією християнства, яке заснував Христос і його учні в першому столітті нашої ери. Основний наголос у східному християнстві робиться на спасінні душі та поверненні грішного творіння до свого Творця. Цей процес вимагає постійного очищення через церковні заходи, такі як таїнства, піст і молитву.*

*Мета. Аналіз інтерпретації сутності і природи православного християнства німецько-американським філософом і теологом Паулем Тілліхом.*

*Методи. Герменевтичний і дескриптивний, які в сукупності розкривають підходи і оцінку Паулем Тілліхом східної версії християнства.*

*Результати дослідження. Згідно Паулю Тілліху, східне християнство доволі рано стало релігією містики і таїнств. Воно представляє тип релігії, яка підкреслює присутність святого, sacramentalного та містичного єднання з Божественним. Ця інтуїція Божественного проявляється як духовна глибина всього в природі та історії. Таким чином, східне православне християнство, підсумовує Тілліх, є релігією візуальної краси, літургійної досконалості, богословських спекуляцій, містичного піднесення. Особливістю цього типу християнства є те, що воно не є релігією соціальної та політичної дії, порядку і трансформації. Розглянувши богословські основи східного православного християнства, Пауль Тілліх прийшов до висновку, що цей тип християнства став несоціальним, sacramentalним і містичним типом релігії, яка переросла в магічне марновірство і поступилася місцем ісламському легалізму та фанатизму. Православ'я в Російській імперії через століття спіткала та ж доля, що й інші Східні Церкви. Його завоював інший суспільний рух пуританського характеру та фанатичної віри, яким є марксизм.*

*Ключові слова: православне християнство, Пауль Тілліх, теологія, світогляд, перспектива, таїнства.*