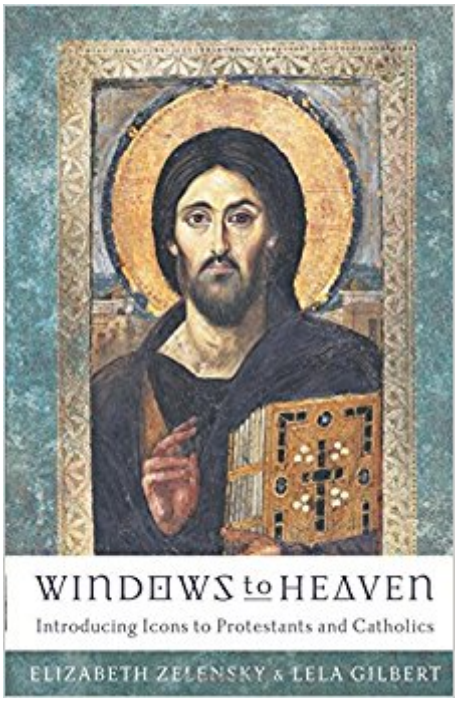
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Windows To Heaven: Introducing Icons To Protestants And Catholics



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Synopsis

Evangelicals often feel uneasy when they encounter the haunting images of Orthodox icons. From the theological to the practical, questions flood in: Why are the facial expressions so fixed? Why the colorful robes? What do the images symbolize? Do Orthodox Christians worship icons? Doesn't that make them idols?In this useful guidebook, Elizabeth Zelensky and Lela Gilbert debunk common misconceptions about Orthodox icons and explain how they might enrich the devotional lives of non-Orthodox Christians. Each chapter opens with biblical passages and engaging anecdotes and closes with excerpts from personal journals. The authors offer a detailed look at five specific icons, discussing the importance of the incarnation, the Trinity, and Christ's transfiguration to the Orthodox faith.This approachable and engaging guide is perfect for those seeking to deepen or refresh their devotional lives.

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Customer Reviews

In recent years, Protestants have discovered icons, once the provenance of Eastern Orthodox churches. Zelensky (a historian of Russia) and Gilbert (a prolific writer/ghostwriter) team up to introduce Eastern icons to Western Christians. The authors open with a lucid discussion of what an icon isÃ¢â ¬â •and is not. It is not merely a work of art depicting the life of Jesus; it is a way of entering into relationship with the Triune God, "an instrument through which the knowledge of God... becomes accessible" to humanity. The heart of the book is a reading of five famous icons, including Andrei Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity. Readers will learn about the history of these icons, their

"writers" (creators), symbolism and place in Orthodox theology and liturgy. Six glossy illustrations round out the book. One wishes that the authors had refrained from straying occasionally into large philosophical debates, such as the issue of relativism versus objective reality; their forays into these quagmires are superficial and distracting. Still, the book is a feast; its authors compellingly suggest that icons offer a much-needed space for contemplation in a frenetic world. Indeed, this little book is itself such an oasis. Readers who like Frederica Mathewes-Green and Henri Nouwen will welcome this new addition to the icon shelf. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Elizabeth Zelensky, a Russian Orthodox believer, lectures in history at Georgetown University. Lela Gilbert has written and coauthored numerous books, including Islam at the Crossroads and Their Blood Cries Out.

Excellent little book, a real treasure trove of information, offering more details about the creation of an icon like the Christ Pantocrator at Sinai than one would usually find in even some scholarly sources.

Read this book for a class dealing with Greek Orthodoxy. As a protestant, this book helped me understand the meaning and detail of Iconography.

I know next to nothing about Orthodox Christianity, much less icons. I knew enough not to consider them idols (a major pitfall of Protestants when approaching this issue) but other than that, I had no idea what they meant, why they’re done in their particular inverted style, and how they’re used by Orthodox Christians.Windows to Heaven: Introducing Icons to Protestants and Catholics is, as far as I know, a great book on the issue. Written by Eastern Orthodox university professor Elizabeth Zelensky and Episcopalian author Lela Gilbert, the book is an accessible, quick read full of information and inspiration.The introduction beings by recounting various reactions to icons. "They look creepy." "People bow before them and treat them as idols." "I’m inspired when I walk into an Orthodox Shrine." "They give me a sense of peace and in a sea of sin and chaos."Instead of dealing with each Protestant contention with icons at the beginning of the book, Zelensky and Gilbert work their way slowly through the issue, dedicating each chapter to explaining the history, artistic style, and theological meaning of particular icons, and their place in Orthodoxy. This is not a work of modernist apologetics, a naked appeal to a people consumed only with respect for rational thinking

stripped of beauty; and it is not a post-modern work, a naked appeal to people who consider condemnation of anything the only sin. It is a perfect blend of reasonable presentation, beautiful language, awe at the power of God, commitment to not hiding or apologizing for their beliefs, and biblical support. Each section is bookended with testimonies from the authors and quotes from Orthodox and Protestant hymns, adding a personal and poetic dimension to the beauty presented.The work is not a defense of all of Orthodox theology; issues where I may differ with them, such as the process of salvation and sanctification, and original sin, are explained in part but only in relation to understanding the icons. This is not a pitfall of the book, as the book is meant to help others understand icons, a particular part of their theology, not the whole of Orthodox theology.This bring me to another noteworthy aspect of the book: detailed footnotes with titles the reader can peruse if they seek a deeper understanding of Orthodoxy.If you're interested in a preliminary understanding of icons, this is a great book with which to start.

If you have ever worshipped at an Orthodox church, especially an older one, the aesthetic nature of the experience impresses one as so different from the Catholic and Protestant counterparts. Icons epitomize this Orthodox predilection for sight and sound, as opposed to written texts, as the vehicle of the Gospel. They are "theology in color." Icons are also one of the biggest points of contention between Orthodox and non-Orthodox believers. This little book combines Scripture, personal journaling, history, theology, art and liturgy to portray in a sympathetic way the nature and function of icons in Orthodoxy. The authors try to show how from an Orthodox perspective icons are not merely church art but a means of moving from the material to the spiritual world, and how such a movement can enrich the Christian lives of Protestants and Catholics. In between introductory and concluding chapters, the bulk of the book devotes one chapter each to five important Orthodox icons--Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity, the Vladimir Theotokos, Theophanes' Transfiguration of Christ, the Dormition of the Virgin, and the Sinai Pantocrator. This popular book is no substitute for the scholarly likes of Jaroslav Pelikan's Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons (1990) or Leonid Ouspensky's Theology of the Icon (1978), or for the short and very readable primary texts On Divine Images by John of Damascus (675-749) and On the Holy Icons by Theodore the Studite (759-826), but it is a welcome addition to the growing literature that introduces Protestants and Catholics to the Orthodox tradition in a non-polemical (if uncritical) manner.

Once in awhile, a book is produced that is unpretentious in its thesis, gentle in its handling of the source, and appropriately communicating the heart of its message with respect to all

parties."Windows to Heaven: Introducing Icons to Protestants and Catholics" is such a book. Written by Zelensky, an Orthodox Christian and Gilbert, a Protestant, this book seeks to teach non-Orthodox Christians about the importance of icon traditions. They explain what an icon is and is not, dispelling myths held by many Protestants. The book does more than just to educate about the difference, but provide information on how Protestants can appreciate icons as well.Many Catholics will find the material familiar, but Zelensky does bring a more Eastern approach that many Catholics may appreciate: nice, inexpensive and rewarding book.

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