Revolution, Exile and the Decline of Russian Religious Thought

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Russian religious thought originated in the mid-nineteenth century and reached an apogee in the decades preceding World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917, a movement known as the Russian religious renaissance. Almost all the leading figures of the religious renaissance went into exile, and several, especially Nicolas Berdyaev and Sergius Bulgakov, produced their most significant works in the years prior to World War II. But after the war, the mode of philosophical and theological reflection that they represented declined rapidly. This article advances five principal reasons for this decline: the exile situation itself; the difficulty in communicating the major themes of Russian religious thought beyond the Russian context; fundamental problems in religious thought; the passing of generations; and the emergence of an alternative, more patristically- and liturgically-based theology. Despite the decline of religious thought, many of its basic ideas have carried forward into the neopatristic mode of Orthodox theology.

Russian Religious Thought on the Eve of the Russian Revolution

In the decade preceding the Russian Revolution of 1918, the Russian religious renaissance[1] had reached a certain maturity, marked by several major publications. The collective book *Vekhi* (*Signposts*) (1909) contains contributions by seven leading representatives of the Russian religious renaissance, including four former Marxist philosophers who had returned to Christianity: Nicolas Berdyaev (1874–1948), Sergius Bulgakov (1871–1944), Simeon Frank (1877–1954), and Peter Struve (1870–1944).[2] In the words of Simeon Frank, *Vekhi* 'asserted the necessity of a religious foundation for any consistent philosophy of life, and at the same time sharply criticised the revolutionary and maximalist tendencies of the radically-minded Russian intelligent-

[1] The classic study, still unparalleled, of the Russian religious renaissance is Nicolas Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

[2] There are two English translations of *Vekhi*: Boris Shragin and Albert Todd, eds, *Landmarks: A Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia, 1909*, trans. Marian Schwartz (New York: Karz Howard, 1977); and Marshall S. Shatz and Judith E. Zimmerman, trans. and eds, Vekhi: *Landmarks: A Collection of Articles about the Russian Intelligentsia* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994). For a summary of the Vekhi essays, see Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance*, 111–130; and Christopher Read, *Religion, Revolution and the Russian Intelligentsia, 1900–1912: The Vekhi Debate and Its Intellectual Background* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 106–120.

sia.'[3] The book prophetically warned the intelligentsia of the dangers of rigid Marxist and revolutionary philosophies which had scant regard for freedom in their quest for power. The almost universally negative reaction to *Vekhi* showed that its authors had struck a vital nerve.

Other major landmarks of Russian religious thought prior to the revolution and exile include Pavel Florensky's challenging presentation of Orthodox philosophy and theology, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* (1914),[4] and Sergius Bulgakov's first properly theological book, *The Unfading Light* (1917).[5] One of the last manifestations of the Christian intelligentsia in Russia was a collection of essays under the title *Out of the Depths* (1918) (*Iz glibiny*, *De profundis*, from Psalm 21/22), by eleven prominent non-Marxist intellectuals, including five of those who had contributed to *Vekhi* in 1909, dealing with the causes and nature of the revolution.[6] This symposium was a bitter reproach over the consequence of ignoring the message of *Vekhi*. The intelligentsia's continued pursuit of radicalism and revolutionary maximalism was now bearing fruit in the triumph of Bolshevism, marked by the suppression of all forms of dissidence from Marxist ideology and communist rule.

The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 and the subsequent triumph of the Red Army in the civil war put an end to debate about the future of Russia. The communist system became rapidly entrenched, radically transforming the Russian economic, political, social, and religious landscape. Between one and two million Russians fled abroad, primarily to neighbouring Eastern European countries, to Western Europe, and to the Far East, especially China. They included not only most of the nobility, senior officials in the imperial bureaucracy, and political opponents of the Bolsheviks, but also much of the country's cultural, intellectual, and religious elites, as well as many demobilised soldiers from the defeated White armies. Most of the leading figures of the Russian religious renaissance fled or were expulsed from the Soviet Union. The inter-war period was a remarkable time of religious and intellectual flowering within the exile Russian community, especially in religious thought. But after World War II, religious philosophy went into rapid decline as the cutting edge of Orthodox thought turned more patristic- and liturgically-based theologies into what is broadly termed neopatristic theology or the neopatristic synthesis.

In the remainder of this paper, I will consider the main causes for the decline of Russian religious thought after World War II under five headings, which, admittedly, overlap somewhat: the exile situation; the difficulty in communicating the

[3] Simeon Frank, *A Biography of P.B. Struve* (New York: Chekhov Publishing House, 1956), 82; translation in Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance*, 111.

[4] Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth: An Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters* (1914), trans. Boris Jakim (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[5] Sergius Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light: Contemplations and Speculations* (1917), trans. T. Allan Smith (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

[6] William Woehrlin, trans. and ed., *Out Of the Depths (De Profundis): A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution* (Irvine, CA: Charles Schlacks, 1986). See account in Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance*, 207–209.

major themes of Russian religious thought beyond the Russian context; fundamental problems in religious philosophy; the passing of generations; and emerging alternatives.

The Exile Situation

After the Bolshevik triumph in the civil war, the Communists could not tolerate the existence of independent thinking in the new Soviet Union. They moved to eliminate or silence all sources of possible dissent or opposition, especially from the non-Marxist intelligentsia who had not already gone into voluntary exile. In August 1922, Lenin ordered the arrest and expulsion from the Soviet Union of a large number of Russian intellectuals who did not support the Bolsheviks. The best estimate of the number actually banished from the Soviet Union is about 80, together with their immediate families, while many others were sent into internal exile.[7] Among those deported were several leading members of the Russian religious renaissance, notably Nicolas Berdyaev, Sergius Bulgakov, Simeon Frank, and Nicolas Lossky (1870–1965). The one leading philosopher-theologian who was not expelled and chose to stay in Russia was Fr Pavel Florensky (1882–1937), who was imprisoned and eventually executed in 1937.

Many of the Russian expatriates in Western Europe saw the large exile community as the repository of the true Russia, which had been usurped by the Bolsheviks. The expatriates felt that 'Russia Abroad',[8] as it was known in the inter-war period, had a responsibility to preserve and to further authentic Russian culture and values, centred in three areas in particular: Orthodoxy, culture, and the Russian language. The exiles formed associations of all sorts, organised Russian schools and publications, and attempted to minimise assimilation into host societies. The written word—newspapers, journals of all sorts, books—was the principal means of communication and coherence among the widely dispersed expatriate communities.

Initially, the expatriates believed that the communist regime would soon collapse and that they could return to assume their rightful place in Russian society and politics. But as the years went by and the Soviets consolidated their grip over the country, it became increasingly evident that what was first seen as a temporary exile was becoming permanent. World War II put an end to many expatriate initiatives and publications and any remaining dreams of return to a Russia freed of communism. After the war, the 'first wave' of emigrants fleeing the Bolshevik triumph was joined by refugees escaping from the conflict and from oppression under communist rule, and the centre of Russian emigrant life shifted from Europe to the United States.

[7] Stuart Finkel, *On the Ideological Front: The Russian Intelligentsia and the Making of the Soviet Public Sphere* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 9.

[8] The title of a book by Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Physical return to Soviet Russia was impossible for most and only a 'metaphysical return'—by means of publications and, after World War II, radio broadcasts—could be envisaged. But the Soviets prevented any significant dissimulation of emigrant thinking in the Soviet Union until after the fall of communism.

Many of the émigrés initially arrived in Constantinople, Sofia and Belgrade, but few stayed long in Constantinople, while Sofia and Belgrade remained important émigré centres in the inter-war years, especially for more conservative political and ecclesiastical groups. Berlin and Prague quickly became the principal centres of the exiled Russian intelligentsia. In Berlin, Nicolas Berdyaev was instrumental in forming the Russian Religious Philosophical Academy as a successor to his Free Spiritual Academy in Moscow. With increasing economic problems in Germany, many of those who went initially to Berlin moved on, especially to Prague or to Paris. In Prague, Russian intellectuals founded a short-lived but influential Russian Law Faculty and other educational bodies. But most of the Christian intelligentsia soon departed for Paris, especially after the founding of the Saint Sergius Theological Institute in 1925.

The initial faculty of Saint Sergius included the best minds of Russian theology in exile. Fr Sergius Bulgakov was invited to head the school and he became Professor of Dogmatic Theology. Once in exile, many religious intellectuals of the pre-revolutionary era returned to the Orthodox Church, joining those who had returned to the Church prior to World War I. But some stood apart from the Church, notably those associated with the 'new religious consciousness' movement, such as Dimitri Merezhkovsky (1865–1941) and his wife Zinaida Gippius (1869–1945).

One of the main reasons for the decline of the type of philosophical-theological thought represented by the leaders of the religious renaissance was precisely its exile situation. Cut off from its roots in Russia, this mode of thought and its native social, cultural and political context were simply too foreign in the setting of intellectual, literary, and personal exile in which the leaders of the religious renaissance found themselves after 1920. The brilliant but exotic flower of Russian religious thought could not bloom for long when it was transplanted unto a far-away soil. Religious philosophy developed in the intellectual ferment of the late imperial regime and it presented Christian perspectives on the future of Russia. This context was no longer relevant in exile. In exile, the Christian intellectuals, despite all their intellectual and cultural achievements, were a poor social, cultural, and religious minority in countries dominated by Western culture and Western Christianity.

Russian Religious Thought in the West

Few of the older generation of Russian thinkers really adapted themselves to the exile situation in which they found themselves; Berdyaev, by far and away the most cosmopolitan of the group, was an exception. Most of the Russian thinkers in exile

attempted to recreate as best they could the cultural and intellectual environment which they had known in Russia. A sign of this was that virtually all of the older generation of the intelligentsia wrote their works in Russian, and their writings were initially published by Russian publishing houses, especially YMCA-Press in Paris (despite its name, it published exclusively in Russian until after World War II), and in Russian journals in Western Europe, especially Paris and Berlin.

Many of the exiles viewed their prime audience as the Russian exile community itself, as a stepping-stone to a hoped-for return to Russia or at least an audience in Russia itself. In addition, while many of this generation were familiar with major Western European languages and could speak English, French, and/or German, they were not sufficiently at ease in foreign languages to write major substantive philosophical and theological works. A related indicator of the problem of acculturation of the older generation of theologians was the use of Russian as the language of instruction at the Saint Sergius Institute; it was only in the 1970s that French became the language of instruction.

Initially, few of the works of the Russian theologians published in Paris were translated. The major exception was Berdyaev's writings, which appeared in Western languages shortly after their publication in Russian. It was easier for some of the younger theologians, such as Georges Florovsky (1893–1979), Leon Zander (1893–1964), and Nicolas Zernov (1898–1980), and of course for the 'second generation' theologians such as Paul Evdokimov (1901–1970), Vladimir Lossky (1903–1958) and Alexander Schmemann (1921–1983), to adapt themselves to the culture of their countries of exile and to acquire a better grasp, both spoken and written, of Western languages than the older generation. Many of the members of the younger generation—the children of those exiled—were educated partly or entirely in the West, and they wrote mainly in Western European languages.

It is important to note that there has been no equivalent of Russian religious thought in other major countries of the Orthodox tradition, such as Greece and Romania, or even Serbia and Bulgaria. Even though most of the major works of the Russian religious thinkers have by now been translated into English and French, these thinkers remain, even today, little known in Greece and other Orthodox countries. Their philosophies and theology are typically dismissed summarily, despite some attempts to make them better known, for example in Greece.

Fundamental Problems in Religious Thought

In the exile setting, certain internal weaknesses and inadequacies in the religious philosophical-theological approach to Orthodoxy became more evident, especially its inadequate grounding in patristic theology, the Byzantine liturgical tradition, Church history, and Orthodox spirituality, and, on the other hand, its excessive reliance on key ideas of modern philosophy, especially German idealism.

As case studies, we can look at the two most prominent Russian religious thinkers in exile, Nicolas Berdyaev and Sergius Bulgakov. Nicolas Berdyaev began his exile in Berlin in late 1922 but quickly moved to Paris, where he remained until his death in 1948. During his Parisian years, he wrote most of the books for which he became well known.[9] Berdyaev also played a key role in promoting the intellectual pursuits of his companions in exile as editor and publisher of works by the leading Russian religious, literary, philosophical, and theological exiles in the 1920s and 1930s. He notably directed the important publishing house YMCA-Press (named for its principal financial backer, the American branch of the YMCA), and he edited the journal *Put'* (The Way), the most influential periodical of the exiled Russian intelligentsia between 1925 and the last of its 61 issues in March 1940.[10]

Berdyaev's major philosophical-theological themes are the primal significance of the human person and its correlates, freedom and creativity; Russian thought; and analysis of the Russian revolution, Marxism, and modernity. Berdyaev's broad spiritual and intellectual culture and his Christian-inspired but not always explicitly Christian thinking on human existence and the modern world touched sensitive chords in European circles from the late 1930s until about the 1960s. During this period he was by far the most well known modern Orthodox religious-philosophical thinker, but his popularity diminished considerably in the last decades of the twentieth century. Among the Orthodox he was more often considered an idiosyncratic figure, only remotely connected with mainstream Orthodoxy. Undoubtedly Berdyaev's failure to see in the Church Fathers the true source of Christian philosophy, together with a perception that he was an existentialist philosopher,[11] contributed to the decline of his star in the late twentieth century.

By the late 1920s, Fr Sergius Bulgakov was the leading representative of the Russian religious renaissance. He was widely respected both in the Russian exile community and among non-Orthodox theologians and church leaders But in the mid-1930s, Bulgakov became embroiled in two important theological controversies, one over his teachings on Sophia or Divine Wisdom (sophiology), and the other concerning his proposal for intercommunion with Anglicans.

Bulgakov developed the idea of Sophia into an integrated but complex theology, reflected in his major theological works. Bulgakov's sophiology raised numerous questions and protests, which culminated in the great sophiological controversy

[9] These include *The Meaning of History* (1923); The End of Our Time (The New Middle Ages) (1924); Freedom and the Spirit (1928); The Destiny of Man (1931); Christianity and Class War (1931); The Fate of Man in the Modern World (1934); The Origin of Russian Communism (1937); Slavery and Freedom (1939); The Russian Idea (1946); Spirit and Reality (1946); The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar (1949); and The Divine and the Human (1949). All are published in English translation, many in the 1930s, the remainder in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

[10] See the detailed study by Antoine Arjakovsky, *The Way: Religious Thinkers of the Russian Emigration in Paris and Their Journal,* trans. Jerry Ryan (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

[11] See Andrew Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers: From the Philokalia to the Present* (London: SPCK, 2015), 64–65.

of 1935–1936.[12] More than any other idea of Russian religious philosophy, sophiology provoked a profound division among exiled Russian theologians. Nicolas Berdyaev, for one, did not adhere to sophiology: 'I do not myself share the views of the sophiological school'.[13] But Berdyaev praises sophiology for 'an indication of creative thought in Russian Orthodoxy', and he defends Bulgakov's 'line of thought in Orthodoxy' and his 'statement of new problems'.[14]

In the mid-1930s, Bulgakov's teachings on Sophia were condemned by two different and mutually hostile factions of the Russian Orthodox Church: Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) (1867–1944), the self-appointed 'guardian of the patriarchal throne' of the Patriarchate of Moscow; and the 'Karlovtsy Synod' of Russian bishops abroad, which became the Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia (ROCOR).

The 1930s phase of the dispute was set in motion by a report on Bulgakov's sophiology prepared for the Moscow Patriarchate by the young theologian Vladimir Lossky and Alexis Stavrovsky (1905–1972), who had attended the Saint Sergius Institute, but did not complete his studies. In general terms, the Lossky-Stavrovsky report concluded that Bulgakov's teaching on Sophia, as expounded notably in Bulgakov's book *The Lamb of God* (1933), was pantheist, removing distinctions between God and creation. In response, Metropolitan Sergius issued a decree (*ukaz*) on 24 August 1935, which describes Bulgakov's teaching as 'an eccentric and arbitrary (*svoeobraznym i proisvolnym*) sophianic interpretation, frequently perverting the dogmas of the Orthodox faith', and finds that some of its possible conclusions may be 'even dangerous for spiritual life' and that the teaching is 'foreign' to the Orthodox Church. But the *ukaz* stops short of describing Bulgakov's doctrines as

[12] The secondary literature on the Sophia dispute is considerable even in the absence of a full-length monograph. See Arjakovsky, *The Way*, especially 384–402; Antoine Arjakovsky, *Essai sur le père Serge Boulgakov* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2006); Élisabeth Behr-Sigel, 'La sophiologie du père Serge Boulgakov' (1939), *Le Messager orthodoxe* 57 (1972): 21–48; Paul Evdokimov, *Le Christ dans la pensée russe* (Paris: Le Cerf, 1970); Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), Ch. 3, 'God in Trinity'; Aidan Nichols, *Light from the East: Authors and Themes in Orthodox Theology* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1995), Ch. IV, 'Sergei Bulgakov and Sophiology'; Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 287–289; Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance*, Ch. 11, 'The Divine Wisdom'. See also the special issue of St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly devoted to Sergius Bulgakov (49, 1–2, 2005), especially the articles by Brandon Gallaher and Irina Kukota, Bryn Geffert and Alexis Klimoff.

[13] Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea,* trans. R.M. French (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 241. Berdyaev had written more emphatically earlier: 'I myself did not stand in the Platonic-sophiological line of Russian religious philosophy. I am not a Platonist and not a sophiologist, unlike V. Soloviev, unlike P. Florensky, unlike Fr Bulgakov'. Nicolas Berdyaev, 'The Russian Spiritual Renaissance of the Beginning of the XXth Century and the Journal Put' (For the Tenth Anniversary of Put')', Put' 49 (1935) (in Russian). Translation: Steven Janos <www.chebucto.ns.ca/Philosophy/Sui-Generis/Berdyaev/essays/rsr.htm> (13.03.2017).

[14] Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, 241.

heretical.[15] The ROCOR Bishops' Council had no such qualms and in October 1935 flatly condemned Bulgakov's teachings on Sophia as heretical.[16]

In 1936, Vladimir Lossky expanded his critique of Bulgakov's teachings in a small book which sets out Lossky's theological objections to Bulgakov's sophiology.[17] The book goes on to attack other aspects of Bulgakov's theology, especially his Trinitarian theology and his Christology, his use of gender analogies in theology, his concept of tradition and pan-human ecclesiology, the idea of Godmanhood, and the use of historical analogies and the importance of dogma in the Church. Lossky's book is not exactly a 'manifesto' for a new approach to theology, yet it challenges many aspects of Bulgakov's theology.

Ecclesiastical politics played a major and even determining role in the condemnation of Bulgakov's teaching on Sophia. Bulgakov and the Saint Sergius Institute belonged to the third Russian jurisdiction, headed by Metropolitan Evlogy (Georgievsky) (1868–1946), who was appointed by the saintly Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin) (1865–1925) in 1922 to head the Russian Church in Western Europe. Evlogy faced an impossible situation. He tried to be faithful to the suffering Church in Russia by remaining within the Moscow Patriarchate, but the compromises of Metropolitan Sergius with the Bolsheviks, especially after 1927, made this increasingly difficult. At the other extreme, ROCOR denounced the 'Red Church' as captured by the Communists. Metropolitan Evlogy was caught in the crossfire and his position in the Moscow Patriarchate became increasingly untenable. In 1930, Metropolitan Sergius attempted to remove Evlogy for having participated in ecumenical prayer services for the suffering Church in Russia and early in 1931 Evlogy placed himself and his jurisdiction under the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.[18]

Thus the condemnations of Bulgakov's theology in the mid-1930s were a convenient way for the other two Russian jurisdictions to embarrass and humiliate Evlogy by attacking his protégé, Fr Sergius Bulgakov. Evlogy defended Bulgakov but felt obliged to appoint a commission to examine Bulgakov's controversial teachings. The commission basically found that Bulgakov's teachings were not heretical but required clarification on a number of points.[19] In the end, Bulgakov retained his

[15] Cited in Paul Anderson, 'Memorandum on Ukaz Concerning the Rev. Sergius Bulgakoff' (Paris: October 30, 1935), in 'Memoranda Regarding the Sophiological Controversy', Archives of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius <www.sobornost.org/Archives_Bulgakov-Sophia.pdf> (07.11.2016).

[16] 'A Decision of the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad of 17/30 October 1935 Concerning the New Teaching of Archpriest Sergei Bulgakov on Sophia, the Wisdom of God'. Cited in Ludmila Perepiolkina, *Ecumenism: A Path to Perdition* (St. Petersburg: Self-published with Archimandrite Alexei (Makrinov), 1999). <http://ecumenizm.tripod.com/ECUMENIZM/id17.html > (07.11.2016).

[17] Vladimir Lossky, *Spor o Sofii: Dokladnaia Zapiska prot. S. Bulgakova i smysl ukaza Moskovskoi Patriarkhii* (Paris, 1936). The book was reprinted in Russia (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Sviato-Vladimirskogo Bratstva, 1996), but no translation in English has been published, although there is an unpublished translation by William Kevin Fisher.

[18] See Paul Ladouceur, 'On Ecumenoclasm: Anti-Ecumenical Theology in Orthodoxy', *Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 61.3 (2017): 323–355.

[19] Translation of the Reports and discussion in Bryn Geffert, 'The Charges of Heresy against Sergius

chair of dogmatic theology at the Saint Sergius Institute, with the stipulation that he refrain from teaching the Sophia doctrine in his classes. There was no publication ban and Bulgakov continued to write about sophiology.

The *intercommunion quarrel* involved two distinct approaches to Orthodox involvement in ecumenism, represented by Sergius Bulgakov and Georges Florovsky. Both were deeply committed to ecumenism but had different perspectives on Orthodox involvement in ecumenical endeavours. The intercommunion controversy took place in the context of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, founded to promote dialogue and rapprochement between the Anglican and Orthodox churches. Although Bulgakov was the senior Orthodox representative in the Fellowship in the 1920s and early 1930s, Florovsky soon became as prominent as Bulgakov, thanks to his learning, eloquence, personal charm, and a good command of English. The Anglicans greatly respected Bulgakov, but they never warmed to his speculative theology, especially sophiology, and were more attracted by Florovsky's biblical and patristic orientation.

After six years of meetings between Anglicans and Orthodox, Bulgakov advanced a novel and audacious proposal for 'partial intercommunion' in the context of meetings of the Fellowship: with the blessing of Anglican and Orthodox bishops, Anglicans would take communion at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy by Orthodox clergy and vice versa. Bulgakov's proposal received the support of the 'modernist' group among the Russians, notably Nicolas Berdyaev, George Fedotov, Anthony Kartashev, Leon Zander, Nicolas Zernov, and, apparently, Metropolitan Evlogy, Bulgakov's ecclesiastical superior, while the 'traditionalists', especially Georges Florovsky and Nicholas Arseniev (1888–1977), opposed it.[20] There was opposition on the Anglican side as well, but in the end the Anglican bishops gave their approval.

Behind Florovsky's specific critiques of the proposal was his conviction that the only basis of Church unity lay in global dogmatic agreement. Bulgakov, thought Florovsky, was playing on the positive psychological tone of the Fellowship meetings to seek support for his proposal, to the detriment of dogmatic and canonical norms.[21] For Florovsky, full dogmatic agreement must take precedence over the experience of unity before the altar, over common prayer shared in the Fellowship; 'unity in truth' (that is, dogma) and canonical authority are more important than 'unity in love' and the shared experience of worship. Thus for Florovsky, since significant dogmatic

Bulgakov: The Majority and Minority Reports of Evlogii's Commission and the Final Report of the Bishops' Conference', *Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 49.1–2 (2005): 47–66.

[20] Arjakovsky, *The Way: Religious Thinkers of the Russian Emigration*, 368–371; Sergei V. Nikolaev, 'Church and Reunion in the Theology of Sergii Bulgakov and Georges Florovsky' (Ph.D. Thesis, Southern Methodist University, 2007) (Ann Arbor MI: ProQuest, 2008), 250–252.

[21] See Georges Florovsky, 'Confessional Loyalty in the Ecumenical Movement' (1950), and 'Letter to William Nicholls' (1950), in Brandon Gallaher and Paul Ladouceur, eds, *The Patristic Witness of Georges Florovsky: Essential Theological Writings* (London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, forthcoming 2018).

differences separate the Orthodox and Anglican churches, there can be no question of intercommunion.

The Fellowship debated Bulgakov's proposal for two years after the 1933 conference. Faced with Orthodox opposition and Anglican hesitations, Bulgakov retreated. At the 1933 Fellowship conference, Walter Frere (1863–1938), Bishop of Truro and one of the leading Anglican participants in the Fellowship, stated that there already existed 'spiritual communion at our Eucharists' and 'common worship and a very real, though not fully sacramental, communion with each other'.[22] In an article in the Fellowship's journal *Sobornost* in September 1935, the Anglican divine Charles S. Gillett suggested that the Anglicans should make a 'spiritual communion' during the celebration of the Orthodox liturgy, and vice versa, as a solemn expression 'of a common contrition, a common purpose and a common eagerness for the fulfilment of that common purpose in all its sacramental completeness'.[23] In 1935, Bulgakov recognised that his proposal for intercommunion had floundered: 'Opinion was sharply divided, but I would say that, on the whole, conviction prevailed (a conviction which sprang not so much from the voice of a loving heart, as from the arguments of 'sober reason'!) that the time was not yet ripe for my suggestion.'[24] Bulgakov rallied to the minimalist notion of 'spiritual intercommunion' among the Anglicans and the Orthodox, which represented Florovsky's view.

The clash over intercommunion was an encounter between two contrasting Orthodox visions of ecumenism. The ecumenical theology of Fr Sergius Bulgakov was mystical, sacramental, charismatic, prophetic, and eschatological, whereas Florovsky's was dogmatic, historical, patristic, and exclusive.[25]

These two public theological controversies, with Bulgakov at the centre of each, highlighted important weaknesses in Russian religious thought, now exposed to a much wider range of scrutiny than during its heyday in the decades prior to World War I and the Russian Revolution.

The Passing of Generations

The successors of the leading Russian religious thinkers in exile were not up to the intellectual levels of the older generation. In 1939, Bulgakov contracted a cancer of the throat and had an operation which left him almost unable to speak, although he continued to teach, to write, and to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. Bulgakov died in

[22] Walter Frere, in 'The Nature of Catholic Action', *Sobornost* 2.3 (1935): 24.

[23] C.S. *Gillett,* 'Intercommunion', *Sobornost* 2.3 (1935): 22-23. Rev. Charles S. Gillett is not to be confused with Fr Lev Gillet (1893–1980), a French Orthodox priest also very active in the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius.

[24] Sergius Bulgakov, 'Spiritual Intercommunion', *Sobornost* 4 (1935): 3; reprinted in Father Sergius Bulgakov 1871–1944: A Collection of Articles (Oxford: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 1969), 29.

[25] See Paul Ladouceur, 'Two Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism: Sergei Bulgakov and Georges Florovsky', *Ecumenism* 192–193 (2015): 35–39.

1944. Bulgakov's close followers were unable to maintain his intellectual momentum. Bulgakov's main direct successors were Leon Zander, who was active especially in the ecumenical field; Nicolas Zernov (1898–1980), who taught at Oxford University and was closely associated with the Fellowship of Saint Alban and Saint Sergius; and Constantine Andronikof (1916–1997), professor of liturgical theology at Saint Sergius and dean from 1991 to 1993, and translator of most of Bulgakov's major writings into French.

Paul Evdokimov and Olivier Clément (1921–2009) were not direct successors of Bulgakov, nor followers of sophiology. But they were open to certain interests and ideas of the older generation of the religious renaissance, especially Bulgakov, as well as to the emerging neopatristic approach to theology. Evdokimov studied under Bulgakov at Saint Sergius Institute in the mid-1920s—he was in the first graduating class. Olivier Clément was influenced by reading Nicolas Berdyaev and studied with both Evdokimov and Vladimir Lossky in the 1950s.[26] Evdokimov and Clément, together with a few others such as Nicholas Afanasiev, can be considered 'bridging figures' between Russian religious thought and neopatristic theology.

An Emerging Alternative

The great theological controversies of the mid-1930s over sophiology and intercommunion, with Sergius Bulgakov at the epicentre of each, certainly contributed to the decline of religious philosophy from its apogee prior to the Russian revolution. For many of the younger generation of Russian theologians, especially Georges Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky, the major ideas of religious renaissance—notably all-unity and sophiology, even as grafted, if somewhat artificially, to the Orthodox tradition by as great a genius as Bulgakov—were perceived as too dependent on Western philosophy, too speculative in nature, and too distant from the Orthodox tradition contained in patristic thought, especially the theology of the Greek and Byzantine Fathers. For the younger theologians, the gap between the approach and ideas of the philosopher-theologians and patristic theology was simply too great to satisfy the criterion of faithfulness to Orthodox tradition. They set out to re-establish theology in more direct continuity with the patristic tradition. Signs of this were already evident in the 1930s, focussing initially on the revival of Palamite theology of the divine energies.

The main stimulating factor for the re-emergence of Palamite theology in the 1920s and 1930s was severe criticism of Palamism by several Roman Catholic theologians, notably Martin Jugie (1878–1954).[27] Jugie, writing on Palamas' 'strange

[26] For biographies and studies of Lossky and Evdokimov, see Olivier Clément, *Orient-Occident: Deux Passeurs: Vladimir Lossky et Paul Evdokimov* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1985).

[27] Adrian Fortescue, 'Hesychasm', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 7 (New York: Robert Appleton, 1910). <www.newadvent.org/cathen/07301a.htm> (19.05.2017); Martin Jugie, 'Palamas Grégoire' and 'Pal-

theology' in the early 1930s, attacked the notions of the divine energies and a real distinction between the divine essence and the divine Persons, other 'erroneous and close to heretical' Palamite theses of uncreated deifying grace, the uncreated gifts of the Holy Spirit, the power and light by which one sees the uncreated glory of God, and the inhabitation of the divine Persons in the soul of the just.[28] Returning to his anti-Byzantine polemics in 1941, Jugie solemnly declared that in any case 'Palamism as a dogma in the Greco-Russian Church is indeed dead', and he doubted that 'the current sympathetic consideration of a few Russian émigrés' would be sufficient to revive it.[29]

For some Orthodox theologians, misrepresentations and biased critiques of Palamas confirmed the urgent necessity of accurately presenting Palamite theology and of reviving Palamism as a living feature in Orthodox thought. Jugie's 1941 diagnosis of the status of Palamite theology in Orthodoxy was not far from the mark, but he vastly underestimated the strength of the Palamite revival already underway in the 1930s.

Georges Florovsky first highlighted the importance of the inter-related themes of apophatism, the energy-essence distinction, and theosis, initially in private letters to Bulgakov as early as 1925, and more substantially in his essay 'Creation and Createdness', first published in 1928.[30] Although not directly relying on Palamas, this article makes extensive use of Palamite theology in its central argument that the fundamental distinction between divine nature and human nature is that between uncreated and created. Several other Orthodox theologians also sought to recover Palamite theology, including Archimandrite Basil Krivoshein (1900–1985) and Fr Dumitru Staniloae.[31] Staniloae's book, *The Life and Teachings of Gregory Palamas* (in Romanian), included translations of extracts of the Palamas' *Triads* and two other tracts.[32]

amite (Controverse)' in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, Vol. 11.2 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1932), cols. 1735–1776 & 1777–1818; Martin Jugie, 'De Theologia Palamitica', *Theologia Dogmatica Christianorum Orientalium*, Vol. II (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1933), 47–183; Sébastien Guichardan, *Le Problème de la simplicité divine en Orient et en Occident aux XIVe et XVe s.: Grégoire Palamas, Duns Scott, Georges Scholarios* (Lyons: Legendre, 1933).

[28] Jugie, 'Palamas Grégoire', *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 11.2:1764–1765.

[29] Martin Jugie, *Le Schisme byzantin: Aperçu historique et doctrinal* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1941), 383.

[30] Georges Florovsky, 'Tvar i tvarnost', *Pravoslavnaya mysl*, 1 (Paris, 1928). Translation: 'Creation and Createdness', forthcoming in Gallaher and Ladouceur, eds, *The Patristic Witness of Georges Florovsky*. A shorter version also appeared in French in 1928: 'L'idée de la création dans la philosophie chrétienne', *Logos*, 1 (Romania, 1928); and in English as 'The Idea of Creation in Christian Philosophy', *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 8.3 (1949): 53–77.

[31] Basil Krivoshein, 'The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas' (in Russian), *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, *Recueil d'études d'archéologie et histoire de l'art, études byzantines*, VIII (Prague, 1936); in English in *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 3 (1938): 26–33; 71–84; 138–56; 193–214 [reprinted as a monograph in 1954 (London: Geo. E.J. Coldwell) and in 1968]; in German in *Das östliche Christentum* 8 (1939); in French in Basile Krivochéine, *Dieu, l'homme et l'Église. Lecture des Pères* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2010).

[32] Dumitru Staniloae, *Viața și învățătura Sfântului Grigorie Palama cu trei tratate traduse* (Sibiu, Romania, 1938); reprinted in Bucharest in 1993 and 2006. It has not yet (2018) been published in a Western

Vladimir Lossky became interested in apophatism and Palamas early in his theological studies. Lossky drew heavily on the Palamite theology of the divine energies in his ground-breaking *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, first delivered as lectures in Paris in 1942 and published in 1944.[33] The restoration of Palamite theology in Orthodoxy, often referred to as neo-Palamism, continued after World War II, reaching a high point with the publication in 1959 of translations and studies on Palamite theology by Fr John Meyendorff (1928–1992).[34]

In December 1936, both Sergius Bulgakov and Georges Florovsky represented the Saint Sergius Institute at the First Congress of Orthodox Theologians in Athens. Florovsky delivered two papers: 'Western Influences in Russian Theology'; and 'Patristics and Modern Theology'.[35] The first is a résumé of his monumental study *The Ways of Russian Theology*, published in 1937. The second paper calls for a return to patristic theology as the sole true and permanent source for Orthodox theology. Florovsky advocates the need for a neopatristic theology, which he later called a 'neopatristic synthesis'. Florovsky's paper 'Patristics and Modern Theology' can be considered as a sort of 'neopatristic manifesto'. Vladimir Lossky's book *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* is possibly the most significant and influential book of Orthodox theology in modern times. It is a prime example of a neopatristic approach to theology.

Thus by the time that World War II ended, the basic elements of a neopatristic approach to theology were in place, posing itself as an alternative to Russian religious thought, and to the older academic or school theology, as the dominant strand in Orthodox theology.

Conclusion

The current 'Bulgakovian revival' is due in large part to the excellent English translations of Bulgakov's major works published in the last two decades.[36] But it is mostly limited to academic circles, especially among non-Orthodox. Bulgakov's major theological premise of Divine Wisdom, sophiology, has not generated much

European language.

[33] Vladimir Lossky, *Essai sur la theologie mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient* (Paris: Aubier, 1944); English translation *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: J. Clarke, 1957; Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976).

[34] See John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (London: Faith Press, 1964); *St Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974); and *Gregory Palamas: The Triads* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983).

[35] Forthcoming in Gallaher and Ladouceur, eds, *The Patristic Witness of Georges Florovsky*.

[36] See Sergius Bulgakov, *Unfading Light* (on religious consciousness, apophatism, creation and anthropology) (1917); the minor trilogy: *The Burning Bush* (on the Mother of God) (1927); *The Friend of the Bridegroom* (on St John the Baptist) (1927); and *Jacob's Ladder* (on angels) (1929); and the major or great trilogy: *The Lamb of God* (1933) (on divine-humanity, Sophia and Christ), *The Comforter* (1936) (on the Holy Spirit) and *The Bride of the Lamb* (1945) (on creation, the Church and eschatology). All are published in English translation by Eerdmans between 2003 and 2012.

enthusiasm from contemporary Orthodox theologians, except in the context of historical theology. The current theological agenda is more dominated by defences of neopatristic theology against critiques from more conservative Orthodox sources, who find the 'neo' aspect too liberal—especially in terms of ecclesiology and ecumenism—for their taste. There are defenses also against critiques from more radical Orthodox, dismayed by the difficulty of neopatristic theology in dealing with modern issues and its excessive if not exclusive reliance on Greek/Byzantine theology as its chief if not sole referent.[37]

In this context, there certainly is a need for Orthodox theologians to draw more explicitly on the positive and permanent aspects of the Russian religious renaissance, such as a broad engagement with the world from a Christian perspective, beyond simple denunciation and attempted withdrawal from 'the world', to an appreciation of aspects of modernity which concord with Orthodox tradition; and emphasis on the theology of the human person, freedom and creativity. These were major themes of Russian religious thought, exemplified notably in Nicolas Berdyaev, but also powerfully present in the other main figures of the Russian religious renaissance. In addition, the importance of social and political theology in the Russian religious thinkers from Vladimir Soloviev to Sergius Bulgakov needs to be recognised and indeed seen as a source for contemporary Orthodox social and political thinking. Beyond the strictly intellectual sphere, we have its manifestation in concrete social action, most clearly represented in the life, writings and martyrdom of Saint Maria of Paris (Mother Maria Skobtsova) (1891–1945).[38]

[37] For an overview of critiques of neopatristic theology, see Paul Ladouceur, 'Light and Shadows in Modern Orthodox Theology', Ch. 17 of *Modern Orthodox Theology: 'Behold I Make All Things New'* (London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, forthcoming 2019).

[38] See Mother Maria Skobtsova, *Essential Writings*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003); and Sergei Hackel, *Pearl of Great Price: The Life of Mother Maria Skobtsova 1891–1945* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981).