



Mixology and Theology

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Week Seventeen: Black / White Russian and Orthodox Theology (deeper dive)

Mixology: Black Russian / White Russian

How does a cocktail made with a coffee liqueur from Mexico become a Black Russian? Well, vodka, of course. The origin story of the drink from liquor.com says:

In the late 1940s, Perle Mesta, the American ambassador to Luxembourg, was hanging out in the bar at the Hotel Metropole in Brussels. The establishment's bartender, Gustave Tops, decided to make a signature drink for her, the Black Russian. The Cold War was just starting, so creating a dark, mysterious drink by mixing Russian vodka with Kahlúa was appropriate for the time.

So an American ambassador to Luxembourg, and a bartender in Brussels, and a Mexican coffee liqueur, and vodka = Black Russian. OK, sure.

The White Russian version came decades later. Again, from liquor.com:

I've no idea who added milk or cream to the Black Russian in order to turn it into a White Russian, but it happened in the mid-1960s as far as I can ascertain. That drink was, of course, immortalized in 1998 when Jeff Bridges, playing the Dude in The Big Lebowski, quaffed eight of them during the course of the movie. (He dropped a ninth on the floor.)

Black Russian / White Russian

2 oz Vodka

1 oz Kahlúa (for sweeter drink use more)

splash of heavy cream (White Russian)

1. Pour ingredients into a mixing glass filled with ice.
2. Stir until chilled and strain into an Old Fashioned glass filled with fresh ice.
3. For a White Russian, add the splash of cream and stir.

Iced Coffee

A mocktail version of the Black Russian is simply iced coffee. Enjoy your favorite premade, or brew strong coffee and let it cool before pouring over ice. Add sweetener and cream if you like.

Theology: Orthodox Church Theology (deeper dive)

I'm including the information from the previous Orthodox Church Theology, and adding some additional information on the major topics.

History

The Orthodox Church (also called the Eastern Orthodox Church) is a historic expression of Christianity dating back to the earliest years. One of its important self-understandings is that it has held onto the theological, spiritual, and liturgical traditions of the church from the beginning. The first seven ecumenical councils, taking place from 325 to 787, are important defining points in the development of church doctrine, as they are for the West. The center of Orthodox faith has historically been Constantinople (Istanbul) as opposed to Rome for the West. The Orthodox Church is a communion of regional and ethnic churches such as the Russian, Greek, and Serbian. Each is headed by their own patriarch. The ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople is considered the first among equals.

The Seven Ecumenical Councils

YEAR	PLACE	ISSUES	STATEMENTS
325	Nicaea	Arianism, the nature of Christ, celebration of Passover (Easter), ordination of eunuchs, prohibition of kneeling on Sundays and from Easter to Pentecost, validity of baptism by heretics, lapsed Christians.	The council drew up a creed, the original Nicene Creed, which received nearly unanimous support. The council's description of "God's only-begotten Son", Jesus Christ, as of the same substance with God the Father became a touchstone of Christian Trinitarianism.
381	Constantinople	Arianism, Apollinarism, Sabellianism, Holy Spirit	<p>The council approved what the current form of the Nicene Creed as used in most Oriental Orthodox churches is. The Eastern Orthodox Church uses the council's text but with the verbs expressing belief in the singular: Πιστεύω (I believe) instead of Πιστεύομεν (We believe). The Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church also uses the singular and, except in Greek, adds two phrases, Deum de Deo (God from God) and Filioque (and the Son).</p> <p>The council also condemned Apollinarism, the teaching that there was no human mind or soul in Christ. It also granted Constantinople honorary precedence over all churches save Rome.</p> <p>The council did not include Western bishops or Roman legates, but it was later accepted as ecumenical in the West.</p>

YEAR	PLACE	ISSUES	STATEMENTS
431	Ephesus	Nestorianism, Theotokos, Pelagianism	<p>Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, opposed use of the term Theotokos (Greek Ἡ Θεοτόκος, "God-Bearer"). This term had long been used by orthodox writers, and it was gaining popularity along with devotion to Mary as Mother of God. He reportedly taught that there were two separate persons in the incarnate Christ, though whether he actually taught this is disputed.</p> <p>The council deposed Nestorius, repudiated Nestorianism, and proclaimed the Virgin Mary as the Theotokos.</p> <p>After quoting the Nicene Creed in its original form, as at the First Council of Nicaea, without the alterations and additions made at the First Council of Constantinople, it declared it "unlawful for any man to bring forward, or to write, or to compose a different (ἑτέρον) Faith as a rival to that established by the holy Fathers assembled with the Holy Ghost in Nicæa." [16]</p>
451	Chalcedon	The relationship between the divinity and humanity of Christ, many disputes involving particular bishops and sees.	The council repudiated the Eutychian doctrine of monophysitism, described and delineated the "Hypostatic Union" and two natures of Christ, human and divine; adopted the Chalcedonian Definition. For those who accept it (Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and most Protestants), it is the Fourth Ecumenical Council (calling the Second Council of Ephesus, which was rejected by this council, the "Robber Synod" or "Robber Council").
553	Constantinople	Nestorianism, Monophysitism	This council condemned certain writings and authors which defended the christology of Nestorius. This move was instigated by Emperor Justinian in an effort to conciliate the monophysite Christians, it was opposed in the West, and the Popes' acceptance of the council caused a major schism.
680	Constantinople	Monothelism, the human and divine wills of Jesus	Third Council of Constantinople (680–681): repudiated monothelism, a doctrine that won widespread support when formulated in 638; the Council affirmed that Christ had both human and divine wills.
787	Nicaea	Iconoclasm	Second Council of Nicaea (787). In 753, Emperor Constantine V convened the Synod of Hieria, which declared that images of Jesus misrepresented him and that images of Mary and the saints were idols. [24] The Second Council of Nicaea restored the veneration of icons and ended the first iconoclasm.

Great Schism

After a prolonged period of differences and dividing issues between the Eastern Orthodox churches and Western Roman Catholic church, the Great Schism occurred in 1054 AD. Both churches excommunicated the other. While there were many complex cultural, political, ecclesiological, and theological issues that divided Eastern and Western Christianity, two of the primary issues that led to the Great Schism were the authority of the Pope in Rome in comparison to the authority of the various Patriarchs of the Eastern Churches, and the dispute over the Western alteration of the Nicene Creed, known as the "Filioque Controversy."

As the Roman Catholic Pope gained more power in the West, the Eastern Churches continued to assert their autonomy. The Eastern Churches did not have a single authority like the Western Pope. They had regional Patriarchs who oversaw their churches and met with other regional Patriarchs for ongoing ecumenical discussions. The expansion of the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic Church led to greater conflicts over which leaders had power.

The “Filioque Controversy” is about the difference in theology about the Holy Spirit and the introduction of a new word into the historic Nicene Creed by the Western churches. The original Nicene Creed says that the Spirit “proceeds from the Father.” The West gradually added the Latin word “filioque” which means “and the Son,” and it became a part of the Western church’s liturgy by 1014. So Western Christianity commonly confesses that the Spirit proceeds “from the Father and the Son.” But this was clearly a change in the historic creed that was established at the two important ecumenical councils, Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381. The East did not agree with the theology behind it and was offended by changing the historic beliefs of the church many centuries later. It sounds like a somewhat silly argument over a word. It goes deep into the theological differences between East and West. Suffice it to say, it depends on whether you think the Spirit has a unique identity and role in God’s life and work, or whether you think the Son’s role is elevated in comparison to the Spirit. Enough said.

Some Key Theological Issues

Theosis: The Orthodox Church teaches that the goal of human life is union with God, or theosis. This union occurs through a process of purification and illumination, all made possible by Jesus Christ and the Spirit. This process is ongoing in this life and completed in the resurrection of the believer. It is impossible to understand Orthodox theology, spirituality, liturgy, and sacraments without seeing theosis as the purpose and goal. The Orthodox Churches have been much more influenced by early Christian mysticism than the Western churches, where rationalism has been more influential. In Orthodox liturgy, sacraments, and sacred architecture and art, one is invited into a mystical encounter with God through Christ by the Spirit, bringing one into full union with God.

Historically, Western churches have had a negative evaluation of theosis. Because of Western theology’s strong emphasis on human sin, it views theosis with some suspicion. The Western notion of grace and justification is often seen as something declared upon the sinful person, but not part of an actual transformation of the person, who is still tainted by sin. Historically, Lutherans have been most skeptical of Orthodox understandings of sanctification and theosis; however, in recent decades Finnish Lutherans have engaged with fruitful dialogue with Russian Orthodox leaders. There is some conversation from this about rethinking Luther’s understanding of justification in light of theosis.

Icons: The Orthodox Churches use icons in worship for veneration. Veneration is not about worshiping the object itself. It is a means of making a deep spiritual connection to what the image points to, such as Christ, Mary, or other saints. This is not too different from the ways others experience art or music as a vehicle for connecting to something deeply spiritual.

Eucharist: The celebration of the Eucharist, which they call the Divine Liturgy, is central to Orthodox faith. They understand that Christ is truly present, but they do not have a doctrine of transubstantiation like the Roman Catholic church does. The eucharist is a key part of the life of theosis. The Divine Liturgy is a sacred participation in the fullness of life with God through Christ empowered by the Spirit. Orthodox call the sacraments “Mysteries,” and participating in them connects the believer to the mystery of God.

Lutheran-Orthodox Relationship

Martin Luther had some appreciation for the Orthodox Churches, especially since, in his understanding, they shared a common enemy, the Roman Catholic Church. Luther saw that the Eastern Orthodox agreed with him on many of the teachings and practices he rejected in the Roman Catholic Church, such as a celebrate priesthood, papal supremacy, and the practice of selling indulgences. These had never been part of the Orthodox tradition. Early followers of Luther made contact with leaders of the Eastern Orthodox churches to try to build support and fellowship.

The Lutheran World Federation has participated in a series of dialogues with the Eastern Orthodox Churches since 1967. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has been in dialogue with the North American Orthodox bishops and issued a [“Common Statement on Faith in the Holy Trinity”](#) in 1999. In the statement, the ELCA agreed that the “filioque” was an addition to the original Nicene creed that may be omitted, especially in ecumenical services with Orthodox churches.

Further thoughts on Theosis:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zr2avLzFSV4>

Further thoughts on Orthodoxy and mysticism:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_Xm5sDn8hA

Further thoughts on the Divine Liturgy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDUMf7oFt2s>