

A Church Slavonic Primer by Aleksander Brooks

Lesson 5 - To Thee, O Lord; And to thy spirit

Today I have some good news for you. If you learn your Church Slavonic, you will never have to have the "you who", "thou thee" debate again! This is because in Church Slavonic there is (1) a centuries-long, already established norm for how certain persons are addressed and (2) a concrete grammatical difference between personal pronouns. In Church Slavonic, there is a singular "you" and a plural "you." And the singular "you" also implies a less formal, more intimate relationship between two persons.

Of course, if you're familiar with your King James Bible, you will already know something about this concept, and that it's not just about having highfalutin language. We could say that it is in fact an indication of how the Lord invites us into an intimate relationship with Himself.

In Church Slavonic, we always address God in the singular, intimate form of the second person pronoun, which is "thou," whether the Person or Persons addressed may be the Trinity, or the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit.

The Theotokos and the saints are also addressed with this form. In response to the priest, he is addressed with this form as well.

Thus, "to Thee, O Lord" is

ТѢБѢ, ГДН

/t'eb'e gospod'i/
(Тебе Господи)

ТѢБѢ is the dative form of the second person singular pronoun, and it's in the dative form because, like we said in the last lesson, we're sending something to the Lord. The second word, **ГДН**, I hope you already know.

If you recall, in lesson two, I talked some about pronouns when we covered "have mercy on us." I mentioned that there are different words for the various inflections of pronouns (though usually a connection can be seen between the words). This inflection of pronouns to a small degree is seen with some of the older forms of English pronouns, such as "thou" and "thee" (and "ye" and "you" in the plural).

This distinction between singular and plural and intimate and formal, by the way, remains to this day in many Slavic and other languages.

The inflection that we have talked about so much and the different forms of pronouns also extends to possessive pronouns. That is, we have a form for all the persons and all the cases. But, as I mentioned above, there are often commonalities between these forms. For instance, in the phrase, "and to thy spirit," we have the second person singular possessive pronoun "thy." It begins with a T as does the second person dative pronoun that we saw above, and all the other case forms also begin with a T.

Thus,

И́ ДУХОВИ ТВОЕМУ
/i dukhov'i tvoemu/
(И ДУХОВИ ТВОЕМУ)

is "and to thy spirit." This is a grammatically straightforward phrase but it is the first instance we have in which the syntax does not match up with English syntax. A literal translation would read "and (to) spirit thy."

You, I hope, recognize a few things in this phrase. You should know И for "and," then you might have thought that ТВОЕМУ looks kind of similar to КРАТОМУ from the phrase in lesson four. This would be a very good correlation, because the -ЕМУ ending is one of the other variations for the masculine dative adjective ending that I mentioned. With this possessive pronoun, and with certain others, the endings partially match up with the adjective endings.

Those of you that studied the last lesson well are probably wondering why the above word I said is the dative form of "spirit," ДУХОВИ, does not coincide with the dative for "spirit," ДУХУ, that we had in the phrase "Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit." This is because the dative form in today's phrase with an -ОВИ ending is an exception. This is seen in a number of places but not so often.

Lesson Notes:

Personal pronouns (Charts will be filled in further in future lessons)

	2nd person
Nominative	
Genitive	
Dative	ТѢБѢ
Accusative	
Instrumental	
Prepositional	

Possessive pronouns

	2nd person
Nominative	
Genitive	
Dative	ΤΒΟΕΜΥ
Accusative	
Instrumental	
Prepositional	