



Mixology and Theology

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Week Two: Moscow Mule and Orthodox Church Theology

Mixology: Moscow Mule

There are different claims for the origin of the Moscow Mule cocktail. It was created in the 1940's somewhere in Manhattan, and quickly became popular in the Western U. S. It may have been created out of a need to get rid of old stock of ginger beer and vodka in one bar. The use of a copper mug to serve the drink came from an early stunt to promote the Mule among bartenders.

Moscow Mule

| | | | |
|------|--------------|------|------------------------|
| 2 oz | vodka | 4 oz | ginger beer |
| 1/2 | lime, juiced | | lime wedge for garnish |

Half-fill a copper mug or highball glass with ice. Add vodka, ginger beer, and lime juice. Stir just to mix. Garnish with lime wedge.

Moscow Mule Mocktail

| | | | |
|------|------------------------|-----|--------------|
| 6 oz | ginger ale | 1/2 | lime, juiced |
| | lime wedge for garnish | | |

Half-fill a copper mug or tall glass with ice. Add ginger ale and lime juice. Stir just to mix. Garnish with lime wedge.

Theology: Orthodox Church Theology

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.

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.