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RUSSIAN ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: MAJOR TRENDS

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Russian Orthodoxy during the twentieth century presented a rich and varied body of thought about the nature of humanity and the human condition. This article surveys the major thinkers within this tradition, beginning with its background in the Slavophile movement and culminating in the work of more recent Orthodox thinkers such as Sergei Bulgakov, Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky, and Alexander Schmemann.

Let me first offer a clarification about the title of this paper. *Theological anthropology* is a particular type of religious anthropology, that is, a theoretical reflection and doctrinal application of religious anthropology understood as a vision of man in the context of holistic religious experience. *Christian* theological anthropology is a theoretical reflection and description of man's being, nature, condition, calling, and destiny as seen in Christian teaching and experience.

As a *theoretical reflection*, theological anthropology interacts most closely with philosophical anthropology, while preserving its identity and peculiarity conditioned by religious experience as the foundation on which it is developed. Philosophical anthropology, in turn, is often seen as one of the anthropological disciplines along with physical (natural-scientific) and cultural (socio-cultural) anthropology. Along with its specific object, philosophical anthropology enjoys a certain methodological priority over the above-mentioned disciplines since it provides a general theoretical space for interdisciplinary interaction and dialogue—a "dialogue of anthropologies." This is also how I perceive the present conference, as an open interdisciplinary theoretical dialogue held in philosophical space.

Returning to the subject of my paper, I should make another clarification. I intend to speak not about Christian theological anthropology as a whole but rather about that of Russia as it was in the twentieth century. Russian theological anthropology in this period presents a vivid example of the "dialogue of anthropologies"—an experience of the creative, though complex, interaction that theology may have with philosophy, science, and culture in the field of anthropology. As a matter of fact, the very specificity of an example of Christian anthropological thinking considered in this

paper, namely, that which is "Orthodox," "Russian," and "of the twentieth century," reminds us of the somewhat unpleasant fact that perceptions of man and their theological descriptions differ in various Christian traditions, cultures, and periods of time. These differences are conditioned by the variety of social, cultural, and historical situations in which the Gospel was incultured and the Christian tradition developed and shaped.

Even so, it is possible to identify certain common elements in the Christian vision of man. The most basic point of reference in Biblical anthropology is that man was created by God. But God also created the whole world. Man is part of nature, a mortal creature dependent on nature. Just like the animals, man was created "of the dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7, 19; 6:17; Eccl. 3:18–21). He is "dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27), "maggot and worm" (Job 25:6). He is temporal as grass (Ps. 101:15–17; 142:4; 1 Pet. 1:24). Man is a being in need; he needs the external world and depends on it. Man is dependent on God (Job 34:14, 15).

Yet being part of the created world, man occupies a unique place in it. He is the crown of creation (Gen. 1:27; Ps. 8:6–9; cf. Sir. 17:1–13); he is created in the image and after the likeness of God (Gen. 1:27; 1 Cor. 11:7). As the image of God, man was destined to have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26, Ps. 8:5–8, cf. Sir. 17:1–13), representing among the rest of the creatures the power of God over the world, bearing witness to this power and exercising it as "vicar" with true righteousness (Eph. 4:24). In this capacity, man participates in the glory and honour (Ps. 8:5) that belongs to God alone (Is. 42:8). And yet it is not his special place in the world that is a specific characteristic of man, but the fact that he is capable of conscientious relations with God. These relations are expressed in man's perception of God's word addressed to him and his obedience to God (Gen. 2:16, 17; Ez. 20:11: Mk. 12:30). Indeed, obedience can be only the consequence of free will. It implies the freedom of choice to obey God or to oppose Him (Gen. 3:1–6).

It is in the sphere of human freedom that sin develops as refusal to obey God, to relate to Him and desire to break away from Him Who is the source and foundation of human existence. Thus, sin leads to distortions in all aspects of human life including man's relations with God, with himself, with other human beings and the world. Now man and all things human stand in opposition to God and thus become subjects of His judgment. A way to renewal of God's image in man lies through repentance and salvation in Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). Christ as God became man is the principal basis of Christian anthropology, for it is in Him that the meaning and calling of man is revealed. This image of humanity revealed by Christ is sealed in the St. Paul's image of "the new man," "the new Adam," "the last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45). Adam was created in the image of God, but it is Christ alone who is the true "image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4). Man finds the meaning of his being and existence in Jesus Christ alone, the Son of God who became man "so that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4 ff.).

Already in the early centuries of Christianity's historical existence, there were differences in Christian practices and theories. Later, local traditions took shape and the so-called theological schools came to vary with the cultures—Semitic, Greek, Latin, German, Celtic, Armenian, Slavic—in which Christianity was propagated. In the Middle Ages, the variety of Christian traditions, amplified by the division of Christians into states, was fixed in self-sufficient and exclusive cultural forms, thus becoming one of the factors of tragic division in what was once undivided Christianity. Old Russia, which embraced Christianity in its Eastern form, gradually assimilated also the richness of Byzantine spiritual experience. As the experience of early Russian devotion and iconography, this "contemplation in colors," shows, it was a lively and creative assimilation.

After the fall of Byzantium, in face of the threat of the Uniate churches and the spiritual ferment provoked by the Reformation, the Orthodox had to search for allies in the West. The energy of the Protestants was used to oppose Catholic aggression while the form of Catholic scholasticism was used to oppose Protestants. After Peter the Great, it was Western culture and Western theology that gained a foothold in Russian theological education. This tendency to look to Rome in the seventeenth century was subsequently replaced in the century to follow by the influence of early Protestant scholasticism. From the late eighteenth century, this impact was augmented by pietistic moralism, mysticism, and German theosophy. The mid-nineteenth century witnessed a fresh influence of Catholic scholasticism in Russian scholastic theology.

Father Alexander Schmemann has written about these developments:

> Paradoxical as it sounds however, it is this very 'westernization' of the Russian theological mind that forced it into a new search for its Orthodox identity and brought about a genuine revival of Orthodox theology, the first since the breakdown of the Byzantine tradition. The intellectual discipline and method acquired in the school, a creative participation in the great spiritual adventure of western culture, a new sense of history—all this, little by little, liberated the Orthodox theologians from a mere dependence on the West and helped them in their attempt to reconstruct a genuinely Orthodox theological perspective. . . . By the end of the nineteenth century, Russian academic theology stood on its own feet, both in terms of quality . . . and inner independence. . . . The Imperial period in the history of the Russian church witnessed a remarkable revival of monasticism, which since the Kievan age always focused and inspired the most living and spiritual forces of Russia. Thus, at the end of this long development, there took place in Russia in the final decades of (XIXth) century a 'religious renaissance' . . . Russian theology was entering a promising period of creativity.[1]

[1]Alexander Schmemann, "Russian Theology, 1920–1972: An Introductory Survey," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 16 (1972), pp. 172–194, at pp. 174–175. [Editor's note: where possible I have provided references to English translations of the works cited. Several passages in the text are the author's translations from Russian editions of these works, and may not agree verbatim with existing English translations.]

This creative renaissance was conditioned in many ways by three major circumstances: firstly, the inner logic with which Russian academic theology developed, combining a return to the early Byzantine spiritual and theological tradition with a creative assimilation of academic toolkits used by Western theology; secondly, the progress of Russian theological thought, especially visible in the development of original Russian religious philosophy; thirdly, "God-seeking," the "religious revival" which arose among the Russian liberal intelligentsia who brought to the Church their aspirations, bewilderments, and questions.

The significance of the "religious renaissance" for Orthodox theological anthropology lies in its provocative nature, which urged theology to address some burning issues of the present occupying the minds of educated Russian society. Thus, during the religious-philosophical meetings, which gathered together representatives of the Church and secular cultural figures in 1901–1903 in St. Petersburg and which were chaired by Bishop Sergius Stragorodsky, rector of St. Petersburg Theological Academy and later the Patriarch, the official Church was strongly criticized for her "indifference towards real people" and reproached for her failure to develop in her ecclesiastical theology an explicit anthropological agenda.

As far as Russian religious philosophy is concerned, it was originally anthropologically oriented. Russian religious philosophy proper began to take shape in the works of senior "Slavophiles." Its primary motive was to express the Russian religious experience philosophically.

Significant in this respect was the role of Ivan Kireyevsky (1806–1856), as he was the one who posed the task of developing a Russian philosophy based and built on Western philosophy and giving the major role in its substantiation to the heritage of the Eastern Fathers of the Church. The fate of Kireyevsky was symbolic. It reflected on a personal level the conflict between the "Westernism" that attracted him in his youth and the Slavophileism that became a conscious program in his mature years. The difference between the Westernizers and the Slavophiles boiled down to different views of Russia's fate and culture. There was also an opposition between the 'communal-collectivistic' principle and the 'individualistic' principle. The Slavophile initial insight was to state and at the same time strongly reject the inner opposition and alienation of the world, human society, man himself, and his conscience. Accordingly, Russian religious philosophy had as its key motive to overcome the fragmentation of the world, society and man and to criticize, on the theoretical plane, the reductionist theories and illusions generated by them in which the general is reduced to the particular, to a fragment. It was for these reasons that Russian religious philosophy took up as its guideline the themes of "universal unity," "God-manhood," and "sobornost," on one hand, and the uniqueness, absolute value, and irreducible nature of the human person, on the other.

According to Alexei Khomyakov (1804–1860), man is called to unity, not to harmony as such but to harmony in the Church, that is, in Christ

and the Spirit, and this harmony ensures and bears witness to the truth. The Christian does not "become catholic" because he is included in the multitude of the faithful, but rather because he shares in the unity of grace. Khomyakov invented a new concept, that of "sobornost" (conciliarity, catholicity). Catholicity for Khomyakov does not coincide with "commonality" or corporativity. He understood catholicity as a divine rather than human characteristic. "It is not persons or a multitude of persons who preserve tradition in the Church, but the Spirit of God living in church totality." Moral unity is only a human condition and guarantee of this catholic transformation through the Spirit.

There is a great gap between the anthropological conceptions of the "Westernizer," Alexander Hertzen (1812–1870), and those of the Slavophiles in evaluating the freedom of personality and understanding people's unity in their common life in society. Asserting people's unity as primary and decisive vis-a-vis their personal life, the Slavophiles argued that man was a profound participant in the Absolute and had the highest divine calling in the world through this participation. Hertzen, on the contrary, saw in commonality only one of the elements of *external* human life along with another element, which is rational egoism. Human history, he believed, is the interaction and struggle between these two forces, but within this struggle, man should seek an intransient value only in his inner, personal independence and freedom.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky's (1821–1881) main theme is also the antinomy of human freedom. For Dostoyevsky, man's self-will is his self-destruction: freedom is violence and tyranny towards others; it plunges one into slavery to passions or ideas. Freedom is righteous only through love, but love is possible only in freedom, for through one's love comes the freedom of one's neighbour. The Grand Inquisitor is first of all a victim of a love of his neighbour which is not free or respectful of the other's freedom, the freedom of everyone among these lesser ones. Freedom can be fulfilled only through love and brotherhood. In this lies the mystery of catholicity, the mystery of the Church as brotherhood and love in Christ. It is only in the Church and in Christ that people become real brothers, and it is only in Christ that the danger of every oppression, violence and obsession is removed; only in Him does man cease to be dangerous for his neighbour.

Vladimir Solovyev (1853–1900) is a key figure in the history of Russian philosophy, and his creative work became the foundation for an intellectual flourishing that happened in the early twentieth century and gave Russian philosophy the status of a distinctive national school. In its most general form, the meaning of the ideal proclaimed by Solovyev's "true philosophy" is evident: the transformed state of the world and humankind is *the divine state of universal unity* in which the imperfection of the world is removed by overcoming its foundation, which is *the isolation of individual elements of being* (things, phenomena, and living creatures).

In his fundamental work entitled *A Study of Man*, Victor Nesmelov (1863–1937) proposes a fundamental shift in the anthropological perspec-

tive in which theological anthropology traditionally proceeds from God to man. Nesmelov suggests that a theoretical description of the Christian experience of man should begin with a description of man himself, with the profundity of his experience, since "the ultimate substantiation of the truth cannot be found outside man." Nikolay Berdyaev wrote about this study,

> Nesmelov has much in common with Ludwig Feuerbach . . . [including] a similar understanding of the essence of every religion, first of all, Christianity. Just like Feuerbach, Nesmelov sees this essence in the enigma of man. . . . Nesmelov turns his principal idea of the anthropological mystery of religion into a tool for defending Christianity. People come to religion through the duality of their nature, through divine likeness laid down in them along with their animal likeness and nature-likeness. Man cannot reconcile himself with his own imperfection and with the fact that perfect and absolute life is not his lot. He cannot reconcile himself with it not because of his subjective wishes but because of his objective nature.[2]

The most important idea of Nikolay Berdyaev (1874–1948) is the primacy of freedom over being. The principal aim of Berdyaev's philosophical constructions is to assert the absolute and indisputable value of a concrete unique personality. For this reason, his position can be rightly described as *radical personalism.* It is radicalism in confessing personalistic principles that singles out Berdyaev's philosophy among all the contemporary versions of existentialism and philosophical anthropology. Personality in Berdyaev has not only absolute value and is not only independent metaphysically, but also metaphysically primordial.

Semyon Frank (1877–1950) brought to logical completion the struggle with what Solovyev calls "abstract principles," an endeavor which continued in Russian philosophy for over half a century. Using the philosophical ideas of Schleiermacher, Bergson, and Stern, Frank concludes that *personality* should be accepted as the absolute principle because in its immediate and concrete being it "embraces" all that is real, beginning from the realm of the boundless (God) and proceeding to the chaotic diversity of the empirical world. Just as does Khomyakov, Frank affirms that people's catholic unity is the basis of existence for every person. Like Solovyev, Frank gives an ontological foundation to the notion of catholic unity, affirming that in its metaphysical essence it is *absolute universal unity* defined as indissoluble unity and even identity of the whole and part, of "we" and "I." In some points Frank's ideas reveal an influence, direct or indirect, of Heidegger's fundamental ontology.

The notion of personality is seen by Frank as the primary and ultimate definition of inner being. Certainly, this understanding of personality directly follows up the tradition initiated by Dostoyevsky, in which human personality is not defined by the usual qualities of isolation and independence but, to the contrary, by being rooted in a different, indissoluble,

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[2]Nikolay Berdyaev, *An Attempt at a Philosophical Justification of Christianity* (about V. Nesmelov's book, "The Science of Men") [in Russian].

antinomic identity with the genuine and unconditional being; personality here is a kind of "immanent transcending" towards being. Frank writes:

> The only but quite adequate 'proof of the existence of God' is the existence of the human personality realized in all its depth and significance, in all its meaning as a being transcending itself. If a person feels himself a personality, that is, a being alien to the entire external objective existence and excelling it in its profundity, originality, significance, if he feels himself an outcast who has no real refuge in this world, it means he has a native land in a different sphere of existence, that he, as it were, represents in this world a different, quite real principle of existence. . . . The idea of divine-human nature—the intimate relation and kinship between God and man . . . has cultivated for the first time in human history the self-awareness of man as personality. It has taught man to be aware of himself as a certain higher principle of absolute value by which he opposes the world as an instance of a special order and is called to creative self-determination and perfection of life. It has cultivated in man for the first time what can be described in a general sense as humanistic awareness. . . .
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> I will feel that which forms the essence of my personality precisely as personality and that of which I am aware as 'I', different from the involuntary spiritual conditions arising in me without any reason—I feel it directly as something uncreated, not as something 'made' by God, but something that stems from Him and is rooted in Him. Certainly, my being is somehow 'given' to me; it is not the primary, absolutely primordial reality. It is precisely my relation with God and its foundation is God. But precisely by virtue of this intimate relation it derivatively participates in the eternity of God Himself. It is only this direct awareness of eternity and unshakable solidity of my ego as essentially and profoundly being in God that lies in the basis of my ineradicable faith in my undestructiveness, in eternity. It does not at all mean that I deify man and identify him with God. This eternity and uncreated nature has to do only with the very point of personality in me. [3]

Among the principal achievements of philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the overcoming of the concept whereby the most important thing was to set man against the world around him, with this opposition understood as a special relation between the whole and a part. This implicit analogy defined almost all the elements of the traditional conception, not only of the relationship between man and the world, but also of interpersonal relationships and those among particular "inner" elements of the human personality itself. The credit for this overcoming should be given to Henry Bergson, while the clearest and fullest articulation of the new concept of man was given by Lev Karsavin (1882–1952). Borrowing the principal ideas of Bergson, Karsavin rids them of elements of biologism and mechanicism and builds on their basis a holistic and coherent metaphysics of personality. His principal innovation was introduction of the principle of universal unity to the system of Bergson's ideas. Karsavin sees in universal unity pluralism and disunity as a

[3] S. L. Frank, *Reality and Man: An Essay in the Metaphysics of Human Nature* (New York: Taplinger, 1965), pp. 104–105, 149.

characteristic no less important than unity. The most profound description of universal unity should be linked with the removal of the very opposition of unity and plurality. This is achieved through a radical "closing" of universal unity in which the least element of universal unity is seen as absolutely identical to universal unity as a whole. In a perfected condition it is impossible to make the traditional distinction between the "highest" and the "lowest" personalities; each is absolutely significant and absolutely unique, being identical to (created) Universal Unity.

Archpriest Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944) developed his religious-philosophical anthropology along the line of universal unity. His theological system represents a specifically Christian Platonism with "Sophia" and "God-manhood" as its central conceptions. His principal theological intention was to overcome the fruitless struggle between theocentrism and anthropocentrism, the opposition between a humanless God and godless man. His metaphysical anthropodicy set itself as its task to reveal the magnificence of man, his closeness and profound kinship to God, the roots of humanity and the drama of human history in the life of the Triune God—Sophia, Pre-eternal Humanity.

Developing his idea of God's image in man as a point of community between man and God, Bulgakov—assuming that God's image is transcendent to human nature, on the one hand, since this is an image of uncreated God, and that the image is immanent to man, on the other—resolves this antinomy of faith in a way that transcends man himself, rooting him in God. Inevitable here is making God immanent to creation and obliterating the borderline between the created and the uncreated. As a result, Bulgakov advocates the idea of a sexual nature of the image of God by insisting on a special divine and supernatural status of sexual difference and rooting it in God as the prototype of man. Bulgakov thus develops the idea of divine humanity in two directions—kenotic Christology and pantheistic Sophiology.

It should be mentioned that the theme of man's exclusive community with God and the significance and value of man was much favored by Orthodox anthropological thinking of the twentieth century. Thus, Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (1914–2003), a remarkable preacher and witness to Orthodoxy in Great Britain, wrote:

> For centuries, as it seems, within the Church we have tried to make our God as great as we could, by making man small. This can be seen even in works of art in which the Lord Jesus Christ is represented great and his creatures very small indeed at his feet. The intention was to show how great God was, and yet it has resulted in the false, mistaken, almost blasphemous view that man is small, or in the denial of this God who treats men as though they were of no value. And these two reactions are equally wrong. The one belongs to people who claim to be children of God, God's own chosen people, who are the Church. They have managed by doing this to make themselves as small as the image they have of men, and their communities as small and lacking in scope and greatness as their constitutive parts. The other attitude we find outside the Church, among the agnostics, the rationalists and the

> atheists; and we are responsible for these two attitudes and we shall be accountable for both in history and at the day of judgment. And yet this is not the vision of God about man.[4]

Here is another significant oral testimony from Metropolitan Anthony:

> We found ourselves in the West as a result of the Revolution . . . The situation of World War I, the Revolution and our being refugees created many distressful things. . . . Next to our place was a small parish near Paris, poor as everything was at that time. . . . A poor church, pitiful singing, small community, poverty and . . . the presence of God. I cannot express it otherwise; it was not some mystical, magnificent experience. It was rather a clear, transparent and quiet feeling that God was there among us and we were with Him. And then I discovered that for many before the Revolution, God was first of all the Pantocrator, the magnificent Ruler of the world, Who lived in cathedrals and churches and was very different from us. And here it suddenly turned out that God was the same refugee as we were. He was driven away from Russia together with us . . . and churches proved to be not great places where the Lord of the world lived but little churches which were arranged by refugees who lost everything and who gave to God, a refugee like us, an asylum. This is a feeling I have had ever since that God remains God in the greatest sense of the word but for all that He is the same as we are. He is an exile on earth, and the faithful give Him a place where He is the master. And he, being the master in that place, shares Eternity, Sanctity, Truth, Life with us.[5]

The anthropological and ethical crisis symbolized by World War I and its terrors led to the need for Christianity to rethink the forms and methods of its witness and service in the changed world. For Russia, the anthropological crisis involved also the Revolution, the Civil War leading to the collapse of a millennium-old political system, the triumph of a godless and bloody regime, and mass emigration. One feature of that period was philosophers such as Bulgakov and Berdyaev who moved, as they put it, from "Marxism to idealism." The integration of the best resources of Russian religious philosophy and academic theology, which began to take shape in the nineteenth century in Russia, continued now in emigration and was to develop into the remarkable theological thinking of the Russian emigration, which has been a decisive influence on the development of twentieth-century Orthodox theology.

The theological thinking of the Russian emigration was far from homogeneous. Fr. Schmemann describes it in this way:

> One can clearly discern the two main trends . . . of modern Russian theology. . . . Representatives of both trends are indeed united in their criticism of the 'western captivity' of Russian theology, in their desire to root theology again

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[4]Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom), "On the True Worth of Man" in *The Works of Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh* (Praktika, 2002), p. 271 [in Russian]; available in English at http://mitras.ru/eng/eng_serm.htm.

[5]"God—Exile on Earth," D. Saprykin's interview with Met. Anthony (Bloom) [in Russian].

> in the traditional sources: the Fathers, the liturgy, the living spiritual experience of the Church. But within this unity, a sharp divergence is expressed in two basic attitudes. For one group, the critique of the theological past includes, although on a level different from that of western theology, the patristic period itself. Orthodox theology must keep its patristic foundation, but it must also go 'beyond' the Fathers if it is to respond to a new situation created by centuries of philosophical development. And in this new synthesis or reconstruction, the western philosophical tradition (source and mother of the Russian 'religious philosophy' of the 19th and 20th centuries) rather than the Hellenic, must supply theology with its conceptual framework. An attempt is thus made to 'transpose' theology into a new 'key', and this transposition is considered as the specific task and vocation of Russian theology. This attitude is opposed by another in which the main emphasis is laid on the 'return to the Fathers'. The tragedy of Orthodox theological development is viewed here precisely as a drifting away of the theological mind from the very spirit and method of the Fathers, and no reconstruction or new synthesis are thought possible outside a creative recovery of that spirit. . . . The most typical . . . representative of the first trend was Sergius Bulgakov, professor of Dogmatics at St. Sergius (d. 1944). . . . Among other representatives of the same basic trend . . . one must mention the names of V. Zenkovsky, B. Vysheslavtzev, and N. Berdyaev who shared in the same general theological orientation, even if they sharply disagreed on concrete issues. The most representative theologian of the second trend is, without any question, George Florovsky, for many years professor of Patrology at St. Sergius (1925–1948), then dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary (1948–1955), professor at Harvard Divinity School (1955–1964), and then at Princeton University. He has had a decisive influence on the younger generation of Orthodox theologians, both Russian and non-Russian, and has also played a leading role in shaping the Orthodox position in the Ecumenical Movement. . . . Of the same patristic inspiration are the works of Vladimir Lossky . . . his book on the mystical theology of the Eastern Church has become a classic in the West.[6]

Researchers describe the former trend as the "Russian school" or "Russian Religious Philosophy school," while the latter was assigned the name of the "neo-patristic school." Today the Russian school has become a thing of the past, while the neo-patristic school has come to dominate Orthodox theology. Both schools were to a certain extent "theological projects." Those in the Russian school were very clear about the methodological basis and philosophic roots of their concepts. This was a strength not equally present among the neo-patristics. On the other hand, the major criticism of the neo-patristics against the Russian School was that it illegitimately drew upon philosophical concepts. Representatives of neo-patristics believe it is necessary to refrain from any philosophical influences, remaining exclusively on patristic grounds. The ultimate failure of the Russian school is best illustrated by its inadequate attempt to form a personalist philosophy. Perhaps surprisingly, it has turned out to be the theological personalism of the neo-patristic school which most fully completes the philosophical insights and ideas generated by Russian religious philosophy.

[6] Schmemann, "Russian Theology," pp. 178–179.

While the major anthropological ideas of the Russian school lay in universal unity, God-manhood, the ontological primacy of freedom, and a personalist metaphysics, the key themes for a purely theological anthropology, under the influence of the patristic revival, came to embrace as well a rich further vein of ideas. These include the liturgical transformation of man's social life according to the image of the Trinity, the ascetic transfiguration of his inner constitution, the communicative nature of his existence, man as a dynamic reality open to self-transformation, the deification of man understood as grace-giving transformation in divine-human synergy, and the "essence" of man living in Christ understood as the sacramental, spiritual-ethical and eschatological reality of Christ living in him. At the same time, many anthropological themes raised in Russian religious philosophy proved to be quite relevant to theological thought as well. Thus, the key theme of universal unity as the unity and wholeness of the world, man, and God is also present in theological thought. In the Russian religious conception of universal unity in general, and in Bulgakov's formulation as Sophiology in particular, God-manhood is seen as the ideal presence of man and the world in God, while creation is thought of as the self-unfolding and self-revelation of the Godhead. This attempt to overcome the tragic ontological alienation of man and God was undertaken with the use of resources and insights offered by the Platonic (and essentially pantheistic) tradition. As Sergei Horujy points out, Russian religious-philosophical thinking at the later stage of its development involving deliberations on the glorification of name, *onomatodoxia*, through the works of Bulgakov, Florensky and Losev, entered a period of what is best seen as Christian Neo-Platonism.[7]

For more Orthodox theological thought, the problem of overcoming the gap between the world and God was tackled on the basis of a different tradition and with reference to different authorities. The major figures here are St. Maximus the Confessor and St. Gregory Palamas, as well as the ascetic authors whose works are collected in the *Philokalia* and "mystics" in the person of St. Symeon the New Theologian and his circle. A special role in studying these Fathers and introducing their heritage to academic usage belongs to Archpriest Georges Florovsky (1893–1979), a theologian, historian, thinker, ecumenical worker, and the founder of the neo-patristic project in Russian theology. The essential starting point and anthropological foundation for such a theology faithful to the patristic tradition is, as it clearly should be, Christ. It is in the mystery of Christ the incarnate Logos, as St. Maximus the Confessor describes Him, that the insight of universal unity so dear to Russian religious-philosophical thinking is preserved, transformed, and purified.

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[7]Sergei Horujy, "Imyaslavie and the Culture of the Silver Age: The Phenomenon of the Moscow School of Christian Neoplatonism" in the proceedings of the conference, *S. N. Bulgakov: The Religious and Philosophical Way* (Moscow, 2003) [in Russian]. [Editor's note: 'Imyaslavie,' lit. "name-glorifiers," is treated in Russian as the proper name of a heresy.]

It is instructive to contrast the approach of St. Maximus to that of scholastic theology. Often in the latter, Christ appears not immediately but only as it were *ad hoc*, like a *Deus ex machina*, solely in connection with sin and redemption. The chapters about Christ are preceded by chapters about God and the world and man. The Incarnation is seen as *one of* the acts of God, albeit one that is almighty, utterly fair, and merciful towards His creation. St. Maximus presents a different picture.[8] For him the incarnation of the Logos is the focus of world existence, the essential foundation of the cosmos, having in itself a pre-cosmic significance. The world is a revelation of God, a revelation of the Word. And the incarnation of the Word is the foundation and goal of the Revelation, its principal theme and meaning. It was from the beginning that God the Word was to become man so that this divine-human union might effect the sanctification and deification of all creatures in universal unity.

Nonetheless, the world is not some inner self-revelation of God. The world was created by the will of a personal God, and since it is created it is not self-sufficient, but limited and finite. And yet this "negative" definition is balanced by a positive vision wherein the world is held together and constituted by the creative idea-volitions, "words," or *logoi* of the Word. It is in them that God comes in touch with the world and the world comes in touch with the Godhead. It is in the creative ideas (*logoi*) of the Logos that the entire existence is united.

The mystery of the creation and universe is revealed in man. Man is the living image of the creation, for in him all the divine powers and energies revealed in the world are focused. By his very constitution he is called to become deified and to effect precisely in himself the deification of the entire creation, the goal for which it was designed and made. Thus the anthropology of St. Maximus extends to cosmology to receive an ontological significance.

Ultimately, the idea of man is fully and effectively realized and the direct relation of created and divine being is established only within Christ. The latter represents the most important, the most general and central idea for St. Maximus. All that is divine (the Logos and *logoi*), all that is (ideal) human and all that is human in every stage of being—primordial, present, and future (after the resurrection)—is given in Christ. In Him the ultimate model of spiritual life is given and the highest manifestations of mystical experience are revealed, the knowledge of the Holy Trinity is granted, and the ideal of deification is realized. Thus the cosmology of St. Maximus is epitomized in the idea of the Logos and then that of man, and his anthropology is based on Christology. In this vision God is not simply "reflected" in the world and the world in not simply rooted in God, as some static ideas would suggest. God's relationship with the world is described dynamically in not only semantic and ideal but also volitional

[8]See Georges Florovsky, "St. Maximus the Confessor" in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, vol. 9: The Byzantine Fathers of the Sixth to Eighth Century* (Postfach: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), pp. 208–253.

and personal terms. The principle of relations between God and the world is not described within the horizon of essential metaphysics but through a concept of *energy*, this fundamentally reconsidered Aristotelian term describing the spiritual experience of an absolutely different existential nature, the absolute ontological transcendence of God in relation to the world and at the same time the perfect presence of God in the world.

This is a dynamic vision of man in which he and the world centered in him prove to be an open reality not limited by its created nature—a reality which is called to synergy and union with God and to deification, which is once again a union not in nature but in action and energy. Of course, it cannot be denied that this optimistic vision of human calling is darkened by the fact of the Fall and its consequences. Since the Fall was an act of will it was also a distortion of the human will, one that led to alienation between the human and divine will and disintegration of the integral human will and the integral human being. Christ is seen in this perspective as predominantly a Doctor whose healing reaches the very source of sinfulness so that the human will can be healed and restored. In Christ all that is human is permeated by the Godhead, is deified and transformed. The human is not dissolved in the divine, but becomes its own self filled up with the human measure. Man is given an opportunity for restoration in Christ, and not just restoration, but ascent to the full image of Christ, to fully deified humanity.

This ascent, however, presupposes a tremendous ascetic work. Asceticism is not understood as a "mortification" senseless for man himself, nor as a "God-pleasing" sacrifice of self-destruction in the hope of reward in the afterlife. The essence of asceticism lies in "the building of a New Man." It presupposes freedom with regard to the limitations of one's own nature and the ability to overcome the old man in oneself. The Eastern Fathers kept repeating that "God became man so that man might become God." Asceticism is therefore a synergistic process of life with Christ and in Christ, a process that is free, volitional, creative, and realized through the work of God's grace.

The heritage of St. Maximus became a powerful source of creative inspiration for Orthodox theological anthropology of the twentieth century. He is one of the most researched and cited Holy Fathers. No less a role in the development of modern Orthodox theological anthropology, just as for theology as a whole, belongs to St. Gregory Palamas. Almost all the leading representatives of the twentieth-century Russian theological school, especially Archpriest Georges Florovsky, Archimandrite Cyprian Kern, Vladimir Lossky, Archbishop Basil Krivochein, and Archpriest John Meyendorff, made their contribution to the study of St. Gregory Palamas's heritage.

St. Gregory's thinking, like the heritage of all the Eastern Fathers, is based entirely on spiritual experience. St. Gregory, who worked in the fourteenth century, can be said to personify the quintessence of the ascetic and mystical experience accumulated by the Church, himself being

a faithful witness and defender of Orthodox spiritual tradition. His major task was to defend the reality of spiritual experience as practiced in Hesychasm, which, according to Archbishop Basil Krivochein, was the ultimate synthesis of "various tendencies in the Orthodox life of contemplation."

The term Hesychast (*hēsychastēs*, meaning "keeper of silence") was used to denote a "desert-dweller," a hermit, from the very beginning of monasticism. Hesychasm emerged in the fourth and fifth centuries when the monastic tradition took shape in Egypt and Palestine. The period from the fifth to the ninth century was when Hesychasm crystallized as a discipline and precise method of spiritual practice. The pivot of this tradition was a school of devotional action built on a two-fold foundation: the saying of prayer, and "attention" as control over one's conscience ensuring the continuity of the prayer. This twofold action unfolds as a spiritual process directed upwards and divided into several steps, including repentance, struggle with passions, bringing one's mind into one's heart, absence of passions, contemplation of the uncreated Light, transfiguration, and deification.

The most important contribution of St. Gregory Palamas to Orthodox anthropology was the theological substantiation he gave to the ages-old spiritual-ascetic experience of Orthodox Christianity, the experience of grace-giving union with God leading to the transformation of human nature, to deification (*theōsis*). According to Fr. Georges Florovsky,

> The term theosis is indeed quite embarrassing, if we would think in 'ontological' categories. Indeed, man simply cannot 'become' god. But the Fathers were thinking in 'personal' terms, and the mystery of personal communion was involved at this point. Theosis meant a personal encounter. It is that intimate intercourse of man with God, in which the whole of human existence is, as it were, permeated by the Divine Presence. Yet, the problem remains: How can even this intercourse be compatible with the Divine Transcendence? . . . St. Basil the Great says, 'the 'essence of God' is absolutely inaccessible to man. We know God only in His actions, and by His actions' (Epist. 234, ad Amphilochium). In the phrase of S. John of Damascus, these actions or 'energies' of God are the true revelation of God Himself (De Fide Orth. 1: 14). This mysterious mode of Divine Presence, in spite of the absolute transcendence of the Divine Essence, passes all understanding. But it is no less certain for that reason. St. Gregory Palamas stands in an ancient tradition at this point. In His 'energies' the Unapproachable God mysteriously approaches man. Actually, the whole teaching of S. Gregory presupposes the action of the Personal God. God moves toward man and embraces him by His own 'grace' and action.[9]

The study of the heritage of St. Gregory Palamas and Hesychasm and, in a broader framework, the assimilation of the spiritual-ascetic heritage of Orthodoxy and reflection on the ensuing anthropological conclusions

[9]Georges Florovsky, "St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers" in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, vol. 1: Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Postfach: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), pp. 105–120, at pp. 115–116.

have helped to reveal a number of important questions. Thus, among the peculiarities of traditional scholastic Christian anthropology is a metaphysical dualism of soul and body borrowed from non-Biblical sources. Such a view is not just dualism but opposition of soul and body. Augmented by modern rationalism, this falsely spiritualistic view has led to the emergence of "the problem of the human body" in Christianity and to calls for the construction of "a theology of the body."

Twentieth-century Western theological thinking resolves this problem predominantly in the Biblical vein. It is maintained, correctly enough, that the Bible presents man in his integrity, in which his soul and body are not seen as "parts" but as aspects manifesting the one reality of human existence. Sharing this attitude, Russian theological thinking adds the vision of the integral human nature revealed in the spiritual-ascetic tradition of Orthodoxy. In this tradition, man is not viewed predominantly as nature but a certain complex and holistic totality of spiritual and physical energies. This is not to deny the reality of human nature, but the question of nature seems rather abstract, the more so as it has become clear since the Cappadocian Fathers that human nature as created by God is incognizable in its profundity. The question more important for an ascetic was not that of the metaphysics of his existence but that of the right order for energies in his human existence, the question of orthopractice. According to Sergei Horujy, "Struggle with passions is an art of controlling the variety of all human energies; devotion implies the gathering of these energies into one aspiration towards God, while synergy and deification are none other than the union of human energy and divine energy which is grace."[10]

Special attention has been given within Russian theology to the question of what significance the ascetics ascribed to the body both in ascetic endeavours and in deification. Among important factors here is the practice of contemplating the uncreated Divine Light, which had been present in the hesychast tradition throughout its existence, as well as in Russia, as exemplified by St. Seraphim of Sarov. Vladimir Lossky writes the following about this:

> To see the Divine Light with physical eyes . . . one has to be a participant in this Light, to be changed by it to a greater or smaller measure. Therefore, mystical experience presupposes a change of our nature under the impact of grace. . . . The body should not impede mystical experience. The Manichean disdain for physical nature is alien to Orthodox asceticism: 'We do not apply the name of 'man' to either soul or body separately but to both of them, for the whole man is created in the image of God', St. Gregory Palamas says . . . Our ultimate goal is not only to contemplate God by mind; if it were so the resurrection from the dead would not be necessary.[11]

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[10] S. S. Horujy, "Hesychasm as a Philosophical Space," a paper presented at a conference on Russian Philosophy Today in Muelheim, Germany.

[11] Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), p. 224.

Speaking about the theology of energies as developed by St. Gregory Palamas, Father Georges Florovsky noted:

> It [the denial of the personhood of God] was the predicament of the Greek impersonalist metaphysics. If there is any room for Christian metaphysics at all, it must be metaphysics of persons.[12]

That is to say that the refusal of Orthodox patristic theology to accept an essentialistic description of reality necessarily presupposed the development of a conception of personality. This conception occupies a considerable place in the works of twentieth-century Russian theologians. Here we can also see a relation of Russian theological anthropology to the themes and problems dealt with by Russian religious philosophy, as was already mentioned above.

Almost all the representatives of Russian neo-patristics made in this or that measure a contribution to the development of this theme, but a special role in developing Russian theological personalism belongs to Vladimir Lossky (1904–1958). Lossky maintains that although the Holy Fathers did not explicitly articulate a teaching on anthropology, one is "coded" in Triadology and Christology. The key theological concept ensuring the relationship of the two levels in the teaching on personality, i.e., Triadology and Christology, on the one hand, and anthropology, on the other, belongs to the teaching on human conformity to God. Lossky particularly follows at this point St. Gregory of Nyssa. The line of his reasoning is this: God is transcendent to creation, and, accordingly, transcendent to created human nature. The transcendence of God's image to human nature implies that the image of God cannot be a "part" of nature or an "element" of a natural compound. St. Gregory of Nyssa sees what is intrinsic to man, as created in the image of God, first of all in that "man is delivered from necessity and is not subject to the rule of nature, but can freely constitute oneself at his will. There is only one nature common to all human beings, though it seems to us fragmented by sin, divided between many individuals. This primordial unity of nature restored in the Church appears so absolute to St. Paul that he calls it 'the Body of Christ.'" Therefore, it is the created nature of man according to the image of God that reveals, according to Lossky, personality as the existential dimension fundamental to man. Lossky writes: "When we want to define, to 'characterize' a person, we look for individual qualities, 'characteristic features,' which are also found in other individuals and can never be absolutely 'personal' as they belong to the common nature. And we ultimately realize: what we cherish most of all in man, what makes him 'himself,' cannot be defined because there is nothing in his nature that would belong to personality proper, which is always unique, incomparable and inimitable."[13]

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[12]Florovsky, "St. Gregory Palamas," p. 119.

[13]Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 121.

That which conforms to the image of God in us is not part of our nature, but our personality which includes nature. It is here that one finds the meaning of the key concept of patristic Triadology and Christology, "hypostasis." As personality, not as individual, hypostasis does not fragment nature in a way that would generate a number of individual natures. The Holy Trinity is three hypostaseis and yet not three Gods, but one God. After the Fall, human nature became divided, fragmented, torn into a multitude of individuals. Man now appears in two aspects: as individual nature he becomes part of a whole, one of the components of the universe, but as personality he is not at all a "part"; he himself contains everything in himself. Nature is the content of personality; personality is the existence of nature. Personality asserting itself as an individual and containing itself within its individual nature cannot be fully self-fulfilled as it depletes itself. But rejecting its own essence, emptying it freely and existing no longer for its own self, personality fulfills itself in the one nature of all. Rejecting its private property, it unfolds infinitely to enrich itself with what belongs to all. Personality becomes the perfect image of God and seeks His likeness, which is the perfection of nature common to all human beings. The distinction between personalities and nature reproduces in humanity the order of divine life expressed in the doctrine of the Trinity.

As a personal creature, man can accept or reject the will of God. He remains personal even when he diverges far from God, even when he ceases to become like Him in his nature. This means that the image of God is indestructible in man. Man also remains a personal creature when he fulfills the will of God, when he completely likens himself to Him. Whatever man chooses—good or evil, whether he becomes like or unlike God—he is in free possession of his nature because he is personality created in the image of God. However, just as personality is inseparable from the nature existing in it, so any natural imperfection, any "non-likeness" in it, limits personality and obscures God's image.

Lossky summarizes his view as follows:

> We cannot articulate the notion of human personality and must content ourselves with this: personality is irreducibility of man to nature. It is precisely irreducibility, not 'something irreducible' or 'something that makes man irreducible to his nature,' because *something* distinctive or 'a different nature' is out of question here, but what is in point is only *somebody* who is distinctive from his own nature, somebody who, holding his nature in him, transcends nature, who by this transcendence gives it existence as human nature, but does not exist on his own, outside his nature, which he 'en-hypostasizes' and which he continually transcends, 'transporting' it.[14]

Lossky repeats the most essential motifs characteristic of the personalism of Russian religious philosophy. At the same time, he never reproduces its pantheistic elements. This difference is dictated to a considerable extent

[14]Vladimir Lossky, "The Theological Notion of the Human Person" in his *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), p. 120.

by the "rules of play" of theological discourse as compared to philosophical discourse.

Another important recent contributor to Russian theological anthropology was Archpriest Alexander Schmemann (1921–1983). He points out the liturgical, that is, catholic-sacramental nature of the existence of man as a being in communion with God, other people and the world. Father Alexander writes this about the Eucharist:

> The Liturgy is a mystery of assembly. Christ came to 'gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad' (Jn. 11:52), and the Eucharist from the very beginning was the manifestation and realization of the unity of the New People of God gathered together by Christ and in Christ. . . . This is the mystery of the Church, the mystery of the Body of Christ: 'where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.' And the miracle of church assembly is that it is not a 'sum' of sinful and unworthy people making it up but the Body of Christ. To be in Christ means to be and live in the Church which is the Life of Christ handed down to people and which lives therefore by the love of Christ, dwelling in His love: 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.' 'Unite us all, as many as are partakers in the one bread and one cup, one with another in communion with the One Holy Spirit.'[15]

Finally, new prospects for elaborating anthropological problems on the basis of hesychast creative impulses have been opened up in the works of Sergei Horujy (b. 1941), mathematician, philosopher and theologian. He describes his school as synergetic anthropology. It is characterized by a non-classical anthropology, empirical and energy-centered, rejecting fully the notions and apparatus of the classical Aristotelian-Cartesian-Kantian model of man including all the three fundamental concepts of this model—subject, essence, and substance. Horujy believes that the mechanisms of conscience working in the spiritual practice of hesychasm are directly correspondent to the description of intentional conscience in Husserl's phenomenology, and that the hesychast awareness in the mode of spiritual vigil presents a close analogy to the phenomenological awareness in the mode of intentionality. Horujy points out that in man's deification the human and divine energies are perfectly united. Since these energies are utterly different in nature, their union requires special preconditions, and central to them is synergy as a system of mutual conformity and coherence. Horujy points out that reaching coherence with divine energy in a state of synergy, human energies do not become closed in it. Anthropologically, synergy means a break and release of man in his energies towards the One Who is ontologically different. In classical anthropology, the constitution of man is determined by his essence, which also plays the role of the principle generating anthropological discourse. Horujy argues that the anthropological release acts as an alternative to human essence within a non-classical anthropology of energy.

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[15]Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), pp. 22–23.

In conclusion of this review of Russian Orthodox theological anthropology of the twentieth century, we should note that even while keeping within the neo-patristic course dominating Orthodox theology today, that is, being rooted and grounded in the patristic thinking so important for the Orthodox ethos, Russian theological anthropology is open to creative dialogue with contemporary philosophy and theological systems of various schools. The heritage of the Holy Fathers has thus proven to be not a treasure hidden under a bushel, but a relevant and much-demanded system of thought. Contemporary philosophical research, in its turn, has to justify itself in face of the believing Orthodox awareness. In this way the Russian Orthodox tradition has made its own contribution to the Christian understanding of human existence, affirming the universal significance of the absolute value of human beings.

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