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PATHS TO THEO-HUMANITY  
IN THE WORK OF RUSSIAN THINKERS  
OF THE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY<sup>1</sup>

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K A R E L S L Á D E K

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**ABSTRACT**

The present study introduces the conception of theo-humanity against the background of the lives of six Russian Christian thinkers (Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky, Vladimir Sergejevich Solovyov, Pavel Alexandrovich Florensky, Sergey Nikolayevich Bulgakov, Pavel Nikolayevich Evdokimov, Vladimir Nikolayevich Los-sky), whose experience is integrated in a systematic reflection of their relationship to theo-humanity. The text is divided into three main sections discussing the search for paths to theo-humanity upon experiencing a crisis of the soul among the intelligentsia of czarist Russia, theo-humanity as a way of struggling with evil and theosis by synergy of humanity and theo-humanity in the theology of the new generation of Russian theologians, and finally theo-humanity in the neo-Palamic synthesis of Russian exiles.

**Keywords**

Russian thought, Theo-humanity, Christian spirituality, Orthodox Church

**I**n the present study I introduce the conception of theo-humanity against the background of the lives of six Russian Christian thinkers, whose experience will be integrated in a systematic reflection of their relationship to the theo-humanity of Jesus Christ. Two of them – the novelist Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky and the pioneer of the vision of “cosmic all-unity” Vladimir Sergejevich Solovyov – can justly be considered the intellectual and spiritual fathers of Russian theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two other Orthodox priests and theologians – the brilliant thinker Pavel Alexandrovich Florensky and the

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speculative dogmatist Sergey Nikolayevich Bulgakov – represent the high point of the “Silver Age” of Russian thinking. Confronted with Bolshevik terror, the former chose the path of sharing the yoke of his people and refused to emigrate (even when Tomas G. Masaryk sought his departure in writing), and attained the crown of martyrdom. The latter was forcibly deported on the so-called “Lenin’s ship of intellectuals” to exile, where he worked first in Prague and later became an icon of Russian dogmatic theology at the Institute of St. Sergey in Paris. The last two theologians of Christian laity – the theologian Pavel Nikolayevich Evdokimov and the medieval mysticism expert Vladimir Nikolayevich Lossky – represent the second generation of Russian exiles who had to develop their Christian identity in confrontation with a different culture and the religion of the country of their exile, founding their theology on the legacy of Patristic authors culminating in the medieval Hesychast movement.

The text is divided into three main sections tracing the search for paths to theo-humanity upon experiencing a crisis of the soul among the intelligentsia of czarist Russia, theo-humanity as a way of struggling with evil and theosis by synergy of humanity and theo-humanity in the theology of the new generation of Russian theologians, and finally theo-humanity in the neo-Palamitic synthesis of Russian exiles.

## **1. The search for paths to theo-humanity upon experiencing a crisis of the soul**

If two important figures standing at the birth of the religious revival of Russian Christian intelligentsia may be pointed out, they are without doubt the writer Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky and the Christian thinker Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov. Their spiritual path became an archetype for the search of young people belonging to the new social class which was at that time beginning to form in Russia and already had a counterpart throughout Europe: the class of intelligentsia. Analogical patterns of spiritual development are found not only in their generation, but also in subsequent generations whose creative lives contributed to the fact that their era came to be known as the “Silver Age” (the “Golden Age” being the preceding Pushkinian period).

Dostoyevsky’s adolescence was marked by searching for himself, his own self-fulfilment and his place in society. Dostoyevsky revolted against everything traditional and identified with the ideals of

anarchism. Influenced by Vissarion Belinsky, he adopted the ideas of socialism and materialism and, as he would say, “lost Christ” for some time.<sup>2</sup> But as he reflected later in *A Writer’s Diary*, Belinsky also had to face up to “Christ’s radiant personality” and he teased Dostoyevsky for his continuous search for the face of the God-man by saying: “If your Christ were born today, he would be the most tedious and most common-place of men; contemporary science and contemporary leaders of mankind would completely outshine him,” to which an observer responded: “No, that’s not true. If Christ appeared among us, he would join the movement, become its leader ...”<sup>3</sup>

Christ’s theo-humanity became distorted in the eyes of these rebels, and since they could not identify with a true image of Christ, they underwent a spiritual crisis which resulted in inner conflicts. Dostoyevsky fought his way to faith through this turbulent anarchism of his youth, which – on being arrested for participating in the Petrashevsky Circle – brought him to forced labour in prison. His health seriously deteriorated, due not only to the mock execution during which he heard the click of a rifle trigger, but also to the strenuous life conditions in the “house of the dead” in Siberia. Humiliation by co-prisoners, worsening epilepsy accompanied by nerve inflammations, and especially the encounter with evil within his own soul brought Dostoyevsky to the verge of a breakdown. Upon landing at the dark bottom of his own soul he found the light of new life. Dostoyevsky opened the book of Gospel, re-read it, and once again he discovered Christ, his true face and theo-human nature, which became the Alpha and the Omega of his further search.<sup>4</sup> Dostoyevsky had obtained the Gospel from Decembrists women and read it throughout the rest of his life. At the time of imprisonment in the labour camp in Siberia the Gospel transformed his hard-trying life and strengthened him on the way of faith.<sup>5</sup> And this is – consonant with the following quotation from Dostoyevsky’s novel *Crime and Punishment* – a new story of faith in the “new history of man’s renewal”:

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Nikolay Lossky. *Dostojevskij a jeho křesťanský světový pohled* [*Dostoyevsky and his Christian Worldview*]. Liptovský Sv. Mikuláš: Tranoscius 1946, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *Deník spisovatele* [*A Writer’s Diary*] I. Praha: Odeon 1977, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> See Marina Kostalevsky. *Dostoyevsky and Soloviev*. London: Yale University Press 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Lossky. *Dostojevskij*, p. 42.

But this is the beginning of a new history, the history of the gradual renewal of a man, of his gradual regeneration, of his passing from one world into another, of his initiation into a new unknown life. That might be the subject of a new story, but our present story is ended.<sup>6</sup>

Vladimir Solovyov, Pavel Florensky, and Sergey Bulgakov underwent an analogical experience of conversion. Solovyov was also enthusiastic about materialism and nihilism. He even became a follower of socialism and communism, which he rejected while studying English positivists and later German idealists. He experienced a crisis concerning the meaning of life and “newly” discovered Christ, just as Dostoyevsky did. At the intellectual level, his return to faith in God was motivated by recognition of the tendencies of his own human will, which – if it consistently follows the atheist and rationalist positions – ends at self-destruction. According to his new understanding, the way out of suicidal tendencies was an appropriate grasp of one’s own nothingness and surrendering to the theo-human will of God. Throughout his life Solovyov sympathized deeply with searchers because he had shared their honest questions and doubts concerning the meaning of life. Three years before his death, on 20 April 1897, the feast of St. Thomas, Solovyov defended the validity of searching for the truth about theo-humanity, of doubt and disbelief resulting in deeper understanding, purification, and finding a relationship to the God-man.

Temporary honest disbelief, before final and full conviction of the truth is reached, does not deserve moral condemnation. Christ did not condemn Thomas – he convinced him in the way he needed. People who do not need that and believe without examination are not better than Thomas, merely happier: Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.<sup>7</sup>

However, at this early stage of Solovyov’s path to theo-humanity an important aspect was missing, without which full conversion could not take place. His intellect and his will were already searching for ways out of the lack of hope in transcendent realities, but he had not yet

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<sup>6</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *Crime and Punishment*. Epilogue, Chapter 2. Constance Garnett (tr.) [2014-03-10]. <<http://www.kiosek.com/dostoyevsky/library/crimeandpunishment.txt>>.

<sup>7</sup> Vladimir Solovyov. O počtivé nevěře [On Honest Disbelief]. *Vyšehrad. List pro křesťanskou kulturu* 1, 25–27 (1946), p. 8.

undergone an authentic religious experience. For this purpose he went to study in London. In the London Museum he read in detail about kabbalah and gnosis and made graphic notes. His nephew Sergey Solovyov preserved a prayer to Wisdom which Vladimir Solovyov had either copied somewhere or had written it inspired by the mystical currents he was studying. The prayer opens with an invocation of the Holy Trinity, with which every liturgical celebration begins. During liturgy Christ renews the fallen creation and the corrupt cosmos; the prayer therefore mentioned all the powers. It mentions Wisdom, the name of Jesus Christ, and the desire for early eschatological consummation.<sup>8</sup> During Solovyov's subsequent stay in Egypt, Wisdom revealed the only organic principle, the meaning of all that takes place, as "cosmic all-unity". Divine Wisdom showed Solovyov Her seeds concealed in various forms in ancient Greek myths, in Hellenistic as well as Jewish wisdom, until it reached fulfilment in Christianity, in its Christological, ecclesiological, and Marian form. Through encountering divine Wisdom Solovyov established a relationship to the theo-humanity of Jesus Christ.

Pavel Florensky also found a relationship to theo-humanity upon undergoing a cognitive crisis. Through the subsequent contemplation of creation he experienced the power of the Word. He was delivered from the crisis by a "revelation" in which he comprehended the ontological essence of the world and came to know the Truth as living and personal, Truth as a personal and living God, Truth as the relationship of the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

At the end of secondary school I underwent a spiritual crisis when the organic character of the physical world was revealed to me ... I had been conditioned by my father to a technological conception of physics but this became untenable when science no longer was an object of faith. My interest in religion was born of this crisis.<sup>9</sup>

The contemplative dimension of his natural religiosity led him through creation back to the Creator. In his intellectual development he was also inspired by intensive study of the works of Vladimir Solovyov,

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Sergey Solovyov. *Владимир Соловьев. Жизнь и творческая эволюция [Vladimir Solovyov: Life and Creative Development]*. Moscow: Respublika, 1997, p. 97.

<sup>9</sup> Konstantin Isoupov (ed.). *P. A. Florensky: pro et contra*. Sankt-Peterburg: RChGI 2001, p. 494.

whom he wanted to meet personally, but when he set out to visit him with his friend Vyacheslav Ern, Solovyov had died in the meantime.<sup>10</sup> An important aspect of this period of Florensky's work was the importance and "magic" attraction of the word, which he interpreted on the mystico-symbolic level. Listening to the Word played an ever greater part in his spirituality. It is through the Word, through the relationship between the sound of a word and its meaning content, that the spiritual essence is revealed in Florensky's conception. By empathically listening to the "sound organism" of a word, its spiritual meaning is revealed, as described by Florensky in his work *Names*.<sup>11</sup> Words that were losing their meaning at the time were to re-gain their true content and renew their power, their "magic" value consisting in their "potential" to establish a real relationship with the invisible world, i.e., with the theo-humanity of Jesus Christ.

Just as Dostoyevsky, Solovyov, and Florensky, Sergey Bulgakov also underwent a crisis, and his subsequent revolt against God was not a revolt against a true image of the God-man, but against an incorrect image, a bad and distorted copy, a caricature he had made up and against which he "had to" set himself, since he could not establish a loving personal relationship to the false image. Due to this false idea of theo-humanity he could not grasp the meaning of his life. Bulgakov commented on the crisis of estrangement from the God-man with the following words:

The general character of my temptation to disbelief and my tragic fate could be defined as a discrepancy between the image of pious life, which I had created in my mind and my culture, and personal questions, which I could not and did not want to give up, in the name of truth as I perceived it at the time.<sup>12</sup>

His idea of religious life gave no answers to existential questions. As indicated above, the internal struggle issuing from an effort to impose the materialistic conception of life on oneself as the only proper path,

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<sup>10</sup> Milan Žust. Po stopách Vladimíra Solovyova. Příklad Pavla Florenského [In the Footsteps of Vladimir Solovyov. The Example of Pavel Florensky]. In: AA. VV. *Vladimír Solovyov a jednotná Evropa*. Velehrad: Refugium 2001, p. 119–121.

<sup>11</sup> See Pavel Florensky. *Имена* [Names]. Moscow: Eksmo, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Sergey Bulgakov. *Автобиографические заметки* [Autobiographical Notes]. Paris: YMCA-PRESS 1946, p. 26.

and to act accordingly, brought many Russian intellectuals to contemplate suicide. In his autobiographical notes Sergey Bulgakov mused in a similar fashion.

Although I had adopted nihilism without fighting it, this does not mean that I lived through it in a painless manner. [...] Twice I perceived the loss of faith as a total existential crisis, and I even considered suicide because of this religious problem. Along with the loss of the meaning of life I had lost faith.<sup>15</sup>

The crisis of estrangement from the God-man brought Bulgakov to a crisis in relationship to all of creation. And it was precisely the aesthetics of nature, the path of natural contemplation, what brought about a new impetus on his spiritual path. In it Wisdom revealed itself, through which Bulgakov returned to God. The conversion was preceded by an intuition in which nature could not be perceived merely as a “desert of death”:

I eagerly focused on the mountains opening up in front of me, drunk with the light and the air, and nature revealed itself to me. My soul had long been used to the dumb, silent pain in which I only perceived nature as a desert of death under a cloak of beauty, an illusive mask; nonetheless, the soul had not resigned itself to nature without God. Suddenly, at that moment, it came to know feeling, joy, shivering: what if [...] if it wasn't desert, deceit, mask, but He, the good loving Father, his attire of glory, his love ...<sup>14</sup>

The purpose of creation is therefore to convey the beauty of Divine Wisdom, the goodness, glory and love of the Father, which is concealed in it. In this intuition of the truth about creation, a relationship to theo-humanity opened up for Sergey Bulgakov, who afterwards meditated in his theology on the dogma of the Incarnation, reverence for the Theotokos, the meaning of the Resurrection and of the Ascension of the resurrected body of the Son of God.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, pp. 31–32.

<sup>14</sup> Sergey Bulgakov. *Свет невечерний [Unfading Light]*. Moscow: Respublika 1994, p. 13.

## 2. Theo-humanity as a way of struggling with evil and theosis by synergy of humanity and theo-humanity

The Russian authors we are considering described the encounter with the theo-humanity of Jesus Christ as liberation from the void of life without God. After their conversion they strove for inner transformation and assimilation to the theo-humanity of Christ who became their chief weapon in struggling with evil. A heart illuminated by the theo-humanity is better capable of discerning the temptations with which humans are plied; one spiritual topic these thinkers discussed was therefore analysis of the operation of evil. According to Dostoyevsky, the main temptations one encounters on the way without Christ are pride, desire for power, and despotism. Dostoyevsky's characters choose these "demons" as their lives' goals. In his stories Dostoyevsky laid bare the consequences of accepting such "demonic" temptations for the soul of a man and for others around him. By describing these states in detail Dostoyevsky wanted to expel these "demons" from society. His novels are exorcist-therapeutic in character and call to struggle against evil. Pavel Evdokimov, a theologian of the Russian exile, embarked upon the topic of the origin and consequences of evil human acts in his dissertation thesis called *Dostoyevsky and the Problem of Evil*. The apocalyptic character of the history of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century demanded deeper theological understanding and Dostoyevsky became a highly inspiring author. On the characters of Dostoyevsky's novels Evdokimov documented the tragic reality of a free rejection of the spiritual dimension of life, which leads to a regression to passions, absolute lack of interest, and hatred of life. The renewal of man and his original *image of God* takes place by transformation in the encounter with the theo-humanity of Christ with active agency of the *Holy Spirit*. According to Evdokimov's theological vision, man did not completely lose the ability to freely choose the good after the fall of Adam, but the process of theosis is not a matter of course and man must renew the lost *Divine likeness* in Christ, as the following three quotations from Evdokimov's works state:

Man, "[God's] image", has nostalgia for becoming a "person", which he cannot realize unless he participates in the Archetype, fully stretched out



to the divine Other. But it is in the event of the Incarnation that creation “created in God’s image” acquires value.<sup>15</sup>

Christ returns to man the power to act; divine illumination renews the likeness, which immediately liberates the image, and its radiation can be sensed in the saints and children.<sup>16</sup>

The conception of Christ as the ideal human is nothing but a confirmation of the concrete reality of man living ἐν Χριστῷ. This is by no means a moralistic conception. It is not a matter of imitation, but of incarnation of Christ’s image, théosis, for which man must die and be re-born.<sup>17</sup>

Vladimir Solovyov, who chose the story of Christ’s temptation in the desert as the initial quotation from the Gospel to introduce the meaning of spiritual struggle, analyses the operation of evil and the path of liberation through theo-humanity in a similar fashion. For Solovyov, the theophany of Jesus Christ is the intended culmination of all the partial and preliminary theophanies in the religions of India, in Greek philosophy, as well as in the Divine pedagogical guidance of Israel. By the incarnation of the Word–Logos in the womb of Mary, God freely renounced eternal Divine glory and assumed human nature. During the temptation in the desert Christ’s theo-humanity meets evil. The Saviour’s essence had to cope with the human will which since the fall of Adam also included the temptation of the evil principle.

First, for a being exposed to the conditions of material existence, there comes the temptation to make material assets the goal, and to use Divine power as a means of attaining them: “If you are the Son of God command these stones to become loaves of bread.” [...] By withstanding the temptation of the body, the Son of Man gained control over all corporeality. Second, banishing material motives gives rise to another temptation for the God-man – to use Divine power as a means of asserting his human personality, to succumb to the sin of the mind – pride: “If you are the Son of God throw yourself down, for it is written: He will command his angels and on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike a foot against a stone” [...] When he had overcome the sin of the mind, the Son of Man gains control over thoughts. Third, there comes the last and strongest temptation [...]

<sup>15</sup> Pavel Evdokimov. *La vita trasfigurata in Cristo: Prospettive di morale ortodossa*. Roma: Lipa 2001, p. 199.

<sup>16</sup> Idem. *L’Ortodoxie*. Paris: Desclée 1979, p. 85

<sup>17</sup> Idem. *Dostojevskij e il problema del male*. Roma: Città Nuova 1995, p. 105.

to use Divine power for an enforced subjugation of the world. But such use of violence, i.e., using evil means for good ends, would amount to acknowledging the fact that the good itself is weak and evil is stronger – and that means bowing to the principle of evil which rules the world: “He showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and said to him: *I will give all these to you if you fall down and worship me*” [...] When he had resisted the sin of the spirit, the Son of Man gained sovereign control in the realm of spirit; he refused to submit to an earthly force in order to gain control over the earth, and gained heavenly forces for himself: “And behold, angels came and were ministering to him.”<sup>18</sup>

Unlike corrupt humanity, the God-man resists all the Tempter’s traps and shows the human race the spiritual path of struggling with evil. Christ overcame all temptations of the evil principle and renounced those tendencies of the human will which lead to proud self-assertion. However, the evil principle retained control over the surrounding world and the redemptive role of Christ had to face the malice of the external environment. His salutary act could not be accomplished without purification through suffering and death on the cross. In *Spiritual Foundations of Life* Solovyov stated:

By his life, death, and resurrection Christ revealed that the God incarnate in Him is above the law and above reason, and that He can do more than suppress evil by his power and convict by his light, that He as the eternal spirit of life and love renews and saves the dying nature, transforms its deceit into truth, its anger into the good, and in this work of all-conquering love He finds His glory.<sup>19</sup>

With respect to the relationship between humanity and theo-humanity, Solovyov’s reflections on the Lord’s Prayer from the quoted book *Spiritual Foundations of Life* are highly inspiring. He opens the chapter with the following words:

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<sup>18</sup> Vladimir Solovyov. *Чтения о богочеловечестве, Статьи, Стихотворения и поэма, Из „Трех разговоров“* [Readings on Theo-Humanity; Essays, Poems, from “Three Conversations”]. Sankt-Peterburg: Художественная Литература 1995, pp. 190–191.

<sup>19</sup> Idem. *Духовные основы жизни* [Spiritual Principles of Life]. Sankt-Peterburg: Magik-Press 1995, p. 96.

When in our heart we have experienced a turning away from the evil which rules in the world and in ourselves, when we have made an effort to overcome this evil and learned by experience of the impotence of our good will, then there arises for us the moral obligation to seek the help of another will – a will that not only wants the good, but also has control over the good and as a result can grant the power of the good to us. There is such a will, and before we start looking for it, it has already found us.<sup>20</sup>

Let us summarize Solovyov's fundamental reflections on the *Lord's Prayer*. In the address "*Our Father who are in heaven*", man appeals to God the Father to perfect him by His goodness and in union with Him, since he ought to belong to Him – as Father – freely and voluntarily. In knowing a person, one desires to know His name in order to distinguish Him from another, and at the same time he desires to become like Him, so that His name be sanctified in him. And one must wish that His name reign not only in the human heart, but also through acts, i.e., through all beings that submit to Him, and that these beings together constitute a real kingdom. Such kingdom is not here yet, but people are praying for it. What already exists must therefore come, to be not merely over everything (in God), but in everything. The only obstacle to that is the will of beings which contradicts the will of God and the good. But where the will of God becomes the free will of all, God's kingdom is growing.

As long as our world does not want to be God's kingdom God does not rule in it and this world is an earth separated from heaven, an earth on which there is no God's will. But beings that voluntarily and fully submit themselves to God open themselves up to him and make their will but a form and fulfilment of the will of God – such beings constitute the Divine world, heaven, the kingdom of glory.<sup>21</sup>

By praying "*Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*" the faithful allows the will of God to operate through him. There are obstacles (corrupt sensuality, consequences of evil acts, the agency of enemy forces), but to desire the will of God means to remove them – by temperance, redemption of sins, and spiritual firmness. There is no evil in

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<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 38.

material enjoyment, but in the covetousness accompanying it, seeking pleasure for itself. Let us therefore only desire that which is temporal, which is today. Nonetheless, one cannot plead without requesting justice, therefore: “*Forgive us our trespasses, as we also have forgiven those who trespass against us*”. In Solovyov’s meditation the entire human race is the heavenly Father’s family, and God can therefore use forgiveness to forgive brothers. Forgiveness, as a secret movement of our heart, is effective even when an external act is not possible. In the heart’s depths there is also an unconscious dark, irrational, and evil force. When man accepts it, he goes insane because it separates him from everybody and positions him against all. One can only be liberated from its dominance by the free power of faith and by free submission to the will of God. A spiritually re-born man must also face external temptation. By praying “*Lead us not into temptation*” we call for the divine powers to help protect our soul from obfuscation and offence. Solovyov describes individual temptations based on those to which Christ was exposed in the desert.

By the end of the first temptation, the spiritual freedom we believed to be ours appears merely as a reason for real servitude to the body; by the end of the second temptation, the spiritual wisdom we assumed to have becomes a reason for pride and ambition; and finally the third temptation leads us to perceive spiritual endeavour for the glory of God and well-being of neighbour as a reason for dominance and despotism.<sup>22</sup>

Before the first temptation, when bodily motives had not been fully transformed by the power of the spirit yet, spiritual firmness in requesting the help of divine powers is necessary. The second temptation of the mind leading to pride, rivalry, ascribing unique importance to oneself, and over-estimating one’s infallibility can be countered by humility and self-denial. The third temptation leads us to forcefully subduing people to our truth by using all the means of achieving power: malice, deceit, violence, and ultimately murder. To counter it, patience, mercy, and compassion are necessary. Every temptation thus needs to be accompanied by the prayer *Deliver us from evil*. And the proper goal of prayer is that God be all in all, that by the process of theosis the human being attach herself to the theo-humanity of Jesus Christ

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, p. 52.

by cooperation – synergy – with grace. Throughout his life Vladimir Solovyov strove to unite his humanity to the theo-humanity of Christ and reflected the endeavour in his numerous spiritual meditations.

### **3. Theo-humanity in the theological synthesis of the Russian emigration**

The aforementioned Russian authors' spiritual experience of the path to theo-humanity is reflected in their theological synthesis. The God-man was their focus of interest and the key to discerning the meaning of the totality of being. The last part of Sergey Bulgakov's book *Unfading Light* is devoted to meditations about the "second Adam", Jesus Christ, the God-man who became incarnate to save the fallen man. In consonance with the later theological reflection of his pupil Pavel Evdokimov, Bulgakov distinguishes between man carrying *God's image* and man growing into *Divine likeness*. The paradisiacal man was an *image of God* who had received the image of the Second Hypostasis, the God-man, and – in the words of Apostle Paul – carries the seal of the Heavenly man who had existed before creation. Bulgakov links creation of the world and incarnation, the new creation, since both are acts of "kenosis", the willed descent of God culminating in His Golgotha sacrifice and in the sacrament of the Eucharist. In the incarnate Christ there are two natures, unmixed and undivided, divine and human, absolute and relative, the divine and the created, so that salvation is a path of new creation. The following quotation without doubt expresses Bulgakov's profession of salvation in Christ:

Christ became man in order to become the new Adam. He had to integrate the old Adam in himself, to take the path of earthly life and share its burden and its last lot. But for this purpose it was not sufficient to assume partial aspects of the human condition; they had to be assumed fully, in all their complexity and force, with all the suffering, with the anxiety of being abandoned by God, with death. And only when he has assumed the entire Adam, really became man, underwent all the temptations, and was tried in everything could Christ become the new Adam.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Sergey Bulgakov. *Свет невечерний*, p. 297.

Resurrection is the final consummation of salvation in the new Adam. Salvation is a path to theo-humanity in the sense of renewal, healing, new creation. For Pavel Evdokimov this new creation is also the incarnation of the second Divine Person, which opened up the possibility of inner transformation into theo-humanity, as he noted in his *Ages of the Spiritual Life*:

God wanted to become man. The Incarnation forms the divine and human character of all spiritual life. When one lives a spiritual life, he is never alone, he lives it with God and God lives it in the man and with the man.<sup>24</sup>

On the path to theo-humanity there is not only the event of the Incarnation, but also Christ's cross and His resurrection. Pavel Evdokimov made some very sensitive remarks concerning the need to accept one's own cross in relation to interior knowledge of the God-man's cross:

"The Father's face merges into the Son's face and the shadow of his cross befalls our heart. Our own cross is clearly outlined; there is no return to the prior simple, childlike faith. The soul is harrowed by painful dissonance; it can clearly see evil and sin, experiences extreme tension between two states which exclude each other. The cruel experience of falls and impotence can cast it to the verge of despair. We are strongly tempted to cry out that it is unjust, to say that God is asking too much of us, that our cross is heavier than the cross of the others," writes Evdokimov and adds: "A man is never tried beyond his ability. God eagerly awaits us at this decisive moment. He expects a manlike act of our faith, the full and conscious acceptance of our lot; he wants us to accept it freely."<sup>25</sup>

The incarnation of the God-man is at the centre of the theology of another lay theologian of the Russian emigration who stayed with his father in Prague for a short time and then resided in Paris – Vladimir Lossky. The incarnation of the God-man is the source of true knowledge of both Divine transcendence and Divine immanence. His theological synthesis is based on the reflection of the God-man in the

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<sup>24</sup> Pavel Evdokimov. *Epochy duchovního života. Od pouštních Otců do našich dní [Ages of the Spiritual Life. From the Desert Fathers up to Our Times]*. Velehrad: Refugium 2005, pp. 59–60.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, pp. 76–77.

context of his relationship to the Holy Trinity. The incarnation of the second Divine Person perfectly reveals the truth concerning the mystery of the life of the Holy Trinity, as Lossky underlines in the quotation from the Gospel of John: “1) In the beginning was the Word – 2) The Word was with God – 3) The Word was God – are the core from which all of Trinitarian theology has evolved.”<sup>26</sup> Facing the transcendence of the Holy Trinity, man abides in praise:

The Trinity is the original relationship to any existence and to all cognition grounded in it. The Trinity cannot be grasped by man. It itself encompasses man and arouses him to praise. When speaking about the Trinity outside doxology and worship, apart from the personal relationship granted to us by faith, our language is always false.<sup>27</sup>

Vladimir Lossky was faithful to the spiritual legacy of Gregory Palamas. The path to theo-humanity, commenced by the revelation of the Holy Trinity, *divinizes* man by means of *uncreated energies*. In his thought, theo-humanity is completely encompassed in the truth of the loving relationship of the individual Divine Persons. God the Father is a Person, therefore He must necessarily be in relationship; He is “the absolute gift of His Divinity to the Son and the Spirit”.<sup>28</sup>

The Father would not be a true Father if He were not fully turned towards (πρός) the other Persons, if He were not fully shared by Those whom he himself makes into Persons, and thus makes them equal to Himself in the fullness of His love.<sup>29</sup>

Since in Laski’s conception a person is first and necessarily characterised by relationship to other persons, the Holy Trinity is the source of knowing this truth and the event of the incarnation of the God-man is the path to mature personality, which enters the nature of His theo-humanity. Spiritual healing of the man ill after the fall of Adam takes place by agency of the Son of God and of the Holy Spirit, since “mystical life only develops as a path to the soul’s union with Christ through the

<sup>26</sup> Vladimir Lossky. *Dogmatická teologie* [*Dogmatic Theology*]. Praha: Pravoslavné vydavatelství 1994, p. 20.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 28.

Holy Spirit”<sup>50</sup>. The economy of the Son of God renews human nature. In this perspective human perfection is linked with the surrender of the Son, with his refusal to be only for himself. Following the example of the Person of the Son and in his self-donation, man rejects self-will in order to discover and carry out the will of the Father, which results in healing and inner recovery. Thus the path to theo-humanity is also therapeutic. Lossky expounded the importance of *kenosis* in Christian spirituality in a lecture published as part of his *Dogmatic Theology*:

Kenosis is the humility of the Servant who does not seek his own glory, but the glory of the Father who sent him. Christ never, or almost never, lays emphasis on his Divinity. In full self-rejection, in concealing his divine nature, in renouncing all will – right up to the words “the Father is greater than I” – he accomplishes the Most Holy Trinity’s work of love on earth. And out of infinite respect for the freedom of man he only shows humans the brotherly face of the servant, the agonized brotherly body of the Crucified.<sup>51</sup>

Apart from the humility of the Servant, the God-man also revealed his divine glory, to which the event of the Lord’s baptism and the moment of the Lord’s transfiguration upon the Mount Tabor especially testify. As Lossky reasons further, Christ assumed the consequences of our sin but in his human nature his “weakness” became not “evil, hatred, but suffering and love”.<sup>52</sup> In Christ, human and divine nature act together in harmony. Christ has two wills which, however, do not operate in the sense of having freedom of choice, as is the case with fallen man, since in a single Hypostasis one will cannot be opposed to another; both are naturally directed to one goal: the good. The tension between the two wills in the garden of Gethsemane, manifested in Christ’s agony and fear of death, is on Lossky’s interpretation the free acceptance of all the consequences of sin including death, when “the proper will of the Word, i.e., his human nature, succumbs, then this nature learns the unspeakable horror of death, since death

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<sup>50</sup> Idem. *Очерк мистического богословия восточной церкви. Догматическое богословие* [*An Essay on the Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church. Dogmatic Theology*]. Moscow: CEI Centre 1991, p. 128.

<sup>51</sup> Lossky. *Dogmatická teologie*, p. 71.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 71.



is unknown to it".<sup>53</sup> While for man death inevitably comes from the inside, it got hold of Christ from the outside, and therefore Jesus on the cross experienced an agony by which sin was destroyed and the way to redemption in the Resurrection opened up. Lossky wrote in *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*:

The work accomplished by Christ is related to our nature which is now no more separated from God due to sin. It is a new nature, renewed creation that has appeared in the world, a new body pure of any effect of sin, free from external subjugation, separated from our iniquity, from every foreign will through the priceless Blood of Christ.<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

The conception of theo-humanity in the aforementioned Russian authors was reflected against the background of their own spiritual path, which led through the crisis of unbelief to gradually learning to know the God-man. The God-man was the source of their spirituality and his theo-humanity was the point of departure for establishing cooperation, or synergy, of their human will with grace, *uncreated energies*, Christ's perfect theo-humanity, whereby they set out on a path of transformation, *theosis*, the only path leading to the glory of resurrection and eternal life.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, p. 77.

<sup>54</sup> Idem. *Очерк мистического богословия восточной церкви. Догматическое богословие*, p. 117.

## **ABSTRAKT**

**KAREL SLÁDEK**

### **Cesty k boholdství u ruských myslitelů 19. a 20. století**

V předložené studii je představeno pojetí boholdství na pozadí osudů šesti ruských křesťanských myslitelů (Fjodor Michailovič Dostojevskij, Vladimír Sergejevič Solovjov, Pavel Alexandrovič Florenskij, Sergej Nikolajevič Bulgakov, Pavel Nikolajevič Evdokimov, Vladimír Nikolajevič Losskij), přičemž jejich zkušenost bude následně vřazena do systematické reflexe nad jejich vztahem k boholdství. Text je rozdělen na tři hlavní kapitoly sledující: hledání cest k boholdství po prožití vnitřní duševní krize u inteligence carského Ruska, boholdství jako cesta boje se zlem a cesta zbožštění synergií mezi lidstvím a boholdstvím v teologii nové generace ruských teologů a konečně boholdství v neoplamitské syntéze ruských emigrantů.

#### **Klíčová slova**

ruské myšlení, boholdství, křesťanská spiritualita, pravoslaví