Interlude - Defining Some Terms - Part 2

Rev. Fr. Anthony Cook

Last time we began to go over a number of the terms we use when we discuss the theology of the Church - we will continue that in this month’s issue.

Transcend

The word “transcend” simply means, to go beyond, to surpass, to be bigger than – we use it in general terms to affirm that God is not limited by what limits us. This word is very handy when we don’t want to just say once again that God is bigger than the universe that He has made, and not just a little bit bigger, but that He is completely other and unfathomably distant from us - so we say that He is transcendent. It’s a big word that really just means: wow. In a technical sense, it affirms that God is entirely beyond the material order, reason, comprehension, and anything that we can know or understand.

Universe/Cosmos/Creation/Time-Space Continuum

So, all these words basically are used as synonyms in theological discourse, and all are words for the whatever-it-is that we exist in, what it is that God transcends. He is not of it in any way - we cannot be other than of it. This is a different usage than what we might see in scientific or secular contexts; modern academics in various disciplines sometimes talk about multiple universes and dimensions. Those terms are helpful concepts for them, obviously, but for our use, what they are talking about is all included under the umbrella term of universe/cosmos/creation/etc. Everything that exists is part of the created universe. It is all limited and finite, and may be measured in space and time.

Constrained, Finite & Limited Order

These are some other words that we use to describe the universe, the created order. They emphasize the smallness, the measurability, of our experience, and contrast to the unlimited, infinite, unconstrained perfect and eternal existence of God, infinitely beyond our experience and comprehension. We, and everything that we can see and touch and experience, can be measured. All of these things have limits and boundaries to them.

Causality/Contingency/Dependency

Causality is one of the constraints that limits us and everything that exists within this created order. We, and everything around us, depend on something or someone else. We can say that we exist, but only because something else exists prior to us. For most of us, that something is our...
parents, who exist because of their parents, and so forth. But the same holds for everything around us - everything we touch is caused by some physical process, some other cause. To say that we are limited by causality is to say that we are contingent, we are dependent on other things that exist, as is everything else that exists, back through the chain of causality to the First Cause that is visible to our examination of the natural world, which seems to be what the scientists call the Big Bang. Based on God’s revelation to us, we go further than that to say that, beyond the limits of the physical and temporal universe, God Himself is the ultimate First Cause of all things, and is Himself eternal and uncaused, non-contingent and independent. We discussed this in Episodes 7 through 9, but it is good to review the basic point again.

**Temporal**

Temporal means “of or in time”, and refers to a particular limitation on our nature, that we exist only within time. Modern science has revealed that time and that other constraint of our nature, space, are in fact connected, and thus to say that we are constrained, contingent, and limited is to say that we are bound within time and space, that our nature and existence are intrinsically within those boundaries, and will always be so.

**Condescension**

Condescension is a word that we have not yet used, but which is often used in theological conversation to speak of God’s lowering of Himself in love to enter into the constraints of our existence to restore us to communion and relationship with Him. The dictionary definition is “a voluntary descent from one’s rank or dignity in relations with an inferior.” In modern terms, this word often has a negative connotation, implying a patronizing and superior attitude, but we should note that a superior attitude is only a problem when the person who is being patronizing is not, in fact, superior than the person they are treating in a patronizing way. Genuine condescension of a superior to an inferior is a good thing, a self-offering, a gift of love that is not required, that cannot be demanded, but that is given freely. The Christian use of the word comes from the Greek word which means “to come down with.” It is this idea, that God has come down to save us, lowering Himself, pouring Himself out in love, that we intend when we talk about His condescension.

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*The above is the second portion of the twenty-third installment of Fr. Anthony’s catechetical podcast, updated weekly at [http://theruleoffaith.typepad.com](http://theruleoffaith.typepad.com). We also have a weekly Bible Study each Tuesday at 6 pm - all are welcome.*

*Please note, as well, that we live stream each Sunday’s Orthros & Divine Liturgy on our parish Youtube channel:  [https://www.youtube.com/c/franthonyc-stgeorgesouthgate](https://www.youtube.com/c/franthonyc-stgeorgesouthgate). A recording of the Sunday Sermons is also posted there.*

*As we are speaking of our internet offerings, please remember to check the parish website:  [http://www.stgeorgesouthgate.org](http://www.stgeorgesouthgate.org), for announcements, and for an updated calendar of feastdays, readings, services, and events.*
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**January 1, 2019**
- **Orthros/Liturgy (8:50 & 10 am)**
- **New Year’s Eve Dinner Dance (7:30 pm)**

**January 2, 2019**
- **Philoptochos (6:00 pm)**
- **Royal Hours of Theophany (8-10 am)**

**January 3, 2019**
- **Apodosis of the Nativity**

**January 4, 2019**
- **Gideon of Mount Athos**
- **Anysia of Thessaloniki**

**January 5, 2019**
- **Saturday before Epiphany**
- **Epistle: James 2:14-26**

**January 6, 2019**
- **Epistle: 1 Timothy 3:13-16; 4:1-5**
- **Gospel: Matthew 3:1-6**

**January 7, 2019**
- **Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16**
- **Gospel: John 1:18-28**

**January 8, 2019**
- **Epistle: Hebrews 2:11-18**
- **Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23**

**January 9, 2019**
- **Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16**
- **Gospel: John 1:18-28**

**January 10, 2019**
- **Epistle: Hebrews 2:11-18**
- **Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23**

**January 11, 2019**
- **Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16**
- **Gospel: John 1:18-28**

**January 12, 2019**
- **Epistle: Hebrews 2:11-18**
- **Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23**

**January 13, 2019**
- **Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16**
- **Gospel: John 1:18-28**

**January 14, 2019**
- **Epistle: Hebrews 2:11-18**
- **Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23**

**January 15, 2019**
- **Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16**
- **Gospel: John 1:18-28**

**January 16, 2019**
- **Epistle: Hebrews 2:11-18**
- **Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23**

**January 17, 2019**
- **Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16**
- **Gospel: John 1:18-28**

**January 18, 2019**
- **Epistle: Hebrews 2:11-18**
- **Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23**

**January 19, 2019**
- **Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16**
- **Gospel: John 1:18-28**

**January 20, 2019**
- **Epistle: Hebrews 2:11-18**
- **Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23**

**January 21, 2019**
- **Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16**
- **Gospel: John 1:18-28**

**January 22, 2019**
- **Epistle: Hebrews 2:11-18**
- **Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23**
2019
New Year’s Eve Party
MONDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2018
DOORS OPEN-7:30 PM
Saint George Greek Orthodox Church
GRECIAN CENTER
16300 Dix-Toledo Road-Southgate, MI 48195
Entertainment by DJ
Greek & American Music
PHOTO BOOTH
8:00 PM Hors d’oeuvres-9:00 PM Dinner,
Featuring a Gourmet Dinner Buffet to include:
Filet Mignon, Atlantic Salmon,
Chicken Champagne, Premium Bar,
The Go Famous Pastry Table,
Champagne Toast at Midnight w/Party Favors
12:30 AM Breakfast

TICKETS
ADULT $50  CHILDREN under 12 $10
POST-DINNER $30 after 10:00 PM
FOR TICKETS
CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE-
734.283.8820
OR RESERVE TICKETS ON OUR WEBSITE
STGEORGESOUTHGATE.ORG
PLEASE PURCHASE TICKETS BY
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2018