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The Role of the Holy Spirit during Parousia in the Eschatology of Sergius Bulgakov

Abstract

In Parousia, Jesus Christ is undoubtedly the central figure. However, since Parousia is the revelation of the glory of the entire Trinity, it is worth asking about the role of the remaining Divine Persons in this event. In the article, the main focus will be on the role of the Holy Spirit and its interpretation in the eschatology of Sergius Bulgakov. According to the Russian theologian, Parousia is a revelation not only of Christ's glory, but also of the hypostatic Glory of God, i.e. the Holy Spirit, and in this way it's the final realization of Pentecost.

Keywords: Bulgakov, Holy Spirit, Glory, Parousia, new creation

Streszczenie

Rola Ducha Świętego podczas paruzji w eschatologii Sergiusza Bułgakowa

W paruzji centralną postacią jest niewątpliwie Jezus Chrystus. Skoro jednak paruzja jest objawieniem się chwały całej Trójcy, to warto zadać sobie pytanie o rolę pozostałych Osób Boskich w tym wydarzeniu. W tym artykule główna uwaga zostanie poświęcona roli Ducha Świętego i jej interpretacji w eschatologii Sergiusza Bułgakowa. Według rosyjskiego teologa, paruzja jest objawieniem nie tylko chwały Chrystusa, ale także hipostatycznej Chwały Boga, czyli Ducha Świętego, a w ten sposób ostateczną realizacją Pięćdziesiątnicy.

Słowa kluczowe: Bułgakow, Duch Święty, Chwała, paruzja, nowe stworzenie

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The Parousia main figure is undoubtedly Jesus Christ. On His Second Coming, on the Lord's Day, His reign as the Son of God will be fully revealed to all of the universe and to all of the history. Ultimately, however, this day will be the work of the entire Holy Trinity. Nevertheless, seldom more space is given to other Divine Persons in this context.² This subject was developed by Sergius Bulgakov, a 20th-century Orthodox theologian who worked in the circle of Western culture. He emphasizes that Parousia is the work of the entire Holy Trinity: the Father sends, the Son comes, the Holy Spirit has already been sent and meets the Son in the world.

In this article a special emphasis will be placed on the person of the Holy Spirit and His role in Parousia. Since the essential feature of Parousia is the appearance of Christ **in glory**, as opposed to the appearance in humility, one should ask – says Bulgakov – what does it mean **in glory**? What is Glory? It is the Holy Spirit who is the hypostatic Glory of God upon the Son. For Bulgakov, the Second Coming of Christ is then also a Parousia of the Third Hypostasis. In this way, the topic of the article can be formulated as follows: how is a Parousia also a Parousia of the Holy Spirit? What is His role in this event? Basing on the source texts, the concept of Sergius Bulgakov on this subject will be presented.

Since for the Russian theologian Parousia is the fulfilment of Pentecost, the scheme of the article is: first the presence of the Third

² The basic pneumatological and eschatological books do not develop this aspect of the Holy Spirit's action: cf. R. Cantalamessa, *Il canto dello Spirito. Meditazioni sul Veni creator*, Milano 2014; R. Cantalamessa, *Il mistero di Pentecoste*, Milano 1998; Y. Congar, *Je crois en L'Esprit Saint*, 3 vol., Paris 1979–1980; P. Evdokimov, *L'Esprit-Saint dans la tradition orthodoxe*, Paris 2011; J. Finkenzeller, *Eschatologie*, in: *Glaubenszugänge. Lehrbuch der katholischen Dogmatik*, Hrsg. W. Beinert, Bd. 3, Paderborn 1995, p. 525–671; R. Guardini, *Die christliche Lehre vom Tode, der Läuterung nach dem Tode, Auferstehung, Gericht und Ewigkeit*, Mainz 2002; F.J. Nocke, *Eschatologie*, in: *Handbuch der Dogmatik*, Hrsg. T. Schneider, Bd. 2, Düsseldorf 1992, p. 188–376; J. Ratzinger, *Eschatologie – Tod und ewiges Leben*, Regensburg 1978; B. Sesboüé, *La Résurrection et la vie. Petite catéchèse sur les choses de la fin*, Paris 1990; B. Stubenrauch, *Pneumatologie – Die Lehre vom Heiligen Geist*, in: *Glaubenszugänge. Lehrbuch der katholischen Dogmatik*, Hrsg. W. Beinert, Bd.3, Paderborn 1995, p. 3–156.

Some mentions of this subject can be find in: L. Bouyer: *Le consolateur. Esprit-Saint et vie de grâce*, Paris 1980; R. Laurentin, *L'esprit saint, cet inconnu: Découvrir son expérience et sa personne*, Paris 2014.

Hypostasis in creation before Pentecost will be described, then Pentecost as the time of the hypostatic presence of the Holy Spirit in the world, and finally the new creation that will fulfil Pentecost and realize God's final relation to the world.

1. Before Pentecost – the kenosis of the Holy Spirit in creation

Sergius Bulgakov in his eschatology emphasizes that Parousia is an event in which the glory of the whole Trinity is revealed. The glory of the Father is made known through the Dyad of the Son and the Holy Spirit revealing Him. During the Parousia, two great works carried out by these Divine Persons in the history of salvation, namely the Incarnation and Pentecost, will also be completed. Then not only Christ will become tangible and visible, but also the Glory of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit. Until then, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world is marked by kenosis. The key moment in which the nature of the Spirit's presence in the world changes, although it remains kenotic, is the moment of Pentecost. This does not mean, however, that the Holy Spirit appeared in the creation only after this event. Even before Pentecost, we can speak of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world.

To explain the kenosis of the Holy Spirit in creation, one must look at God's relationship to creation in general. God's kenosis in creation, for Bulgakov, consists in the fact that He ceases to be the Absolute and becomes God. By the "Absolute" the Russian theologian understands a God who lives only in relation to Himself. On the other hand, "God" is a relative concept for him: God is the Absolute who has entered into a relationship with creation.³ This self-relativization of the Absolute

³ Bulgakov strongly emphasizes God's apophatism. For him, God as the Absolute is completely transcendent to the world, He is Not-what. However, the Creator reveals himself before creation, making room in himself for what is relative. In revealing himself to creation, God gets rid of His absolute transcendence and manifests Himself in His action for creation, in His grace or (using an expression characteristic of dogmatic disputes in the fourteenth century) energy. The Triune God can only be distinguished from the creation side, in how He revealed himself to the world. Otherwise He is unity (cf. S. Bulgakov, *Unfading Light. Contemplations and Speculations*, transl. T.A. Smith, Grand Rapids–Cambridge U.K. 2008, p. 214–215).

towards the reality He created from nothingness is a sacrifice of love. The kenosis of the Father consists in the fact that the One, who is being eternally revealed in the Son and the Spirit, in creation remains, as it were, outside of revelation. His revelation is limited to that in the Dyad of the Son and the Spirit. This transcendence of the Father is precisely His kenosis, His not being in creation. The kenosis of the Son consists in the fact that the One who is all in creation humbled himself in the Incarnation and became God-man. This kenotic dimension reaches its peak in Passion and Death.⁴

The kenosis of the Holy Spirit is the acceptance of the lack of wholeness by the Fullness, of becoming by Eternity. The immeasurable Fullness is immersed in the measure characteristic to the lack of fullness. This is inevitable because incompleteness is inherent in creation which has to develop. Bulgakov speaks of the presence of the Holy Spirit in creation at the natural level, that is, before the Incarnation and Pentecost. He calls it “natural grace.”⁵ Here we should mention the concept of the Divine Sophia, that is of the Divine substance or Divine unity, crucial for Bulgakov’s reflection. Sophia is God’s way of acting, His life.⁶ God created the world in and through Sophia, therefore, in its sophiological foundation, the world is Divine, while remaining non-Divine in its created

⁴ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, transl. B. Jakim, Grand Rapids–Cambridge U.K. 2004, p. 219.

⁵ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 220.

⁶ By the concept of “Sophia” Bulgakov tries to explain the dogma of the Triune God, which speaks of three Divine Persons and one substance (*ousia*), as can be read, for example, in the *Quicumque* confession of faith (DS 75). The Russian theologian claims that limiting himself to the philosophical concept of substance (*ousia*), which entails an ideological content from the very beginning, we severely limit the description of what the common life of the three Divine Persons is. Bulgakov proposes to use the biblical term of God’s Wisdom, Sophia. For the Russian theologian, God, on the one hand, has Sophia or is Sophia, on the other hand, Sophia, who exists only in God, belongs to Him as the basis of His being. Sophia is therefore the non-hypostatic *Ousia* of God who exists only in a relationship with a tri-person person of God. Here, in some sense, an analogy to the human body and spirit can be applied. A body without a spirit ceases to be a body and becomes a corpse, while a spirit without a body cannot express itself in the world. The body becomes an icon of the spirit that lives in it. Similarly, we can speak of Sophia as the “body” of God. It is an expression of His inner life (cf. S. Bulgakov, *Sophia. The Wisdom of God – an Outline of Sophiology*, transl. F. Clarke, X. Braikevitch, Lindisfarne 1993, 23–26. 56–58).

independence. It is created Sophia.⁷ In its sophiological foundation, it is necessary to distinguish its logoses or forms of being from being itself, which is expressed in the Latin word *natura* (from *nasci* – to give birth; giving life to everything it contains). The ideal seeds, logoses of beings that come from the Logos, are actualized in creation by the Holy Spirit as forms. At the same time, they are dressed in a beauty that is an updated idea, transparent in its formability. All forms of being, the meanings they dress, are – as created in beauty – the works of the Holy Spirit, who is the Artist of the world, the Principle of Form and the Form of Forms.⁸

Nature exists because of the sophiological (not hypostatical) action of the Holy Spirit, and it is normal for the Beauty hypostasis to dress nature in beauty, which is the initial image of God's crowning in the world. The beauty of nature is an obvious fact – for believers and non-believers alike. Nature is beautiful in all forms; it does not know the formlessness which is ugliness. Since nature and beauty are not human, but rather prehuman, and therefore outside the freedom of the spirit that chooses and defines itself, they are beyond good and evil, they are amoral. It is created freedom that gives the beauty of nature moral criteria. These criteria refer not to the beauty of nature itself which comes from the Holy Spirit in its sophiological foundation, but from its application. Man can pollute beauty, but he or she cannot destroy it.⁹

In sustaining the creation, the already mentioned kenosis of the Holy Spirit is revealed. It involves not only enlightening all of creation, but also accepting the measure of creation and the fact that it is not very receptive to the revelation of the Spirit. This little susceptibility, and even opposition of creation, does not cause the Spirit to leave it to make

⁷ Bulgakov notes that God had to create the world from himself, from his abundance. Nothing new arrives in God's life as a result of the lives of creatures. The world receives in some way the Divine principle of life. His being is only a mirror image of God's world. This God's world is Sophia, God's life. Bulgakov refers here to Proverbs 8: 22–23, where God's Wisdom is presented as the prototype of creation that existed before the creation of the world. The life of the world is thus created Sophia, which has its foundation in Divine Sophia (cf. S. Bulgakov, *Sophia. The Wisdom of God*, p. 63).

⁸ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 200–201.

⁹ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 202–203.

it return to its original void, but rather indwells the creation and sustains it.¹⁰

Moreover, natural grace, that is, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world, means that He is in the very matter of the world and is a necessary condition for the world to receive the supernatural, to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Hence, the Holy Spirit must be present in creation in a kenotic way, through the sophianic ability of the world to accept the spiritual. Only then will it be possible to sanctify the creation that will occur in the Incarnation and Pentecost, and finally in Parousia.

2. Between Pentecost and Parousia

What is the difference between the world before and after Pentecost? Pentecost is the coming into the world not of God's spirit with its gifts, but of the hypostatic Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, we can speak only of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in his gifts. Back then they were sent transcendentally, but at Pentecost they are sent by the hypostatic Spirit descending into the world. Pentecost is immanent to the world.¹¹ However, this difference remains hidden from people's eyes. It cannot be seen like the Logos for shepherds and kings, when He descended from heaven and became the baby Jesus lying in a manger. The Spirit remains hidden under the forms of the tongues of fire, and the descent of the hypostasis is revealed only in its gifts. This raises the question: since the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit manifested itself only in gifts that were already known beyond Pentecost (e.g. in the prophets), what does the descent of the Holy Spirit mean new?¹²

¹⁰ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 206.

¹¹ Bulgakov speculates that to distinguish between the hypostatic revelation of the Holy Spirit and his grace-giving action, one can apply, with some modification, the distinction between *ousia* and *energeia*, which underlies Gregory Palamas' theology. The *ousia* (which Palamas considered wholly transcendent) would refer to the hypostatic revelation of the Holy Spirit, while the grace would refer to *energeia* (cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 288 [note]).

¹² Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 269–270.

To answer it, one must refer to the doctrine of Divine-humanity,¹³ that is, to the Bulgakov's theory about the relationship of God to the world, to the union of Divine and created Sophia, and especially to its specific aspect, which is the relationship of the Incarnation and Pentecost. Since the Father in the life of the Trinity expresses Himself in the Dyad Son-Spirit, He likewise uses the Second and Third Hypostases in His revelation to the world. Therefore, the appearance of the Logos is not enough. The descent of the Holy Spirit is necessary. The external, typical of the Old Testament, transcendent relationship between the Logos and the Spirit, i.e. the gifts of the Holy Spirit alone, is not enough. On the contrary, there must be an internal connection between the Incarnation of the Son and the descent of the Spirit. It was very clearly defined by Christ in his farewell speech.¹⁴

Divine-humanity is realized through the Incarnation, which is accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit. However, Ascension does not mean the end of the Incarnation and the cessation of Christ's ties with humanity. The Holy Spirit is bound, without separation and without confusion, with the Son, with God-man. In this sense, we must understand the identification that Christ makes between His coming and the coming of the Holy Spirit. "I will send you another Comforter, that he may remain with you forever." (Jn 14:16) Christ indwells the world through the Holy Spirit and in the Holy Spirit.

¹³ Divine-humanity is, simply speaking, the union of Divine and created Sophia. As explained above, the world was created in the image of Divine Sophia, and thus the divine pre-image of being was given a non-divine being, by being immersed in created nothingness, into becoming, thus receiving an autonomous existence in the created world. In other words, becoming a created Sophia. This division into Divine and created Sophia is insurmountable. Its overcoming in God's plan involves the overcoming of the duality of the eternal and created Sophia. Creation will be deified: it will be raised from created Sophia to created-Divine Sophia. The created Sophia must be united in one life with the Divine Sophia on the basis of the unity of the hypostases living in two natures according to the idea of the Council of Chalcedon, the hypostatic union, the unity of the two natures, Divine and human, which must receive its form not only in Christology, but also in anthropology and cosmology (cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 356).

¹⁴ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 270.

This expresses the fundamental fact that Christ is never separated from the Holy Spirit. Both the Incarnation and the Divine-humanity are therefore the work not of one hypostasis, but of two, the Son and the Holy Spirit in Their dyadic union. Such is the dyadic axiom – both with regard to the Divine and creaturely Sophia, or Divine-humanity, and with regard to the theophany of the Logos in the world. Thus, the descent of the Holy Spirit is a new act in the Divine Incarnation: the return of Christ in the Holy Spirit, Who is “another Comforter”, *allos*, not *heteros*, i.e., not second and in this sense other or new, but the same, only manifested in a new manner.¹⁵

Although, for Bulgakov the descent of the Son of God in the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit at Pentecost are two moments of fulfilment of the Divine-humanity, and in this sense they are identical in their *content*, there is still some difference between them. The revelation of the Second Hypostasis occurred through the hypostatic Incarnation in a specific historical person of Jesus Christ, at a specific place and time. This particularity is missing at the descent of the Holy Spirit. He remains historically and empirically invisible. His presence is mysterious. If in the early Church His descent was somehow tangible, then His gifts were evident and tangible, but His Person remained unknown. His presence is recognized according to a certain state of life, by inspiration, not by a personal understanding of Himself; and the subject and content of inspiration is Christ.¹⁶

In conformity with this absence of concrete form, the action of the Holy Spirit, even though He descends into the world and overshadows humanity united in the Church, does not know any limits. Here it is once again confirmed that this Spirit “bloweth where it listeth” (John 3: 8). He does not have any concrete human or even natural form, and is therefore not constrained by place or time. He is supra-temporal, although precisely because of this He acts in time. He is supra-spatial, although, once again because of this, He acts in space, everywhere and nowhere, always and never. [...] He does not have a human countenance, although every human countenance that is made radiant by the grace of the Spirit, especially and preeminently that of the Mother of God Who is Full of Grace, manifests Him.¹⁷

¹⁵ S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 272.

¹⁶ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 275–276.

¹⁷ S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 276.

Another aspect of the descent of the hypostatic Holy Spirit is that He is making mankind able to respond to God's invitation to eternity. It was necessary that not only Christ, by virtue of his Divine-human freedom, in his two wills and energies, should take humanity as his own. It was also necessary that humanity, in its depths, already united with Christ in the power of the Incarnation, accept Christ into its life, become "the Body of Christ". This was completed by the Holy Spirit who, in his descent, gave humanity the fullness of life in Christ, inspiring humanity with this life. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit does not descend upon individuals, such as the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation or Jesus at the Epiphany, but upon all mankind and all nature.¹⁸

Here the topic of the kenosis of the Holy Spirit comes up with particular emphasis. Although we can speak of the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost, it is not His power which is limited in the world but it depends on humanity's ability to accept Him. Human freedom is of key importance here. Grace does not force freedom; convinces it. There is a kind of struggle between freedom and grace, between created humanity and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There is no doubt about the final outcome of this struggle, because only the Holy Spirit possesses the invincible power of Beauty. But this duel lasts over time and has a spatial dimension. The kenosis of the Holy Spirit is a voluntary self-limitation to created freedom.¹⁹

This kenosis of the Holy Spirit is associated with some ineffectiveness. In the language of Christology this can be expressed by stating that of Christ's three offices two have been fulfilled, while the third, royal, is in the state of becoming.²⁰ Christ is King, but his reign is not yet

¹⁸ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 278.

¹⁹ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 281.

²⁰ According to Bulgakov, the royal function begins and is completed after the Ascension. So it has an extremely mystical character. Christ is King in the world, but He does not rule it as the realized Kingdom of God. He is constantly being put on the throne. His royal function continues even now, unlike his prophetic and priestly functions, which have ended and only their fruits are active. On the other hand, Christ's Kingdom in this world remains a kingdom out of this world, although in the fullness of time, during Parousia, it will overcome this world (cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, transl. B. Jakim, Grand Rapids–Cambridge U.K. 2008, p. 419).

complete. It will be completed by the action of the Holy Spirit, by the power of Pentecost. This office will be completed when the kenosis of the Holy Spirit will be completely overcome, “when God will be all in all”, when the kingdom of God will be established in all creation.²¹

Since the new creation is closely connected with man as the bearer of the soul of the world and the governor of the world, it is worth looking at the influence of the Third Hypostasis on the life of an individual believer. What does mean for him or her to receive the Holy Spirit? In John’s Gospel, receiving the Holy Spirit is described as a new birth: “What is born of the flesh is flesh, what is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (Jn 3:6) This new life appears in the old man. This is clearly seen in Paul when he contrasts the two principles of life: according to the spirit and according to the flesh, the spiritual man and the natural man (cf. Rom 8:1,5,9; Gal 5:16–17; 1 Peter 4:6). New life means life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Being in Christ, accomplished by the Holy Spirit, is also adoption by God. The God-man himself in His human nature was adopted by the Father in the descent of the Holy Spirit, as depicted in the baptism scene, where the Father’s words are heard: “This is my beloved Son.” (Mt 3:17)²²

How does this “life according to the spirit” function in man? Since man is an incarnate spirit, on the one hand, he or she has a natural life, a psycho-physical existence, and on the other hand, he or she is a spirit and has his or her own spiritual nature. According to the Chalcedonian dogma, the union of the two natures, without confusion and without separation, was hypostatically realized in the Incarnation, in the life of God-man, Jesus Christ. There is no hypostatic union between God and man in the sanctification of creation by the Holy Spirit; rather, Divine nature and human nature are united in one life. Human nature, inspired by the Third Hypostasis, remains itself, but it can make space for other nature. This is its deification, that although it remains the subject and

²¹ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 283.

²² Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 298–299.

center of its own created life, it becomes transparent to the operation of Divine nature.²³

In this context, the doctrine of Nestorianism about two heterogeneous hypostases in one “union hypostasis”, which is unacceptable in Christology, finds its application in pneumatology.²⁴ Man’s personal center is suspended and makes room for the Holy Spirit. This is what happened above all in Mary, who is the hypostatic image of the Holy Spirit.²⁵ This situation also applies to the lives of all saints: “I do not live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20) – the Holy Spirit reveals Christ in human hearts.²⁶

The possibility of communion with God, however, was paralyzed by original sin: the human spirit became heavy and worldly. This possibility of union with God was regained by the Incarnation. Thanks to Christ, man can participate in the New Adam. This participation is actualized by the Holy Spirit. Christians become “spirit bearers” through baptism. This new birth opens the door of the inner cell of the human spirit to the

²³ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 223.

²⁴ Bulgakov claims that Nestorius does not understand that nature can exist without *prosopon*. Hence, divinity and humanity in Christ have corresponding persons who are in a relationship of complete harmony and unity (*synapheia*). This union means a new person – the person of the union, that is Christ. But from birth, this person, the union person, has its beginning. Nestorius accused Cyril of confusing natures, while Cyril accused him of duplicating persons in Christ. The union person or the economy person consists of two *prosopa*-natures. They are juxtaposed or contained in one another, they are transparent to each other, differing in nature, they are united in an act. But they are juxtaposed not by necessity but in freedom. They are united by obedience, goodwill, and love. This idea of the mutual penetration of the “*prosopa*” into the “*prosopon*” of the union is illustrated by Nestorius with the image of the burning bush of Moses (cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, p. 41–45).

²⁵ “A personal incarnation, a hominization of the Third Hypostasis, does not exist. Still, if there is no personal incarnation of the Third Hypostasis, no hominization in the same sense in which the Son of God became human, there can all the same be such a human, creaturely hypostasis, such a being which is the vessel of the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit. It completely surrenders its human hypostatic life, makes it transparent for the Holy Spirit, by bearing witness about itself: «behold the handmaid of the Lord». Such a being, the Most Holy Virgin, is not a personal incarnation of the Holy Spirit, but she becomes His personal, animate receptacle, an absolutely spirit-born creature, the Pneumatophoric Human” (S. Bulgakov, *The Burning Bush. On the Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God*, transl. T.A. Smith, Grand Rapids–Cambridge U.K. 2009, p. 81).

²⁶ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 223.

Holy Spirit. This intervention of God in man is accomplished by His will. In the life of the Church, this will is primarily connected with the sacrament of Baptism. Just as in the life of God-man, baptism signified the descent of the Holy Spirit, so it is also in the life of every person.²⁷

Baptism is also an inclusion in the community of the Church. Man is not called to live separately because his or her spirit is made in the image of the tri-hypostatic spirit of God. Therefore, he or she is open to others and this openness is his or her essential feature. Bulgakov calls it multi-unity. Like the multi-unity of the human race, the Church also exists as a multi-unity. The “Catholic” nature (*sobornost*) of personal consciousness is thus open in ecclesial love. The gift of love that comes from the Holy Spirit makes this concordance for granted, like in a body composed of many members. Just as the sacraments are given from the whole Church to the whole Church (even though they are received by individuals), so Catholicism realized by each member is a fundamental quality of spiritual life. So Christian spirituality is Catholic or universal in nature, it is an attitude of love for God and neighbour.²⁸

Another feature of Christian spirituality should be noted. It is not a-cosmic (and certainly not anti-cosmic), it is not a lack of love for the world as God’s creation. This world that John forbids us to love is a world of sin, joined to a human sinful relationship to it. It is not about the world as God’s creature whom God loves so much that He did not spare his own Son for its salvation. Man must love this world because he or she is linked to it as a creature, and his or her salvation also includes the salvation and healing of the world. (cf. Rom 8:19–22) Thus, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon spiritual beings has consequences for the entire world.²⁹

²⁷ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 301–302.

²⁸ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 304–305.

²⁹ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 305.

3. The new creation in Parousia as the fulfilment of Pentecost

How will Pentecost be fulfilled? It will be completed in the glory of Parousia. Then what world has received through the Incarnation and the hypostatic descent of the Holy Spirit will be able to be experienced by all. Until then, death rules the world as it did before the Incarnation and Pentecost, and the mystery of sin and the flesh still remains valid. The action of the Holy Spirit's power, which is present in the natural world, does not become tangible and visible, but refers to an internal, metaphysical change. One can only postulate the universal permeability of the world to the spirit, the spiritualization of creation and matter, which is represented by various symbols in the prophetic books, especially by the symbol of the New Jerusalem. (Cf. Rev 21–22)³⁰

Through the Incarnation of the Son and the descent of the Holy Spirit, in Divine-humanity, the world and man received the fullness of sophianization. Divine Sophia became united with created Sophia; creation deified in the unity of two natures in Christ by the Holy Spirit. This event has two directions. The first is the kenotic direction: God descends from heaven and takes the form of a servant. The second is the opposite and signifies glory. The latter consists of successive events: Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, Second Coming of the Lord in glory in which He glorifies the world and deifies it with the power of the Holy Spirit. The glorification of Christ was completed when he sat at the right hand of the Father, also elevating human nature there. But this exaltation of Christ, which includes the possible exaltation of all creation, must also be realized in the latter.³¹

Christ's kenosis continues after Ascension in those who are Christ's. This kenosis is accompanied by the kenosis of the Holy Spirit. If the descent of the Holy Spirit was made possible by the Incarnation, then the glory of Christ, i.e. the Holy Spirit, is hidden in heaven and is not revealed on earth. Glory works mysteriously in and through the Church which

³⁰ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 347–348.

³¹ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, transl. B. Jakim, Grand Rapids–Cambridge U.K. 2002, p. 403.

prepares the world for a glorious transformation. It is maturity when the “branch” of the fig tree sprouts leaves, and summer is near (cf. Mt 24:32), the season “into which the Father has put his own strength.” (Acts 1:7) The Parousia of the Son is combined with the Parousia of the Holy Spirit. By His coming in glory, the Son gives the Glory to the world.³²

The world in Parousia will be changed by the Spirit, according to the scheme of resurrection: “A natural body is sown – a spiritual body is created. If there is a natural body, a heavenly body will also arise. So it is written: The first man Adam became a living soul, and the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But there was not first the spiritual, but the natural; spiritual was afterwards.” (1 Cor 15:44–46) This spiritualization of the natural refers to what the Apostle says about the soul of the world: “this [creation] too will be set free from its slavery to corruption in order to share in the freedom and glory of God’s children.” (Rom 8:21) Preserving its reality and identity, the soul of the world will cease to be closed to the spirit. It will also cease to dominate over the spirit, and will become obedient and transparent to it. However, the world cannot complete this transition from mental to spiritual with its own strength. This transition presupposes a new creative act of God, not a new creation, but a transformation of what is through the Holy Spirit.³³

The new creation, connected with man as the world’s soul bearer, must be compatible with him or her, and in this sense it has a human character. Christ’s Parousia is visible to and through human beings to the world. On the other hand, the Parousia of the Holy Spirit is not visible, but felt as a force of spirituality that dominates over mental being. As has been said, the superiority of spirituality will be transmitted to all creation that will rejoice in the Holy Spirit. Bulgakov quotes here his theory of non-hypostatic love, that is, the glory that creation gives to its Creator. The transformation of the world through the power of the Holy Spirit, a hypostatic love, will be a new outburst of a creature’s glorifying love for its Creator (cf. Ps 19:2–5).³⁴

³² Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 423–424.

³³ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 425.

³⁴ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 422.

This idea can also be expressed in the language of the theology of glory. Since the Son's Parousia is also a Parousia of the Holy Spirit, and together both of them communicate the will of the Father which is coming in glory of Resurrected, so the universal resurrection is also the revelation and action of God's glory in the world. In Parousia, glory cannot be confined to the revelation of Christ, but its light and strength spreads throughout creation and raises the dead. The "spirit of glory and God" in the revelation of Christ's glory (1 Pet 4:13–14) raises the dead in glory: "it is sown not glorious – it raises glorious; it is sown weak – it raises strong." (1 Cor 15:43) Resurrection during Parousia is therefore also a revelation of the glory of the Holy Spirit.³⁵

Just as mankind's resurrection was pre-fulfilled in Christ's resurrection, so the universal transformation of the world was pre-fulfilled in the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (according to Joel's prophecy quoted by St. Peter). But both lie hidden in the ontological depth of being and await their revelation. Bulgakov refers to a fragment of 1 Corinthians 15, where St. Paul describes the resurrection as the dying and sprouting of a seed. If we translate these images from the vegetative world into the language of anthropology, we will come to the conclusion that in the resurrection, a specific spiritual personality receives or recovers the energy of germination, which it needs to regain full life, not only spiritual, but also corporeal, and more specifically spiritually-corporeal. Death consists in the fact that the body, which is the state of life of the incarnate man, his or her belonging to the world, is separated from his or her soul and spirit (the soul and spirit, in turn, remain inseparable even after death).³⁶ The soul loses the ability to stay connected with the body and animate it, which causes the soul itself to enter a state of potency. But

³⁵ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 432.

³⁶ Bulgakov claims that saints experience the first resurrection, which occurs before the universal resurrection. This is because the saints have opened themselves fully to the action of God's will and a change has taken place in them, which will only be shared by the others at the Last Judgment. Saints not only have holy spirit, but also holy bodies that remain holy even after death and are in union with the spirit. Thus they become a channel of grace for the living and a ladder to heaven. Hence, the cult of relics is possible and meaningful (cf. S. Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles*, p. 19–21).

in the resurrection the soul receives anew from God the energy of the “seed”, the life giving power; and, at God’s command, it will create its own body anew. The matter of this body is taken from the natural world. The resurrection is therefore not a new creation, but recreates what has already been created. Through the energy of the soul, each person gets his or her own body that he or she had before. It is created not by the human spirit, incapable of such “objectification”, but by the soul that obeys God’s will (cf. Jn 5:25). In the resurrection, there is no place for human freedom which is proper to the spirit. Rather, a kind of necessity is at work here, where the soul in a state of being able does not receive new power, but its pre-death power is restored.³⁷

Since the restoration of the world in Parousia will follow the resurrection pattern, it can be concluded that at the end of time the world will not be created anew; it will be transformed. The texts about the new creation (cf. Is 65:17; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1.5) do not speak of a new creation in the place of the old, but of the restoration of creation as promised to Noah (Gen 9:8–17). It means transformation of the world. It will be done by the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost, He descended into the entire natural world in an invisible fire. Internally, the world is already glorified, because Christ was glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration, when heaven and earth, the mountain, clothing, and in them the whole world saw and received the light of Tabor. Besides, Christ was also glorified in His resurrection, in which the glorious body was shown. Just as Christ does not need to be glorified and risen once more to come into the world in glory; so the Holy Spirit does not need to come down from heaven again to transform the world at the hour of Christ’s Second Coming.³⁸

When it comes to the end of the world, Scripture often uses the image of fire. The texts referring to theophany and doxophany are of particular importance here: the Burning Bush (Ex 3,2; 19: 18), the vision of Ezekiel’s glory (Ez 1). Another similar figure is the cloud (Gen 9:13–14; Ex 14:19–20; 19:9; 34.5; 40:34–38; Numbers 9:15–19; 1 Kings 8:10). These divine revelations in fire and cloud are explained in the New Testament

³⁷ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 439–440.

³⁸ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 343.

as pneumatological. Here we can be guided by the preaching of John the Baptist: “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” (Mt 3:11) We find the same in Christ’s words about Pentecost: “you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1, 5). Analogous to these situations is the Transfiguration of Christ in the light of heavenly fire and in the cloud, that is, in the energy of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire at Pentecost. Even the action of the Spirit in the natural world is synergistic. The fire of the Holy Spirit not only consumes and destroys, but also transforms. The new creation is not without base in the old creation; it is included in the old creation.³⁹

The end of this world will not be a physical end, but a metaphysical one. The changes that will occur will not be a combination of the same cosmic elements or the actions of the same cosmic forces. Rather, a new supra-cosmic force will enter the existence of the world and transform it. The entry of this force will affect the entire physical structure of the world, but preserve it in its natural being. This one, however, will be ready to receive a new element of being: glory. This revelation of glory will change the elements of being from within, give them a new quality. We also know that the “physical” world, its matter (*hule*), is not alien to the spirit and closed to it. In creation from nothing, the world receives its reality, matter, and elements from the Holy Spirit. The causality of the world contains not only cosmic and natural elements, but also “spiritual causation”.⁴⁰

The fact is that in the sacraments the Church sanctifies the matter, the material elements of the sacrament – bread and wine, water, oil, and the human body. You can’t just oppose matter and spirit, but they have to be juxtaposed one way or another. Therefore, it must be said that there is no abstract matter, matter enclosed in an empty and motionless being. The concept of *meden* (nothing and something), used by Plato to define cosmic matter, remains valid in an expanded and all-inclusive definition: *meden* is nothing and everything because it is not empty and “dead”.

³⁹ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 426.

⁴⁰ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 401.

Rather, it is the being of everything that is constantly being filled. It is something that is constantly arising.⁴¹

According to Bulgakov, contemporary natural sciences have come to understand matter as a force or energy, i.e. they have come to the concept of „let there be” of being and on this path they have met the theology of the Holy Spirit.⁴² Matter, understood simply as ontic force, is precisely the action of the Holy Spirit in creation, at the original Pentecost before the first day of creation. Not only is spirit not opposed to matter, but it identifies itself as energy. It is the power of matter. Of course, spirit is not exhausted by being or by the reality of pre-matter, it is not “unconscious”, i.e. it is not an impersonal principle by Schopenhauer or Hartmann. However, we can speak of the reality of the absolute spirit, the spiritual “pre-matter” in Divine Sophia, which is not only the pan-organism of ideal forms, the idea of the idea of everything in the Logos, but also the realization and being of everything in the Holy Spirit. In analogy to the spiritual reality of pre-matter in Divine Sophia, creation also has a created pre-matter, a reality of matter capable of being spiritualized.⁴³

This character of matter explains its ability to become the “matter of the sacraments”, to be a guide of spiritual gifts for the incarnate spirit, that is, man, grown into matter. Spiritual, sanctified matter, which in the sacrament becomes a substrate for divine life, for the Holy Spirit, this matter, when it is received by man, integrates into the fullness of his or her spiritual and corporeal being. The matter of the sacrament is the spiritual matter of the age to come, just as the waters of the Jordan are already “the waters of life... flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb” (Rev 22:1) in New Jerusalem.⁴⁴ In this way,

⁴¹ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 344.

⁴² Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 344 (note).

⁴³ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 345.

⁴⁴ Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, p. 346. In this context, Bulgakov especially refers to the transformation taking place in the Eucharist, which he describes according to the teaching of the Orthodox Church as “transmutation”: “In the divine Eucharist, the bread and wine are transmuted into the body and blood of Christ, in which the Lord Himself is present. [...] The power of the mysterious transmutation permeates the nature of the bread and wine and changes it. They become other than themselves, other than they are as things of the physical world. But the bread and wine do not lose their thingness within the limits of this

all creatures await, according to the words of the Apostle, the revelation of the glory of the sons of men; they await transfiguration into a new heaven and new earth, the cosmic Pentecost, which will arrive after the universal resurrection. The Holy Spirit, who lives now in the Church and makes her the Kingdom of grace, will also actualize the Kingdom of Glory; and God's face will be imaged in all creation – God will be all in all.⁴⁵

Conclusion

Parousia in the eschatology of Sergius Bulgakov is an event that reveals the glory of the entire Holy Trinity. The glory of the Father is shown through the Son-Spirit Dyad. As far as the content is concerned, Parousia is the final realization of the key actions of the Second and Third Hypostases in the history of salvation, namely the Incarnation and Pentecost. Thus, the Incarnation is the union between God and creation, and in Bulgakov's theology, between the Divine and created Sophia, it is Divine-humanity. The Chalcedonian dogma describes this reality, speaking of the union of Divine and human natures, without separation and without confusion. However, after the Ascension, Pentecost is necessary to enable people to be part of this reality. Christ's glory becomes available to people in the Holy Spirit. Until Parousia, however, it cannot be fully accepted because of the limitedness of creation and the sinfulness of people.

Only during Parousia, when the kenosis of the Holy Spirit has ceased, will the world be transformed by His power. What it will look like shows us the resurrection of Christ, which is the pattern of the universal

world; their breadness and wineness – their smell, taste, weight, colour, physical and chemical properties – remain unchanged. [...] The miracle of the transmutation is therefore not a physical but a metaphysical event". The Russian theologian thus defines the concept of transmutation: "The idea of transmutation contains an antinomy which overcomes the law of identity without annulling it. This antinomy even reinforces this law: The transmutation of the elements is an identity of things that are different or a differentiation of things that are identical. It is not a transformation in which one thing is absorbed by another; rather, it is both the unity and the contraposition of the two – an antinomic miracle" (S. Bulgakov, *The Holy Grail and the Eucharist*, transl. B. Jakim, Lindisfarne 1997, p. 63–64).

⁴⁵ S. Bulgakov, *Churchly Joy. Orthodox Devotions for the Church Year*, transl. B. Jakim, Grand Rapids–Cambridge U.K. 2008, p. 130–131.

resurrection, as well as the new creation. The Holy Spirit will not destroy the old creature, but transform it. Just as in the resurrection, a man becomes a spiritual, although remaining still material, but governed by a spiritual principle – God’s spirit. The same will happen with creation. A good complement to the image of the transformation of creation is also Mary, whom Bulgakov calls the hypostatic image of the Holy Spirit. This means that the Blessed Virgin is not the personal incarnation of the Holy Spirit, but becomes His personal, animate vessel, a creation absolutely born of spirit, the Pneumatophoric Man. This is also how the new creation is to become. It is to become transparent to the Spirit of God while remaining itself. The image is completed by the reality of the sacraments. There is a mysterious exchange in matter, not only in the Eucharist but in all sacramental acts: matter is taken from this world and born for the world of grace and the age to come, when God will be all in all. It happens through the power of the Holy Spirit present in the Church. In this way, we get a very original picture of the role of the Holy Spirit in Parousia according to Sergius Bulgakov.

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