



***Short Biographical Note:***



***Archpriest, Professor John Anthony McGuckin***

The Very Revd. Professor **John Anthony McGuckin**, of Irish extraction, is an Archpriest of the Orthodox Church in the Patriarchate of Romania's Archdiocese in Western Europe, Rector of St Gregory's chapel in St. Anne's on Sea, in North West England. In 1997 he came to the United States from England, where he had been Reader in Patristic and Byzantine Theology at the University of Leeds, to serve as Professor of Church History at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Over two decades he was the Nielsen Professor of Early and Byzantine Church History at Union; and also Professor of Byzantine Christianity at Columbia University, and is now Emeritus. He is currently Professor in the Theological Faculty of Oxford University where he assists with examining and mentoring duties for higher degrees in the domain of early Christianity. He is also Senior Professorial Research Fellow at Emory University's School of Law. He founded and directed the New York Sophia Institute, in 2008, as an advanced research forum for Eastern Orthodox thought and culture; one that was intended to bring together some of the brightest intellectual lights in contemporary English-speaking Orthodoxy for collaborative studies on Church and Society. It has issued eight volumes of critical studies on the Orthodox tradition under its own imprint of *Theotokos Press*, by young and established orthodox scholars, both male and female: including important studies of the role of women in contemporary Orthodoxy, and the Eastern Christian world's attitudes to significant concerns such as theology of liberation, biblical interpretation, art and music, and monastic experience.

Born of two families, McGuckin's and McMahons, which both worked in the ship industries of Northern England, at Wallsend, his grandfather Patrick and father Francis, were both involved in rope making for the then great British shipping fleets in days when great woven ropes of natural fibre were still in vogue. The first member of his family to attend University, his academic career began in 1969 when he studied Philosophy at Heythrop College, London, from 1970-72, and from there went on to read for a Divinity degree at the University of London, graduating with First Class Honours in 1975, while studying for holy orders, then among the RC Passionist monastic order in 1969. His tutors in Early Christianity at Heythrop were the Jesuit Early Church scholars, Maurice Bévenot, Robert Butterworth and Joseph Laishley. For his doctoral researches at Durham University (1980), where his Doktorvater was Orthodox Protopresbyter George Dion Dragas, he studied the politics and theology of the early Constantinian era, with a thesis on the thought of Lucius Caecilius Lactantius, the Emperor Constantine's pacifist Christian tutor and political advisor. While he was a student at Durham he composed his first book, an English edition of the *Theological Chapters of St. Symeon the New Theologian*, the medieval Byzantine poet and mystic. He became an Orthodox Christian in 1989 and was ordained to the Diaconate in Baia Mare (Romania) in 1996, and to the priesthood with a pastoral care for Romanians in England, in 1996. Since his first book on St. Symeon, he has published over thirty-three books on religious and historical themes, and two volumes of poetry, becoming internationally recognised as a leading interpreter of the Early Christian and Eastern Orthodox traditions. His works have been translated into many languages: Romanian, Spanish, Russian, Dutch, Korean and Chinese among them. He has taught in numerous Universities both in America and in Europe, as Visiting Distinguished Professor or as Visiting Scholar, including Kiev, Sibiu, Bucharest, Oslo, Iasi, Cambridge, Belfast, Oxford, Yale, Sydney and Moscow. He was elected a Fellow of the British Royal Society of Arts in 1986, and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in 1996. He was selected as the prestigious Luce Fellow in Early Christianity in 2006. For his contributions to academic theology, he was awarded the Order of St. Stephen the Great, the Cross of Moldavia and Bukovina, by the Romanian Patriarch Daniil in 2008. In 2013 He was awarded the right to wear the second jewelled cross at St. Vladimir's by Metropolitan Tikhon of the Orthodox Church in America, the highest honour bestowed on married clergy by the Orthodox churches, on the occasion of his award of the Honorary Doctorate in Divinity from St. Vladimir's

## V. Revd. Professor John Anthony McGuckin. *Short Biography*

seminary. In Nov. 2014 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Letters by the Andrei Saguna Theological Faculty of Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu.

Among his publications are: *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition* (1986); *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy* (1994); *At the Lighting of the Lamps: Hymns from the Ancient Church* (1995, and repr. 1997); *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (2000) (Nominated for the 2002 Pollock Biography Prize); *Standing in God's Holy Fire: The Spiritual Tradition of Byzantium* (Orbis, 2001); *The Book of Mystical Chapters* (Shambhala, 2002), *The Westminster Handbook to Origen of Alexandria* (WJK, 2004) and *The Westminster Handbook To Patristic Theology* (2004). His large-scale study of Eastern Christianity, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Theology, and Spiritual Culture* appeared from Blackwell-Wiley in the summer of 2007. A subsequent project was the making of the largest-ever English-Language *Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodoxy* which he edited, and which appeared from Blackwell-Wiley in Winter 2010. His most recent books are *Prayer Book of the Early Church* (Paraclete Press. 2012); *The Ascent of Law: Patristic and Byzantine Reformulations of Antique Civilization* (SVS Press. 2012); *The Path of Christianity: The First Thousand Years* (IVP Academic, 2016); and *Eastern Orthodoxy: A New History*, (Yale University Press, 2019). In addition to his scholarly books, he has published more than 150 research articles, in scholarly journals, ranging in subject matter from New Testament Exegesis to Art History, and Russian mysticism to Human rights theory. His collected works were brought out in 2019 in three volumes by SVS Press, New York. The central focus of his research has revolved around the thought of the fourth to fifth century Christian Fathers and the Byzantine mystical writers.

Professor McGuckin has appeared many times on American, British, and Italian Television programmes, as well as on Radio in Europe, America, and Canada, commenting on religious issues. In 2011 his film, co-authored with Emmy-award-winning Director Norris Chumley was released in cinemas, on cable TV and DVD entitled: *Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer*. It can be seen in large part on *YouTube* under that title. In 1994, his first collection of poetry, *Byzantium and Other Poems*, was published; and a second retrospective collection has appeared in 2010 (*Selected Poems*). While teaching higher graduate courses in New York, Fr. John also served as the Rector of the Eastern Orthodox Chaplaincy of St. Gregory the Theologian, looking after English-speaking Orthodox students in Upper Manhattan. Now he is the Rector of the small Orthodox chapel in St. Anne's.

He is married to Eileen McGuckin, a professional Master-Iconographer in the Byzantine and Slavic styles, with a very pronounced clarity of line and colour in her work. She maintains a busy studio (<http://www.sgtt.org/NewIconStudio/>) fulfilling commissions for individuals as well as churches. Their family consists of three married children, and seven grandchildren: the makings of a small Irish clan.