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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume 2 (2025): 5–6
10.71521/xhzn-n102

About the Current Volume of the Journal

In early November 2024 the Hamilton Center for Classical and Civic Education at the University of Florida and the Northwestern University Research Initiative in Russian Philosophy, Literature, and Religious Thought convened a conference, *Religion, Human Dignity, and Human Rights: New Paradigms for Russia and the West*. The conference featured thirty-four papers, ten of which (in revised form) are published here, in the second volume of *Northwestern University Studies in Russian Philosophy, Literature, and Religious Thought*.

Few topics in the humanities and social sciences attract as much attention, and generate as much debate, as the history and theory of human rights. The two basic, different approaches to this topic might be broadly characterized as secular humanism and religious humanism. The first sees human rights as the product of the Western Enlightenment and French Revolution. It holds that dominant strains of Christianity (in particular Augustinianism) debase and degrade the human relative to the divine, that religious institutions are prone to the abuse of power, and that human rights arose in early modern Europe against the absolutist alliance of church and state and against the religious wars of the era. By contrast, the religious genealogy of human rights recognizes that there is a deep humanistic strain in Christianity that emphasizes human dignity rather than depravity and affirms the possibility of human progress (through reason and conscience) toward salvation or union with the divine (*theosis*). The religious genealogy locates the origins of human rights in this "participatory" type of theological anthropology (human beings participate in and work toward salvation, theosis being a divine-human project), as well as in the multiple Christian contributions to the idea, practice, and institutions of the rule of law (cannon law, conciliarism, natural law, later medieval and early modern natural-rights theory) and in the struggle for religious freedom and freedom of conscience in early modern Europe and colonial North America.

As paradoxical as it might seem, Russia has a powerful intellectual tradition (or counter-tradition) defending human personhood and its dignity and rights. Part of this rich tradition belongs to secular humanism, but arguably the more impressive part belongs to religious humanism. Beginning with the two greatest philosophers of nineteenth-century Russia, Boris Chicherin (1828–1904) and Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900), Russian religious humanists elaborated an idealist conception of human nature, according to which human beings are persons by virtue of reason's remarkable dual power: first, to recognize or posit absolute ideals (e.g., truth, the good, and beauty), and, second, to determine the will according to such ideals. These thinkers identified this capacity for *ideal self-determination* as the core of personhood and as the source of human dignity and human rights. They also believed that it defeated naturalism—the absolute

ideals of reason invalidated positivism, while free will refuted physical determinism—and thus entailed a theistic metaphysics. Precisely this belief is what made them *religious idealists*.

In 1922 Lenin deported most of Russia's prominent religious idealists, together with scores of other non-Marxist intellectuals. Among those exiled were Nicolas Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Semyon Frank, and Ivan Ilyin. These four Russian religious philosophers—and theorists of human personhood, dignity, and rights—are featured in the pages that follow, in the articles by Ana Siljak (who also considers Lev Shestov), Matthew Lee Miller, Daniel Adam Lightsey, Annette G. Aubert, Nathaniel Wood, and Paul Robinson. (Lightsey and Robinson highlight the importance of the capacity for ideal self-determination in their subjects' understanding of human nature.) Religious humanism attracted not only prominent Russian Orthodox philosophers, but also—as J. Eugene Clay shows in his article—Russian Christian minority thinkers such as a Aleksandr Prokhanov, a Spiritual Christian Molokan and fervent defender of freedom of conscience in pre-revolutionary Russia.

Alexander J. McConnell takes us to the late Soviet period, in his consideration of the different types of humanistic discourse in use at the time. Interestingly, he demonstrates that, compared to secular dissidents such as Andrei Sakharov, Christian dissidents engaged more directly with the concept of humanism, were more attentive to its different meanings, and were more likely to identify positively with it—though some, like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, firmly rejected it. Megan Brand adds a needed internationalist dimension to our collection with her article on the Dutch Christian humanist and jurist, Hugo Grotius, hailed as the father of international law. She makes a strong case for the continuing relevance of his theories of natural law and international order. John Witte, Jr., concludes the volume with his reflections about what the "ontological differences" between Orthodox Christianity and Western churches (and societies) might teach us—each other—about universal human rights and ecumenism.

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We welcome letters to the editors about any of the articles published in this volume. Please address them to Susan McReynolds (s-mcreynolds@northwestern.edu) and Randall Poole (rpoole@css.edu).

Research Articles

The Hidden Russia in Western Philosophy: An Outline for Future Research

by Ana Siljak

The field of Russian intellectual history contains no shortage of scholarly investigations into the impact of European thought in Russia. By comparison, the Russian influence on European thought receives far less attention, incommensurate with the extent of such influence, especially in the twentieth century. By providing a few concrete examples of the hidden Russian influence on philosophers as disparate as Jacques Maritain, Max Weber, and Leo Strauss, this article will speculate on the reasons for the invisibility of Russian ideas in Western philosophy and offer suggestions for further research.

Keywords: Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Lev Shestov, Jacques Maritain, Max Weber, Leo Strauss, Russian philosophy, Russian religion, European philosophy, 20th Century Europe.

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The Hidden Russia in Western Philosophy

An Outline for Future Research

Ana Siljak

In 1950, Isaiah Berlin gave one of the most concise but eloquent descriptions of the divide that still continues to separate the fields of analytical and continental philosophy:

> the great chasm between, on the one hand, the clear, dry world of Anglo-American ... empiricism, ... and, on the other, the darker and more personally anguished world of French and German religious or aesthetic or political metaphysics, was never deeper or more unbridgeable. Neither side recognised merit in the other, and no interpreters appeared to explain these apparently disparate activities to the other camp.[1]

With a simple replacement of a few terms, this could describe the gulf that presently exists between Russianists and scholars of Western intellectual history. Russianists, on the one hand, contend with the "darker and more personally anguished" world of Russian ideas, often completely foreign to those who study the much clearer and drier world of Western thought. Russianists have little cause to consider, in depth, the works of Thomas Aquinas, John Locke, or Alexis de Tocqueville; and Western intellectual historians have often never even heard the names of Vladimir Soloviev, Sergei Bulgakov, or Lev Shestov. Concepts such as materialism, nihilism, rights, dignity, toleration, freedom, and even liberalism and socialism have, as it were, two separate histories—one that extends back through European history and the other that, if it has a lineage at all, traces into the Russian past. And interpreters between the two worlds are few and far between.[2]

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1. Isaiah Berlin, *Three Years: Cultural Politics in the Mid Twentieth Century*, Isaiah Berlin Online, https://isaiah-berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/ (Bib. 292), 38–39. For the purposes of this essay, I am mostly confining myself to a discussion of English-language scholarly literature.

2. A good example of this is the case of this is Samuel Moyn's history of human rights, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, which only briefly mentions the Russian influence on human rights, via Nikolai Berdyaev. The Russian history of human rights, on the other hand, is detailed in Ferdinand Feldbrugge, "Human Rights in Russian Legal History," in *Human Rights in Russia and Eastern Europe*: *Essays in Honor of Ger P. van den Berg*, ed. Ferdinand J. M. Feldbrugge and William B. Simons (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2021), 65–90. Similarly, compendia on concepts such as "secularism" or "toleration," and general histories of "liberalism," rarely include Russian considerations of these terms. Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) and Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen's *Rethinking Secularism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) contain no men-

The divide should not be exaggerated, of course. Following in the tradition of the great intellectual historians such as Andrzej Walicki, many scholars have carefully traced the undeniable and pervasive impact of Western philosophers on Russia. Thanks to them, we understand the influence of the Enlightenment, Romanticism, German Idealism, and French socialism on Russian thought. In many ways, intellectual historians in the Russian field are obliged to consider, at least in passing, Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche, and comprehensive histories such as Franco Venturi's *Roots of Revolution* are filled with casual references to Jean Jacques Rousseau, Charles Fourier, and, of course, Karl Marx. The reception of Sigmund Freud, John Stuart Mill, and Joseph de Maistre in Russia has been at least considered, if only briefly.[3]

Undeniably, however, it is far rarer to find scholarship that moves in the other direction—scholarship that traces the influence of Russian ideas on the intellectual history of the West. Michael Gillespie has considered the impact of Turgenev's nihilists on Friedrich Nietzsche; a few articles discuss the influence of Dmitrii Merezhkovskii on Thomas Mann. That the phenomenologist Karl Jaspers supervised a dissertation on Vladimir Soloviev written by Alexander Kojève is merely a fact to be remarked on, and scholars of Jaspers have little to say about what Jaspers might have thought of Soloviev. In the end, this is the main focus of this essay: Russian influence on European and American ideas remains mostly hidden.[4]

The blame for this state of affairs must rest partly on the shoulders of us Russianists. For too long, students of Russian thought have suffered from a kind of scholarly timidity, modestly accepting the sharp disciplinary boundary between Russian and Western philosophy, simply assuming that ideas may naturally flow from West to East but certainly could never travel upstream. With the robust exception of studies on Fy-

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tion of Russia, while Catherine Wanner's *State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2012) and my *Religion and Secular Modernity in Russian Christianity, Judaism, and Atheism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2024) look at the concept from an exclusively Russian perspective.

3. Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution* (London: Phoenix Press, 1972); Kant and neo-Kantianism in Russia have been looked at in depth, see, for example, Thomas Nemeth, *Kant in Imperial Russia* (Cham: Springer, 2017) and Michael A. Meerson, "Put' against Logos: The Critique of Kant and Neo-Kantianism by Russian Religious Philosophers in the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," *Studies in East European Thought* 47, no. 3/4 (1995): 225–43; Nietzsche's influence in Russia has been considered by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, ed. *Nietzsche in Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); and Nel Grillaert, *What the God-seekers found in Nietzsche: The Reception of Nietzsche's Übermensch by the Philosophers of the Russian Religious Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2008). For Freud, see Alexander Etkind, *Eros of the Impossible: The History of Psychoanalysis in Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2019); for John Stuart Mill, see Julia Berest, "J. S. Mill's *On Liberty* in Imperial Russia: Modernity and Democracy in Focus," *Slavonic and East European Review* 97, no. 2 (2019): 266–298; for de Maistre, see Vera Miltchyna, "Joseph de Maistre's Works in Russia: A Look at Their Reception," in *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence: Selected Studies* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 241–270.

4. See Michael Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Urs Heftrich, "Thomas Manns Weg Zur Slavischen Dämonie: Überlegungen Zur Wirkung Dmitri Mereschkowskis," *Thomas Mann Jahrbuch* 8 (1995), 71–91. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24743635. Trevor Wilson's recent book on Alexandre Kojève and his much-needed contextualization of Kojève and his Russian philosophical roots. See Trevor Wilson, *Alexandre Kojève and the Specters of Russian Philosophy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2025). It is worth noting that Evert van der Zweerde voiced similar concerns in his "The Place of Russian Philosophy in World Philosophical History—A Perspective," *Diogenes* 56, no. 2–3 (2009): esp. 171–173.

odor Dostoevsky and Lev Tolstoy, scholars approach the question of Russian ideas in the West tentatively, and even apologetically. Similarities between Martin Heidegger and Nikolai Berdyaev, the Silver Age and European modernism, may sometimes be noted, but the question of influence is often avoided.[5] This is in sharp contrast, for example, to the discussions of Soviet philosophy in the West.

The conference on "Religion, Human Dignity, and Human Rights: New Paradigms for Russia and the West,"[6] and the current volume of *Northwestern University Studies in Russian Philosophy, Literature, and Religious Thought*, have, as their aim, the bridging of the chasm between these two adjacent, yet often separately viewed intellectual traditions—the Russian and the European/Western. These two traditions have considered, very carefully and from multiple perspectives, the questions of religion, human dignity, and human rights, but have often done so in separate contexts. It is to be hoped that the papers presented at the conference and published here will only be the beginning of a conversation. The purpose of my essay is to lay out, through a few examples, a kind of methodological blueprint for future bridge-building, and also to issue a plea: that Russianists take seriously the possibility of sustained Russian intellectual influence on Western thought.

An essential caveat is in order: mine is no argument for Russian exceptionalism. This would be very untimely, given Russia's multi-year invasion of Ukraine and Russia's general belligerence and hostility toward the West and all its values. The recovery of a hidden Russian influence in the West encourages neither Russian triumphalism nor messianism—quite the opposite. Instead, it is rather the unearthing of what Gary Saul Morson has called the "Russian counter-tradition."[7] This is a Russian intellectual tradition that is uniquely Russian but is not anti-Western, Russian but unflinchingly critical of Russian politics and cultural fashions. This Russian tradition is steeped in Western ideas, but it is also unafraid to critique Western errors and excesses. And I believe that it is this Russian counter-tradition, or in Randall Poole's elaboration, "the Russian counter-tradition of open humanism," that has hidden itself within the Western philosophical world.[8]

It seems that the best place to begin when considering this question is in a suburb of Paris, in Clamart, where the exiled Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, in whose

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5. Some examples of works that look at Russian influence on Western thought include Steven G. Marks, *How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); James L. Rice, *Freud's Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Adrian Wanner, "The Underground Man as Big Brother: Dostoevsky's and Orwell's Anti-Utopia," *Utopian Studies* 8, no. 1 (1997): 77–88; and George R. Clay, "Tolstoy in the Twentieth Century," in Donna Tussing Orwin, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 206–221.

6. Hosted by the Hamilton Center for Classical and Civic Education, University of Florida, November 1–2, 2024.

7. Gary Saul Morson, "Tradition and counter-tradition: The radical intelligentsia and classical Russian literature," in *A History of Russian Thought,* ed. William Leatherbarrow and Derek Offord (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 141–168.

8. Randall A. Poole, "Gary Saul Morson and *Vekhi/Landmarks*: Open Humanism in Russian Thought," *Northwestern University Research Forum in Russian Philosophy, Literature, and Religious Thought*, January 5, 2024, https://sites.northwestern.edu/nurprt/2024/05/01/gary-saul-morson-and-vekhi-landmarks-open-humanism-in-russian-thought/.

name this conference was organized, lived until he died in 1948. Berdyaev is an ideal illustration of Russian influence on European thought, an influence that was once universally acknowledged. Of course, Western ideas heavily influenced Berdyaev. He read voraciously in German and French and even some English, was conversant in all the major German and French philosophical schools, and followed European and American philosophical and theological debates throughout his life. This was unsurprising for a Russian of his generation. Far more surprising is the extent to which his ideas spread throughout the Western world. The theologian C.S. Lewis mentioned in passing that everyone was reading Berdyaev, Martin Heidegger inscribed a note of gratitude in a book he gave to Berdyaev, Aldous Huxley quoted him in his dystopian *Brave New World*,[9] and Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote about him in a long essay on "Continental Theology."[10] The breadth of his influence was confirmed by *Time Magazine* in 1948, declaring him "one of the great religious philosophers of his time," and by his serious consideration for the Nobel Prize.[11] To the extent that any Russian philosopher could be well-known in the West, Berdyaev had reached that status.

The contrast with the present day is striking—Berdyaev and his influence are now forgotten. Berdyaev does not even merit an entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and the last English-language biography of him was published in 1960.[12] To the extent he is mentioned today, he is often simply listed as one of "Putin's philosophers," since Putin off-handedly recommended Berdyaev as light summer reading for Russian officials.[13] The question remains: why has someone once so influential now become mischaracterized and mostly forgotten?

In the wake of the 150th anniversary of Berdyaev's birth, it is timely to use him as a prominent example of Russia's influence in European, and even global, intellectual culture. In some of the most unexpected ways, it turns out, culture does in fact flow from Russia to Europe and beyond. For Berdyaev and his fellow Russian exiles, this was literally true, as they physically journeyed from Russia to Europe in the 1920s, carrying with them an entire tradition of religious and philosophical thought that they

9. Quote from Berdyaev in *Brave New World*: "We used to pay too little attention to utopias, or even disregard them altogether, saying with regret they were impossible of realisation. Now indeed they seem to be able to be brought about far more easily than we supposed, and we are actually faced by an agonising problem of quite another kind: how can we prevent their final realisation? ... Utopias are more realisable than those 'realist politics' that are only the carefully calculated policies of office-holders, and towards utopias we are moving. But it is possible that a new age is already beginning, in which cultured and intelligent people will dream of ways to avoid ideal states and to get back to a society that is less 'perfect' and more free." Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1932), title page. Translation in John Hoyles, *The Literary Underground: Writers and the Totalitarian Experience, 1900–1950* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 121.

10. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Contemporary Continental Theology," September 13, 1951–January 15, 1952, in *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Stanford Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/contemporary-continental-theology.

11. "Religion: Berdyaev," *Time Magazine*, April 5, 1948, https://time.com/archive/6600681/religion-berdyaev/.

12. Donald A. Lowrie, *Rebellious Prophet: A Life of Nicolai Berdyaev* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960); M. M. Davy, *Nicolas Berdyaev: Man of the Eighth Day*, trans. Leonora Siepman (London: Bles, 1967).

13. A good overview of the controversy over Putin's philosophical reading list is found in Paul Robinson, "The Putin Book Club," *CIPS Blog*, Center for International Policy Studies, April 3, 2014, https://www.cips-cepi.ca/2014/04/03/the-putin-book-club/.

would proceed to share with Europeans for decades after. Berdyaev will be the first example of a hidden Russian counter-tradition in Western philosophy, one that reveals how Russian thought centered the question of what it means to be human in a modern world of secularism, scientism, rationalism, and totalitarianism.

With the recent availability of new sources, we can now definitively trace the effect of Berdyaev's distinctly Russian personalist and existentialist thought on Europe after 1922, especially its effect on interwar Western personalist justifications of human dignity and human rights. Even when they disagreed with him, French and German thinkers acknowledged his ideas as a challenge that revealed the limits of European rationalism and scientism, and that elevated the value of the person in a world that was rapidly eroding human worth.

Berdyaev was born in Ukraine in 1874, and he was raised in the iconoclastic and vibrant Ukrainian culture of the early twentieth century. Like so many of his generation, Berdyaev joined the Kyivan Marxist movement in the 1890s but was soon labeled a "dangerous individualist" for pointing out Marxism's tendency toward tyranny. Berdyaev eventually returned to the Orthodox faith of his youth, but only after years of experimenting with Nietzschean, occult, and sectarian movements.[14]

Berdyaev's particular Christian philosophy, in which there is a "religious comprehension of the Anthropos as a divine person," was rooted in a Russian tradition of personalism that drew upon a variety of sources, both European and Russian: the Kabbalah, Immanuel Kant, Vladimir Soloviev, Rudolf Steiner, Jakob Boehme, and the Eastern patristic theologians. Central to this personalism was the conception of the human person as the "image and likeness of God," and thus of incalculable value. As early as 1902, he wrote:

> We can formulate the absolute condition of the realization of the moral good: it is the recognition of the unconditional value and right to self-determination of the human person ... together with recognition of the equal value of people ... in the human person, we esteem the 'universal' ... a human being honors his God in another human being.[15]

Berdyaev's religious personalism and his commitment to the freedom and dignity of the person did not remain abstract. It led him to resist authoritarianism wherever he found it. Just to take a few examples: he was charged with blasphemy in 1913 for denouncing the Russian Orthodox Church's persecution of dissident monks, in 1922 he was arrested and interrogated by the Soviet head of the NKVD, Feliks Dzerzhinskii, to whom he denounced communism, and after which he was expelled from the Soviet Union for good. Much later, during World War II, he was interrogated by the Gestapo for his connections to Russians in the French resistance. He wrote articles against com-

14. Much of the information on Berdyaev here and below is taken from my introduction, "A New Christian Humanism: Nikolai Berdyaev and Jacques Maritain," in Bernard Hubert, *An Exceptional Dialogue, 1925–1948: Nikolai Berdyaev and Jacques Maritain* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2025), 3–36.

15. Nicolas Berdyaev, *Meaning of the Creative Act* (San Rafael, CA: Semantron Press, 2009), 19; N.A. Berdiaev, "The Ethical Problem in the Light of Philosophical Idealism," in Randall A. Poole, *Problems of Idealism: Essays in Russian Social Philosophy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 161–197, 175–177; see also Siljak, "New," 9–10.

munism, fascism, and antisemitism. It is no wonder that Alexander Solzhenitsyn later praised Berdyaev as "a brilliant defender of human freedom against ideology."[16]

When Berdyaev arrived in France in 1925, he brought his personalism with him in the concrete form of a small collection of essays, entitled *The New Middle Ages*. First published in Russian in 1923, it was then immediately translated into German in 1924 and became popular among German and French intellectuals shortly thereafter. The book's critique of Enlightenment rationalism and rampant technological mechanization, its elucidation of Marxism and Fascism as secular religions, and its vigorous defense of human personality against modern bourgeois capitalism captured the French philosophical imagination. It also introduced Berdyaev to the neo-Thomist philosopher, Jacques Maritain.

The firmest proof of the full integration of Berdyaev's philosophical worldview into the intellectual life of Europe has been recently laid out in multiple editions of their correspondence, by Teresa Obolevitch and Bernard Hubert, published in French, Russian and Polish, and English. These publications reveal that Maritain and Berdyaev were very close friends, and they engaged in philosophical and theological conversation with other French intellectuals, including Emmanuel Mounier, Etienne Gilson, and Gabriel Marcel. Maritain openly praised Russian philosophers for bringing to France a "theandric" view of human beings, central to personalism. By the time Jacques Maritain wrote his highly influential *The Rights of Man and Natural Law* in 1942, his view of human dignity had been formed in encounters with Berdyaev's ideas. Personalism, it seems, was a "Russo-French" philosophy. Again, one must reiterate that this personalism did not remain abstract—Berdyaev and Maritain valiantly stood against Communism, Fascism, Franco's Spain, European antisemitism, and the worst excesses of techno-capitalism.[17]

Influence is sometimes revealed in disagreement. Maritain remained a Thomist and insisted on the grounding of his insights on intelligible, God-given reason. Berdyaev, on the other hand, was impatient with the Thomistic system and insisted that the path of the individual to the divine was often undefinable and mystical, transcending reason. Even though Maritain explicitly criticized Berdyaev's "irrationalism" and his "anti-intellectual existential philosophy," he nonetheless admitted in his journal that Berdyaev's thought served an important role: "It pushes me to write on these topics (Personality, Evil)." By introducing the concept of divine nothingness, by highlighting the irrational limits of reason, by confronting, head-on, the topic of evil, Berdyaev shaped the European philosophical conversation. In the end, Maritain openly praised Russian philosophy for introducing, into Europe, a distinct "theandric" view of humanity. The émigré Helene Iswolsky, who knew both philosophers, declared that "Christian humanism" was Berdyaev's lasting

16. Ol'ga Volkogonova, *Berdiaev* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 2010), 29; Vitalii Shentalinskii, "Oskolki serebrianogo veka," *Novyi mir*, No. 5 (May 1998), http://www.nm1925.ru/Archive/Journal6_1998_5/Content.aspx; Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007), 13, 15, 130.

17. Teresa Obolevitch and Bernard Marchadier, eds. *Velikaia druzhba: Perepiska Zhaka i Raisy Mariten s N. A. Berdiaevym* (Zielona Góra: Uniwersytet Zielonogórski, 2022); Bernard Hubert, ed. *Une dialogue d'exception (1925–1948): Jacques Maritain et Nicolas Berdiaev* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 2022). See also, Siljak, "New," 25.

contribution to Western thought.[18] In sum, via Berdyaev's intellectual biography, I am illustrating my original point: the hidden influence of Berdyaev in the West was the influence of a philosophical Russian counter-tradition. Berdyaev criticized Russian and Soviet despotism, as well as European rationalism and totalitarianism, in equal measure. Berdyaev's unique attention to the theological and existential grounding of personalism acted as a challenge to Western thought, one that demanded a more complicated understanding of the human person, human meaning, and human dignity.

From the 1970s on, the ideas of Berdyaev and Maritain grew increasingly obscure, as neo-liberalism grew and the dangers of totalitarianism faded, and as the idea of a Christian humanism seemed unnecessary. But their collaboration had its legacy in the philosophers whose importance is undeniable: Martin Buber, Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre, and the popes John Paul II and Francis, just to name a few. Berdyaev's influence thus illustrates my general methodological point, which can be stated quite simply: if you look carefully, paying attention to correspondence, footnotes, and bibliographies, you will find Russians hidden under a number of Western philosophical rocks. Russians are often quietly present, especially when Western thinkers grapple with what it means to be human in the modern world, and this presence is a fruitful path for scholars to follow as they trace the impact of Russian thought on Western intellectual history.

But we must not think of Berdyaev as an isolated case of a Russian émigré in Europe. I am going to be bold now and illustrate the way in which we can find the Russian counter-tradition in some of modernity's most unexpected places—in the thought of those whom we think rather unlikely to embrace the existential and irrational. These are the philosophers Max Weber and Leo Strauss.

Max Weber is today best known for his classic text, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, in which he unearthed a hidden Calvinist anxiety over salvation at the heart of a worldly asceticism—an ethic of self-denial and hard work—that led to the flourishing of capitalism. In this work, as in many of his others, Max Weber has been accepted as he saw himself—a self-professed "scientist" and pioneer in the field of sociology.[19]

Is Max Weber a philosopher? In this matter, it is useful to read the testimony of Karl Jaspers, a philosopher of the continental school, who was categorical: "Over all these years, I never philosophized without thinking of Max Weber."[20] Even more eccentric is Jaspers's more detailed claim about Weber's philosophizing. In his "Max Weber as a

18. Siljak, "New," 27; the influence of Russian personalism on French thought is also discussed in Randall A. Poole, "Integral Humanisms: Jacques Maritain, Vladimir Soloviev, and the History of Human Rights," *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta, Filosofiia i Konfliktologiia*, 35 (2019): 92–106.

19. Space does not permit a full discussion of the scholarship on Weber, but a discussion of Max Weber as a founder of social science and sociology is found in Sheldon S. Wolin, "Max Weber: Legitimation, Method, and the Politics of Theory," *Political Theory* 9, no. 3 (1981): 401–424; Stephen P. Turner and Regis A. Factor, eds., *Max Weber and the Dispute over Reason and Value: A Study in Philosophy, Ethics, and Politics* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), especially chapters 8 and 9; and in Anthony Giddens's classic *Politics and Sociology in the Thought of Max Weber* (London: MacMillan, 1972). A detailed discussion of Weber's *Protestant Ethic* is found in Peter Ghosh, *Max Weber and the Protestant Ethic: Twin Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

20. See John Dreimanis, ed. and trans., *Karl Jaspers on Max Weber* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 140

Scientist," he wrote, "Max Weber's science is linked with the awareness of what is not known."[21] And it is worth quoting at length from his "Max Weber as a Philosopher":

> If science was once considered the way to true being, to true art, to true nature, to true God, and to true happiness, no one believes that any longer. Science has disenchanted everything. ... Therefore, as Tolstoy concluded, science is meaningless ... because it gives no answer to the only question important for us: What should we do? How should we live? Max Weber ... declares that it is simply indisputable that science has no answer to Tolstoyian questions of meaning, but contrary to Tolstoy, does not deny the meaning of science.[22]

For this reason, Jaspers concludes, Weber is "an existential philosopher."[23]

The above quote not only justifies seeing Max Weber as a philosopher (and perhaps even an existentialist!) but it also illustrates the main theme of this essay—Jaspers justifies Weber as an existentialist philosopher by referring to Russia (in the character of Leo Tolstoy). Tolstoy was, of course, widely known in Europe and throughout the world, but the larger question remains: how much did Weber know about Russia?

Scholars are not entirely ignorant of Weber's longstanding interest in Russia. Biographers have noted that Weber read Russian literature, including the works of Tolstoy, especially during a mental health crisis that lasted from 1898 to 1903. Weber's essays on Russian politics and society are well known (especially by Russianists). But most scholars of Weber have either ignored or dismissed the very idea of Russian influence on Weber. Weber's biographer Peter Ghosh, for example, outright asserts that "Russia was part of the Orient," and Weber's thought was "relentlessly Occidental;" and Joachim Radkau declares that Weber could not have learned much about Orthodoxy since "there were scarcely any Russian Orthodox theologians who offered Western scholars material for a worthwhile study."[24]

A more careful look at certain biographical details reveals that Weber was not as "relentlessly Occidental" as Ghosh claims. For example, from 1905 on, Weber studied the Russian language every morning before he got out of bed. In the early 1900s, he was closely involved with a group of Russian émigré students in Heidelberg, including Fyodor Stepun and Bogdan Kistiakovskii. Perhaps under their influence, Weber read not only Russian novels but also works of Russian philosophy, including Vladimir Soloviev (whose "The National Question in Russia" Weber published in translation) and the Slavophile Alexei Khomiakov (he was familiar with Khomiakov's defense of Orthodox conciliarity, or *sobornost'*).[25]

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21. Dreimanis, *Jaspers*, 99.

22. Dreimanis, *Jaspers*, 105–106.

23. Dreimanis, *Jaspers*, 9.

24. Fritz Ringer's *Max Weber: An Intellectual Biography* and the *Oxford Handbook on Max Weber* contain no mention of Russian thinkers. On Weber and Tolstoy, see Guy Oakes, "The Antinomy of Values: Weber, Tolstoy and the Limits of Scientific Rationality," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 1, no. 2 (2001): 195–211; Ghosh, *Weber*, quote 292. Joachim Radkau, *Max Weber: A Biography* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 246.

25. Two excellent articles that mention the possibility of a Russian influence on Weber are Hubert Treiber, "Die Geburt der Weberschen Rationalismus-These: Webers Bekanntschaften mit der russischen Geschichtsphilosophie in Heidelberg: Überlegungen anläßlich der Veröffentlichung des ersten Briefban-

Most revealing of Weber's "Orientalist" tendencies, however, was Weber's sustained interest in the philosophy of Sergei Bulgakov, especially in Bulgakov's book, *Philosophy of Economy: World as Household*. Weber had specifically requested that Bulgakov provide him with an excerpt from what Weber called his "great book." He then supervised the translation and publication of excerpts from the book in 1913.[26] Those who have read Bulgakov's book should be surprised by Weber's interest, since Bulgakov's central task in that work was the most un-Weberian redefinition of economic terms, including, for example, the consideration of "consumption" as "partaking of the flesh of the world"; "production" as "the liberation of creation from the imprisonment of thingness"; and economy as "the cosmic victory of beauty" on the pattern of the Divine Sophia.[27]

What did Weber learn from Bulgakov (or from Soloviev or Khomiakov, for that matter)? A full account of this has yet to be written. But there are two threads of influence worth following. The first appears in excerpts from a conversation among Weber and other sociologists attending the first meeting of the "German Sociological Society" in 1910. Let me quote what Weber told his colleagues:

> While the Calvinist church is permeated by sectarianism, the Greek church is saturated, in great measure, with a very specific classical mysticism ... brotherly love and charity, those special human relationships which the great salvation religions have transfigured (and which seem so pallid among us). ...
>
> ... From this acosmic quality, characteristic of all Russian religiosity, is derived a specific kind of natural right which is stamped upon the Russian sects and also on Tolstoy. ... Soloviev's specific concept of the church, in particular, rests on it. The concept rests on "community" (in Toennies's sense), not on "society."[28]

Could this quote reveal that, for Weber, the opposite of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism was an Orthodox ethic and spirit of community? The tantalizing reference to natural right here is also interesting—did he mean he saw a Russian version of natural right deriving from Orthodoxy?[29] We know that Weber planned, but never

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des der Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe," *Leviathan* 19, no. 3 (1991): 435–451 and Andreas E. Buss, "Eastern Orthodox Christianity and the Other Spheres of Life in Max Weber's Russia," in Alan Sica, ed., *The Routledge International Handbook on Max Weber* (Boston: Routledge, 2022), 235–247. Treiber points out that Weber probably learned about Soloviev through Stepun, who wrote his dissertation on him. Treiber, "Geburt," 442. For his acquaintance with Stepun and Kistiakovskii and the publication of a translation of Soloviev see his letters to Paul Siebeck in M. Rainer Lepsius and Wolgang J. Mommsen, eds., *Max Weber, Briefe 1906–1908* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), 110–111, 119, 127, 141. The reference to Khomiakov is found in Weber's speech to the "German Sociological Society," discussed below.

26. For Weber's interest in Bulgakov's book, see his letters to Edgar Jaffe in M. Rainer Lepsius and Wolfgang J. Mommsen, eds., *Max Weber, Briefe 1911–1912* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996), 550, 747. An excerpt was published as "Die naturphilosophischen Grundlagen der Wirtschaftstheorie," in *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 36, no. 2 (1913), 359–393.

27. See Sergei Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy: The World as Household*, ed. and trans. Catherine Evtukhov (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 101–103, 122, 153.

28. Ferdinand Toennies, Georg Simmel, Ernst Troeltsch, and Max Weber, "Max Weber on church, sect, and mysticism," *Sociological Analysis* 34, no. 2 (1973): 140–149, 144–145. It is interesting that Weber used Tönnies binary of community/society [Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft] long before Andrzej Walicki did in his *Slavophile Controversy*, and he did so in the presence of Tönnies himself.

29. This is explored in Buss, "Eastern," 238–240.

wrote, a book on Orthodox Christianity. What would he have written? The answer is not at all clear, but this trace of Russia in Weber is worth exploring.

The second thread of Russian influence may well lead directly to Weber's conception of "the disenchantment of the world," which appears in his lecture "Science as a Vocation" given in 1917, and has become a cornerstone of the philosophical and sociological debates about modernity. Disenchantment was, for Weber, the disturbing rise of "intellectualization and rationalization" that replaced the understanding of the world as composed of "mysterious incalculable forces." In Weber's words:

> Increasing intellectualization and rationalization ... means ... that there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage. ... Technical means and calculations perform the service. ...
>
> Now this process of disenchantment ... and, in general, this "progress," to which science belongs as a line and motive force, do they have any meanings that go beyond the purely practical and technical? You will find the question raised in the most principled form in the works of Leo Tolstoi. ... Tolstoi has given the simplest answer, with the words: "Science is meaningless because it gives no answer to the only question important for us: 'What shall we do and how shall we live ...'"[30]

You will note that Russia, in the form of Tolstoy, is not even hidden but right at the center of Weber's disenchantment thesis.[31] It is worth asking, however, whether Tolstoy, given Weber's wider reading, was but the most prominent representative of Russian philosophical counter-tradition that included Khomiakov, Soloviev, and Bulgakov, a counter-tradition that forced Weber to examine the drawbacks of excessive scientism and rationalism, and which may have even helped him to formulate the concept of "rationalization" in the first place.

If Jaspers is correct that Weber, as a philosopher, utilized the scientific method while also articulating its drawbacks and limits, we can suggest that Russian thought helped him to do so. Perhaps it was the Russians that infected Weber with the anxiety at the heart of his "disenchantment" thesis, an anxiety that modernity was losing sight of the human, that dignity, and even "natural right" could not be achieved through modern science. Weber's "existentialism" may, in part, be of Russian origin.

The thinker most openly troubled by Weber's existentialist rejection of rationalism was the German-Jewish philosopher Leo Strauss, considered the founder of Straussianism and American neo-conservatism. For Strauss, Weber

> tended to see before him the alternative of either complete spiritual emptiness or religious revival. He despaired of the modern this-worldly irreligious experiment, and yet he remained attached to it because he was fated to be-

30. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 152–153.

31. A discussion of this is found in Oaks, "Antinomy," 201–205.

> lieve in science as he understood it. The result of this conflict, which he could not resolve, was his belief that the conflict between values cannot be resolved by human reason.[32]

In a way, Strauss's philosophical project endeavored to recover reason from the clutches of Weberian doubt. According to Alan Mittleman, Strauss's philosophy was animated by this question of reason and faith, and the struggle to recover reason in an age of doubt, because Strauss believed that "there is a truly just way of life capable of being known by natural reason and lived out in political society."[33] I will now hypothesize, however, that Leo Strauss recovered reason also by grappling with a hidden Russia at the heart of Western thought.

Strauss's contemporary legacy is primarily located in the Anglo-American philosophical world, but his early intellectual development took place in continental Europe. Before he emigrated to the United States in 1938, he met and corresponded with a kind of who's who of European philosophers, including Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, and Alexander Kojève. It was while in Europe that Strauss began to consider the philosophical question of the relationship between reason and religion.[34]

According to his biographer, Daniel Tanguay, however, Strauss came up with a novel formulation of the relationship in 1946. From that time, he referred to the conflict between reason and religion as one between "Jerusalem and Athens."[35] The binary is a reference to the well-known question of Tertullian, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" But Strauss did not formulate his binary in reference to Tertullian. Instead, careful reading of Strauss's various writings on the subject reveals a hidden Russian influence, specifically that of Lev Shestov, the Russian-Jewish philosopher who wrote his final book, *Athens and Jerusalem*, just before his death in 1938.

Shestov was born in Kyiv in 1866 and befriended Berdyaev long before they both emigrated to France. When Shestov came to Paris, he brought with him an existentialism far more radical than even that of Berdyaev. Shestov's philosophy intrigued the German interwar philosophical world, and Shestov met and corresponded with a number of German philosophers. He was a good friend of Edmund Husserl, who introduced him to Martin Heidegger and suggested that Shestov read Søren Kierkegaard (according to Samuel Moyn, Shestov reintroduced Kierkegaard into European thought). He was a part of the philosophical circles in Paris that included Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson. Strauss and Shestov, therefore, shared a common philosophical community.[36]

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32. Quoted and discussed in Alan Mittleman, "Weber's Politics as a Vocation: Some American Considerations," *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy* 20, no. 1 (2014): 279–295, 281.

33. Mittleman, "Politics," 280.

34. For a discussion of the European foundations of Strauss's thought, see Samuel Moyn, "From Experience to Law: Leo Strauss and the Weimar Crisis of the Philosophy of Religion," *History of European Ideas* 33 (2) (2007): 174–94; and Daniel Tanguay, *Leo Strauss: An Intellectual Biography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

35. Tanguay, *Strauss*, 144.

36. Biographies of Shestov in English are few, see Michael Finkenthal, *Lev Shestov: Existential Philosopher and Religious Thinker* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010). Brian Horowitz has written excellent articles on Shestov's ideas, see Brian Horowitz, "The tension of Athens & Jerusalem in the philosophy of Lev Shestov," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 43, no. 1 (1999): 156–173; and Brian Horowitz and Bernard Martin, "The demolition of reason in Lev Shestov's Athens and Jerusalem," *Poetics Today* (1998): 221–233.

Strauss's connection with Russia, and with Shestov in particular, has been mostly invisible to Strauss scholars (and to Shestov scholars, for that matter). The possibility that Strauss read Shestov is often briefly raised, only to be dismissed.[37] But the evidence of a Russian connection exists. Strauss participated in a briefly mentioned "Russian course" in Berlin and a "Russian circle" in London. And there is no doubt that Strauss read Shestov—he specifically mentions the existence of "notes to Shestov" in his writings on Plato's Euthyphro. In sum, Strauss spent time with Russian thought in general and Shestov's philosophy in particular. This leads to the specific question: Could it be that Leo Strauss wrote "Jerusalem and Athens" partly in response to Lev Shestov's *Athens and Jerusalem*?[38]

Placed side by side, the writings of Strauss and Shestov on this subject come to diametrically different conclusions, but they share the same premise: the question of Athens vs. Jerusalem is central to modernity. Both philosophers suggest that modern people must make a choice between the cities, between, as Strauss calls it, "ways of life."[39] Importantly, moreover, they both trace the origin of the question to the same place. They both begin, not with Tertullian, but the Biblical book of Genesis and the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. More concisely, for both men, the dilemma between Athens and Jerusalem begins with the serpent in the garden.

In *Athens and Jerusalem*, Shestov makes the startling claim that Western philosophy is the legacy of the serpent. It was the serpent who told Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, so that they would ascend to a divine, impersonal, and comprehensive understanding of the world, to become "like gods, knowing." Modern philosophers, unlike Eve, do not even hesitate before eating of the Tree.

> All of us are persuaded that the serpent who enticed our primal forefathers to taste of the fruits of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil did not deceive them. ... If it is necessary to choose between God who warns us against the fruits of the tree ... and the serpent who extols these fruits to us, the educated European cannot hesitate; he will follow the serpent ... he

37. Jeffrey Bernstein has an astute summary of Shestov's Athens and Jerusalem but declares "whether Strauss was familiar with Shestov remains an open question." Bernstein, *Strauss*, 11. Remi Brague declares that Strauss could not have read Shestov's *Athens and Jerusalem* before Strauss's own formulation of the problem because Brague misdates the first publication to 1951 (it was published in French and German in 1938). See, Rémi Brague, "Athens, Jerusalem, Mecca: Leo Strauss's 'Muslim' Understanding of Greek Philosophy," *Poetics Today* 19, no. 2 (1998): 235–59, 236. https://doi.org/10.2307/1773441. The following works do not consider Shestov at all: Steven B. Smith, "Leo Strauss: Between Athens and Jerusalem," *The Review of Politics* 53, no. 1 (1991): 75–99. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1407552. David Janssens, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Philosophy, Prophecy, and Politics in Leo Strauss's Early Thought* (State University of New York Press, 2009); Orr, *Jerusalem*. The only sustained comparison of the thought of Shestov and Strauss on the subject of Athens and Jerusalem is found in Tikhon G. Sheynov, "'Athens and Jerusalem' of Leo Strauss and Leo Shestov," *Voprosy filosofii* 4 (2024): 126–136.

38. References to the Russian group and circle appear in Strauss's letters to Jacob Klein in Heinrich Meier, ed., *Leo Strauss: Gesammelte Schriften, Band 3: Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft und zugehörige Schriften. Briefe* Vol. 46. (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2017), 527, 530. Reference to Shestov appears in Hannes Kerber and Svetozar Minkov, eds., *Leo Strauss on Plato's Euthyphro: The 1948 Notebook, with Lectures and Critical Writings* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2024), 97.

39. Laurenz Denker, Hannes Kerber, and David Kretz, "Leo Strauss's 'Jerusalem and Athens' (1950): Three Lectures Delivered at Hillel House, Chicago," *Journal for the History of Modern Theology/Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* 29, no. 1 (2022): 133–173, 138.

> who seeks to discredit knowledge in our eyes lies, while the truth speaks through the mouth of him who glorifies knowledge.[40]

Shestov, Hegel, Spinoza, and so many other philosophers crave the knowledge that would make the world predictable and understandable, a world which they could "know" in all of its complexity. Starting with Spinoza, philosophy wanted to "discover the rigorous and unchangeable order of being," and "the science which reveals this order to man." In a way, this sort of knowledge was the precursor to a kind of Stoic acceptance of life, and knowledge that leads to patient endurance of all that comes. This is why, for Shestov, Spinoza had a rule: not to lament, not to curse, but to understand."[41]

For Shestov, the tragedy of the Tree lies in a simple fact: *the serpent lied*. Philosophers hubristically chose knowledge over God, pursued the supposed omniscience of reason and fact, but did not become gods. Instead, they were imprisoned by their own rationalism, bound by the heavy chains of rational and material causality. In this manner, they lost their freedom and their human dignity, guaranteed by the God who created all that was reasonable and that stood above reason itself. "Adam exchanged the freedom which determined his relationship to the Creator who hears and listens," wrote Shestov, for "the indifferent and impersonal truths which do not hear and do not listen to anything." Humanity disobeyed God and became enslaved by necessity.[42]

For Shestov, controversially, freedom and dignity paradoxically require the absurd: "the relationship of man to God is freedom." This was Tertullian's statement of faith, which Shestov, though Jewish, quoted approvingly: "the son of God died: it is absolutely credible because it is absurd; and having been buried, he rose from the dead; it is certain because it is impossible."[43] Only an absurd God, wholly free from the tyranny of causality, creates a space for vertiginous human freedom, a space into which faith can leap. This Jewish existentialist faith became the cornerstone of Shestov's philosophical contribution to Western thought.[44]

In his talk entitled "Jerusalem and Athens," given in 1950, I think Strauss implicitly attacked Shestov: "What is to be done with those who assert and reassert their belief in revelation while claiming to see farther and higher than does the positive mind?" What is to be done, indeed! Only one thing: to rescue philosophy from the clutches of Shestov's absurdism.

To do so, Strauss himself turns to the serpent in the garden. Strauss defends the serpent: "The serpent spoke the truth." His evidence? "Everything happens exactly as the serpent had predicted. Adam and Eve do not die, their eyes are opened, they become similar to God by acquiring knowledge." Yes, Adam and Eve are punished, but there is only one lesson in this, according to Strauss: God is capricious and fickle, God, it seems, wants "simplicity of his obedience to God and trust in his maker" even in the

40. Lev Shestov, *Athens and Jerusalem* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2016), 80

41. Shestov, *Athens*, 83, 10

42. Shestov, *Athens*, 206

43. Shestov, *Athens*, 165

44. According to Sidney Monas, there was a strain of Hasidism in Shestov's thought. See Sidney Monas, "New Introduction," in Leon Shestov, *Chekhov and Other Essays* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), v–xxiv, vii–ix.

face of His arbitrary whims. For Strauss, unthinking obedience was the Biblical road to Jerusalem.[45]

So how did Strauss rescue reason and philosophy from revelation? First of all, he resolutely declared his agreement with Shestov: "Philosophy is not *necessarily* the right way of life. Philosophy is not *evidently* the right way of life. The *choice* of philosophy by an individual is then based on *blind choice*, on blind faith."[46] Like Shestov, Strauss believes that people must choose between faith and reason, and that the choice of reason is, in fact, a blind leap. But in another place, he adds that there are a few who do make that choice. For this reason, inspired by Shestov, Strauss reread Genesis, but did so in his own peculiar manner: "esoterically."[47] Only a careful reading of the implications inserted by what Strauss calls the "Biblical authors," could a reader the meaning hidden for those capable and intelligent enough to see it. In one reading, God extols revelation and obedience, and for the unthinking many, this is enough. But for the few, chosen and unafraid, the serpent points the way to reason, to philosophy, to Athens. These, Strauss wrote, can become "kings," the very few, since "knowledge of the most important things will remain, as it always was, the preserve of the philosophers, i.e., of a very small part of the population."[48] Only a few, it seems, can be brave enough to follow the serpent.

Strauss thus inverted Shestov, but it seems that, as Berdyaev did for Maritain, and as Soloviev, Khomiakov, and Bulgakov did for Weber, so Shestov challenged Strauss to grapple with existential and theological questions at the heart of modernity, and to contend with what it means to be human in a world of science and progress. In other words, Strauss grappled with the Russian counter-tradition, and thus, this counter-tradition reveals new perspectives on his philosophical project.

In the hidden Russia in Western philosophy, we see a repeated, subterranean challenge to European and Western philosophizing. If we return to the Isaiah Berlin quote with which this article begins, we can propose the following: if continental philosophy is "impenetrably dark," "romantic," and "struggling" with "cosmic issues" upon which "salvation" depends, it is so partly because of the hidden Russian undercurrent within it. As Dostoevsky noted in *Brothers Karamazov*, nothing was more intellectually Russian than "the eternal questions, of the existence of God, and immortality. ..." The continental builders of systems—Husserl, Heidegger, Jaspers, Maritain, and Strauss encountered in Russian philosophy an exploration of boundaries, an understanding of limits, a pointing toward the transcendent and the salvific—all of which could be countered, but none of which could be ignored. It is in this hidden Russian anti-rationalism and

45. Denker, et al., eds. "Jerusalem," 157–158.

46. Denker, et al., eds. "Jerusalem," 173.

47. Discussions of Strauss's esoteric method, primarily extolled in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) can be found in Robert Howse, "Reading between the Lines: Exotericism, Esotericism, and the Philosophical Rhetoric of Leo Strauss," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 32, no. 1 (1999): 60–77; and Shadia B. Drury "The Esoteric Philosophy of Leo Strauss," *Political Theory* 13, no. 3 (1985): 315–337.

48. Leo Strauss, "Jerusalem and Athens: Some Introductory Reflections," *Commentary Magazine*, June 1967, https://www.commentary.org/articles/leo-strauss/jerusalem-and-athens-some-introductory-reflections/.

anti-scientism that, I think, the best of the Russian counter-tradition resides, a counter-tradition whose as yet undiscovered streams we should not be afraid to explore.

It is fitting to close with parting thoughts from Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson on Mikhail Bakhtin, whose influence on the West has not yet been forgotten. According to them, Bakhtin's literary criticism attacked "theoretism," which was a modern "way of thinking that abstracts from concrete human actions all that is generalizable," and "takes that abstraction as a whole." Bakhtin saw that theoretism "blinds us to the particular person and situation, which is where morality resides." In this, Morson and Emerson argue, he was a part of the Russian counter-tradition, and it is as good a summary of the counter-tradition as any philosophical definition.[49]

The Russian counter-tradition may not have provided clear answers to how one must live, but sought instead for a philosophy of the particular, the existential, the transcendent, and the human. It insisted on freedom and dignity. It called for "a surplus of humanness" to undermine the parsimony of ideology. Born in the contest against the prevailing worldview of the twentieth century, concerned to defend the human personality against the totalizing ideologies of communism and fascism that threatened it, this counter-tradition retains its relevance in our present era. Our much-discussed present crises—of liberalism, of the humanities, of artificial intelligence—could benefit from a revitalization of the concept of personality that takes into account the whole human being: physical and spiritual, in its immanence and transcendence. It may be hidden and a counter-tradition, but in a time where the human person is devalued, human dignity is in question, and human rights are violated in the West and in Russia, this counter-tradition deserves to be resurrected to challenge us anew.

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49. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, eds., *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 7, 9.

The Democratic Christian Vision of Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov

by J. Eugene Clay

This article analyzes the democratic Christian vision of Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov (1871–1912), a Russian Molokan physician, publicist, and advocate of religious freedom. Rejecting both Orthodox ecclesiastical authority and Western Protestant dogmatism, Prokhanov articulated a rational, ecumenical Christianity grounded in freedom of conscience and the primacy of love over doctrine. Through his journal *Dukhovnyi khristianin* and his public activism, he fostered open theological debate, defended minority rights, and sought to unite diverse religious communities within a non-hierarchical Christian framework. Prokhanov's project illuminates the role of religious dissent in early twentieth-century Russian debates over democracy, conscience, and human rights.

Keywords: Molokans, Spiritual Christianity, Religious freedom, Sectarianism, Aleksandr Prokhanov

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The Democratic Christian Vision of Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov

J. Eugene Clay

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, scholars including Samuel Moyn, John Witte, Jr., and Michael Gillespie have argued for the significance of religion in the development of human rights discourse, taking issue with the dominant historiography that ignores or discounts religion.[1] In Russia, too, religious minorities have played an outsized role in the struggle to secure human rights, especially freedom of conscience. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a prime example of a leader in this struggle was the physician and publicist Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov (1871–1912). Born into a family of Spiritual Christian Molokans—dissenters who rejected the icons, sacraments, and hierarchy of the established Russian Orthodox Church in favor of a biblical faith that sought to worship God "in spirit and in truth"—Prokhanov deliberately embraced the religion of his ancestors, even as his father and brothers abandoned it for Western Protestantism.[2] However, Prokhanov's version of Spiritual Christianity was not simply a mindless adoption of family tradition. Instead, he offered a utopian vision: a rationalized, ecumenical Christianity of the Russian people, without a Synod or episcopal authority, that practiced an "internal freedom of conscience" and was united not by a creed but by love expressed in good works.[3] Consciously rejecting Western Protestantism, with its proclamation of salvation through grace alone by faith alone, Prokhanov created the journal *The Spiritual Christian* (*Dukhovnyi khristianin*) in 1905—the revolutionary year when the czar issued a decree on religious toleration—to be an arena for open debate, where a truly popular (*narodnyi*) Christianity could emerge.

1. Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (University of Chicago Press, 2008); Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); John Witte, *The Reformation of Rights: Law, Religion, and Human Rights in Early Modern Calvinism* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

2. According to an official census taken in 1912 by the Department of Spiritual Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior, the number of Molokans who observed Sunday as their day of worship numbered 133,935. In addition, there were 4,423 Molokan Sabbatarians and 4,844 Spiritual Christian Jumpers [*pryguny*], so called because they jumped in their worship gatherings at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. See *Statisticheskie svedeniia o sektantakh (k 1 ianvaria 1912 g.)*, Izdanie Departamenta dukhovnykh del (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia, 1914), 33–35, 47, 51. Molokans themselves considered these figures to be a gross undercount; for example, V. I. Savchenko, a Spiritual Christian of Vladikavkaz, claimed that the true official figures showed that there were 930,000 of his co-religionists in Russia as of 1 January 1910. See V. I. Savchenkov, "Svedeniia o chisle sektantov v Rossii," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 6, no. 1 (January 1911): 52.

3. Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov, "Stoletnii molokanskii iubilei," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 2 (January 1906): 20

To achieve this result, Prokhanov adopted a radically democratic approach to the development of doctrine and practice. Is God a trinity of three persons? Is Christ fully human and fully God? Should Christians pray for the dead? Is the Old Testament still relevant for followers of Jesus? Would Christ's Second Coming be an observable physical event or an invisible spiritual reality? To answer these and similar dogmatic questions, Russian Orthodox Christians relied on the authority of their creeds and ecumenical councils while Baptists turned to their infallible scriptures. By contrast, Prokhanov encouraged believers to decide for themselves which teachings and rituals were true and right. Rather than impose his own theological views on others (as did the state-supported Orthodox Church with its edicts of excommunication, monastery prisons, and network of missionaries who worked closely with local police to identify and prosecute heretics), Prokhanov sought to discover and publicize what Spiritual Christians actually believed and practiced. When they disagreed, as they often did, Prokhanov invited reasoned debate and dialogue. In Prokhanov's democratic vision of Christianity, rules of faith and practice were not to be dictated and enforced from above, but rather to bubble up from below. No doctrine, no ritual was as important as love, which could unite into a single community even those with radically different understandings of faith. Such a Christianity, which placed love above dogma, would create a free society "of the sons of liberty who worship God in spirit and truth."[4] Firmly committed to a progressive theology, Prokhanov believed that the orthodoxies and orthopraxies of today would inevitably change as humanity advanced toward truth. In Prokhanov's assembly of saints, there were no dogmas, no heretics, no excommunications: the Chalcedonian Christian who held that Christ was fully God and fully human lived in loving fellowship with the docetic Molokan elder who taught that Jesus had the body of an angel. To achieve such unity, free believers did not need the external force of pope, priest, creed, or sacred scripture. They needed only the Christian virtue of love.

Beyond his attempts to unify and reform the fractured Molokan community to which he was heir, Prokhanov also lobbied for religious freedom, petitioned state officials for the right to publish, organized Spiritual Christian congresses, and helped congregations navigate the complex process of registration so that they could enjoy the benefits of juridical personhood. He provided tools, drawn partly from his theological education at the Protestant Faculty of the University of Paris, to help Molokan elders compose sermons and cultivate the faith of their children and youth.

In his religious project, Prokhanov also engaged prominent members of the secular intelligentsia. He was a passionate participant in sessions of the Ethnographic Section of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society that focused on the so-called "sectarians," a disparaging epithet that included Spiritual Christianity. At such sessions, he exchanged his views with the writer and diarist Mikhail Mikhailovich Prishvin (1873–1954), the avant-garde novelist Dmitrii Sergeevich Merezhkovskii (1865–1941), the Bolshevik revolutionary Vladimir Dmitrievich Bonch-Bruevich (1873–1955), and the Populist journalist Aleksandr Stepanovich Prugavin (1850–1920), who authored several books on popular religion. He also participated in the Religious-Philosophical Society that met

4. *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 7, no. 1 (January 1912): 1.

in the home of Merezhkovskii and his wife, Zinaida Nikolaevna Gippius (1869–1945).[5] Seeking to expand the discussion about true religion, Prokhanov invited non-Molokans, including vegetarians, followers of Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), and former revolutionaries to publish articles in his journal.

To be sure, Prokhanov's expansive understanding of Spiritual Christianity was not widely shared even among his fellow Molokans, many of whom held tightly to their own traditions, doctrines, and rituals. In fact, his critical approach to the biblical text provoked strongly negative reactions from some of his co-religionists. As his friend and collaborator David Vasil'evich Zaitsev noted upon Prokhanov's death, "Only a small group of conscientious Molokan youth and some of the Tolstoyan intelligentsia supported him."[6] Nevertheless, by creating the most successful of all the Molokan journals, Prokhanov created an important legacy for the generations of Spiritual Christians who lived under atheistic Communism; in the 1960s and 1970s, Soviet ethnographers investigating contemporary Molokans found handwritten copies of articles from Prokhanov's journal, *Dukhovnyi khristianin*.[7]

On April 2, 1912, Prokhanov's tragic death at the age of 41 from typhus, contracted from a patient he was treating in St. Michael's Hospital in Tiflis, put an end to his personal participation in the Molokan revival. His two-year-old son Andrei (1910–1943), who would later perish at the Battle of Stalingrad, was left an orphan. Deprived of the opportunity to raise his son, Prokhanov could not transmit his religious values to his descendants. Likewise, the Stalinist antireligious campaigns of the 1930s undid much of his work as a champion of religious freedom. Ironically, today Prokhanov is remembered primarily not for his religious views or for his struggle for freedom of conscience, but as the grandfather of the ultranationalist, antisemitic Russian Orthodox journalist and novelist Aleksandr Andreevich Prokhanov (b. 1938), a founder of the reactionary newspaper *Zavtra*.[8] Nevertheless, the elder Prokhanov's legacy survives in his journal, *Dukhovnyi khristianin*, whose issues have been carefully collected, digitized, and made available on the internet by contemporary Molokans.[9]

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5. "Zhurnal zasedaniia Otdeleniia etnografii I.R.G.O. 13 fevralia 1909 g.," *Izvestiia Vsesoiuznogo geograficheskogo obshchestva* (1909): 33–34; Mikhail Mikhaĭlovich Prishvin, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozh. lit-ra, 1986), vol. 8: 34.

6. D. Zaitsev, "Nad bezvremennoi mogiloi (Pamiati A. S. Prokhanova)," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 7, no. 6/7 (June/July 1912): 8.

7. A. I. Klibanov, *Iz mira religioznogo sektantstva: Vstrechi, besedy, nabliudeniia* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1974), 221–22.

8. Lev Danilkin, *Chelovek s iaitsom: Zhizn´ i mneniia Aleksandra Prokhanova* (Moscow: Ad Marginem, 2007); Juliette Faure, "A Russian Version of Reactionary Modernism: Aleksandr Prokhanov's 'Spiritualization of Technology,'" *Journal of Political Ideologies* 26, no. 3 (2021): 356–79; Juliette Faure, *The Rise of the Russian Hawks: Ideology and Politics from the Late Soviet Union to Putin's Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025).

9. For example, Sergei Petrov, "Dukhovnye khristiane molokane: Gazety, zhurnaly," https://molokanin.ru/gztjur/?n=n5_7; "Dukhovnye khristiane-molokane: Materialy k istorii," http://molokans.ru/bibliography/periodicals

Molokanism: Aleksandr Prokhanov's Spiritual Heritage

Prokhanov's heritage of religious dissent stretched back to the 1760s when hundreds of people in southern Russia's black-earth provinces of Tambov and Voronezh openly rejected the fasts, hierarchies, temples, priesthood, sacraments, and icons of the Russian Orthodox Church and instead embraced the worship of God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). Relying on their interpretations of the Slavonic Bible, these rebels, who later became known as Spiritual Christians, declared that "God dwells in temples that are not made by hand and does not take pleasure in the works of human hands. ... The image of God is the human soul; one day true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and Truth, for the Lord seeks such worshipers. ... God did not ordain salvation to come from soulless things made by human hands."[10] Rather than venerate icons, these believers venerated one another, for humans were made in God's image.[11] Sacraments such as baptism and communion were internal spiritual experiences rather than physical rites. The true church was the community of the faithful gathered in the open air, not specially sanctified buildings. It was a church made up of people, "not of boards, but of ribs" [*ne v brevnakh, a v rebrakh*].[12] Believing that Christ would soon return, the Spiritual Christians took the bold step of sending delegations to Empress Catherine to have their faith recognized and protected from the abuses of local officials.[13]

Unsurprisingly, this bold appeal to the empress failed. The Spiritual Christians were disappointed in both their political and their eschatological expectations. Christ did not return, and in 1769 the Russian government not only rejected their pleas for toleration but actively repressed their faith, seizing their children and property and sending their leaders into military service on the imperial frontiers. Others were publicly beaten and exiled to hard labor. In the face of such persecution, Spiritual Christians went underground, forming secret support networks and coded passwords to maintain their community, even as they were forcibly separated from one another.[14]

During the next decades, these religious rebels split into two major movements: the Dukhobors (spirit-wrestlers, named by learned Orthodox heresiologists after the unrelated fourth-century heresy, the *pneumatomachi*) and the Spiritual Christian Molokans, so called because they drank milk (*moloko*) during the Orthodox fasts when the con-

10. Nikolai Gavrilovich Vysotskii, ed., *Materialy iz istorii dukhoborcheskoi sekty* (Sergiev Posad: Tipografiia I. I. Ivanova, 1914), 14.

11. Pavel Grigor'evich Ryndziunskii, "Antitserkovnoe dvizhenie v Tambovskom krae v 60-kh godakh XVIII veka," *Voprosy istorii religii i ateizma* 4 (1954): 174.

12. Vladimir Ivanovich Dal', "Poslovitsy russkogo naroda: sbornik poslovits, pogovorok, rechenii, prislovii, chistogovorok, pribautok, zagadok, poverii i proch.," *Chteniia v Imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete* kn. 2, chast' II: Materialy otechestvennye (1861): 14.

13. Svetlana Aleksandrovna Inikova, "Tambovskie dukhobortsy v 60-e gody XVIII veka," *Vestnik Tambovskogo universiteta.* Series: *Gumanitarnye nauki* 2, no. 1 (1997): 39–53; Svetlana Aleksandrovna Inikova, "The Tambov Dukhobors in the 1760s," *Russian Studies in History* 46, no. 3 (2007): 10–39; Svetlana Georgievna Tambovtseva, "Dukhobortsy XVIII veka kak tekstual'noe soobshchestvo: Nekotorye istochniki chetyrekh rannikh dukhoborcheskikh psalmov," *Russkaia literatura*, no. 2 (2019): 25–37.

14. J. Eugene Clay, "Russian Spiritual Christianity and the Closing of the Black-Earth Frontier: The First Heresy Trials of the Dukhobors in the 1760s," *Russian History* 40, no. 2 (2013): 221–43; Inikova, "Tambovskie dukhobortsy"; Inikova, "Tambov Dukhobors"; Elena Borisovna Smilianskaia, *Volshebniki, bogokhul'niki, eretiki: narodnaia religioznost' i "dukhovnye prestupleniia" v Rossii XVIII v.* (Moscow: Indrik, 2002), 310–13.

sumption of dairy products was forbidden.[15] In contrast to the Dukhobors, who created a relatively closed community that emphasized their own oral tradition and the inner illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Molokans stressed the authority of the Slavonic Bible, which included the deutero-canonical books. Molokans also proselytized more actively, spreading their spiritual vision to the sparsely populated steppe frontiers of Saratov and Astrakhan provinces, where the institutions of the official church were less developed.[16]

Prokhanov's parents and grandparents were Spiritual Christian Molokans from Atkarskii district in Saratov province, where the energetic popular preachers Semen Matveev Uklein (1733–1809) of Tambov province and Akinfii Semenov Popov (fl. 1790s–1800s), a townsman of Dubovskii posad on the Volga River, helped to spread this biblical, aniconic faith. In 1806, the Molokans of Atkarskii district delivered an explanation of their faith to the local police chief (*ispravnik*). In thirteen paragraphs, filled with references to the Slavonic Bible, the Molokans explained their spiritual understanding of the sacraments. For example, they observed baptism not by a ritual immersion but by repenting of their sins, maintaining their faith, hearing the word of God, and holding to Christ's teachings. Likewise, by obeying the commandments of God—and not by participating in a ritual meal—the Molokans partook of the Eucharist. The church was not a sanctified building but an assembly of people, as the Apostle Paul explained in I Corinthians 6:16, "You are the church of the living God."[17] They confessed their sins not to a priest, but to one another and to their elders. They did not observe the schedule of fasts set by the official church, but instead, in imitation of the biblical prophets, they fasted individually and voluntarily. They also prayed for the czar and for the civil authorities "in accordance with the Apostle's testimony."[18]

Although the Spiritual Christian Molokans received grudging toleration from the government of Alexander I (r. 1801–1825), his younger brother and successor Nicholas I (r. 1825–1855) instituted much harsher policies toward all forms of dissent, both religious and political. In 1830, Nicholas ordered the mass deportation of Dukhobors and Molokans to the unpacified Caucasian frontier. This policy had three goals: (1) to establish ethnic Russian colonies in recently conquered territories; (2) to separate heretics (and their baleful influence) from the Orthodox population; and (3) to discourage the pacifist tendencies of the Spiritual Christians by deliberately placing them in a war zone where they would have to defend themselves. Over the next quarter century, thousands of Molokans were forcibly removed from their homes in southern Russia and sent hundreds of miles away to present-day Georgia, Armenia, and Ossetia. These transplanted

15. Petr Ivanovich Bogdanovich, *Istoricheskoe izvestie o raskol'nikakh*, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg: Tip. Geka, 1787), 45. On the *pneumatomachi*, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (New York: Brill, 1994); Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Die Pneumatomachen: Eine Untersuchung zur Dogmengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg: Hauschild, 1967).

16. [Grigorii Pokrovskii], "Istoricheskie svedeniia o molokanskoi sekte," *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik* (September 1858): 50, 62; Dmitrii Igorevich Frolov, "Religioznoe dvizhenie dukhovnykh khristian molokan v Rossiiskoi imperii v 1905–1917 godakh" (kandidat diss., Moscow State University, 2024), 36–40.

17. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA), *fond* (f.) 1286 (Departament politsii ispolnitel'noi Ministerstva vnutrennikh del), *opis'* (op.) 1, 1806 *god* (g.), *delo* (d.) 122, *list* (l.) 5ob.

18. RGIA, f. 1286, op. 1, 1806 g., d.122, l. 7.

Spiritual Christians founded new Molokan villages such as Vorontsovka (now Tashir) and Nikitino (Fioletovo) in Armenia and Ivanovka in present-day Azerbaijan.[19]

Some Molokans voluntarily made the trip to the Caucasus. In the 1830s, prophecies that Christ would return and establish his millennial, terrestrial kingdom on Mount Ararat encouraged those more apocalyptically-minded among the Molokans to move to Armenia. Others, in hope of obtaining greater freedom to practice their faith, decided to leave the regions where they remained a sometimes persecuted minority and join their co-religionists in the Caucasus. With this hope, in 1862 Aleksandr Prokhanov's grandmother and his parents, Stepan and Agrafena, moved their families from Saratov Province to Vladikavkaz, a growing settlement that had just achieved official status as a town [*gorod*] and would soon become the administrative center of the Terek Region (Terskaia *oblast'*).[20]

In their new home, the Prokhanovs flourished. They owned and operated several large mills, and, in Russia's highly stratified society, earned enough money to join the second guild of the merchant estate.[21] Their three sons distinguished themselves professionally and educationally. The oldest, Ivan (1869–1935), graduated as an engineer from the Technological Institute in St. Petersburg and became a leader of the nascent Evangelical Christian movement; forced into exile by the atheistic Soviet authorities in 1928, he spent his final years abroad.[22] The youngest, Vasilii (1878–1941), inherited the family business upon the death of his father in 1910 and suffered expropriation eight years later under the Soviet government, ultimately emigrating to the United States.[23] Aleksandr, the second son, devoted his life to medicine and to reviving and reforming the faith of his grandparents until his untimely death from typhus in 1912.

Prokhanov's Spiritual Quest

Unlike his father and brothers, Aleksandr consciously chose to live as a Russian Spiritual Christian Molokan, the religion of his ancestors, rather than as a Baptist or Evangelical Christian, the Western movements that became increasingly popular and widespread among the peasantry after the abolition of serfdom in 1861. Although he had migrated from Saratov to Vladikavkaz to preserve his Molokan faith, Stepan Prokhanov, Aleksandr's father, converted to Baptism in 1876, won over by the testimony of a visiting church member from Tiflis. Only five years of age when his father converted, Aleksandr was raised for most of his childhood as a Baptist, which was also the religion

19. Nicholas B. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 92, 132; I. Ia. Semenov, *Russkie v istorii Armenii* (Erevan: Lusabats, 2009), 75.

20. Ivan Stepanovich Prokhanov, *In the Cauldron of Russia, 1869–1933* (New York: All-Russian Evangelical Christian Union, 1933), 29.

21. RGIA, fond 776 (Otdelenie kantseliarii Glavnogo upravleniia po delam pechati), op. 8, d. 2015 (Ob izdanii v gor. SPb zhurnala "Dukhovnyi khristianin"), l. 9.

22. Heather J. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905–1929* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 218–22; Prokhanov, *In the Cauldron of Russia*, 252.

23. Amir Aleksandrovich Khisamutdinov, *O russkikh amerikantsakh, kotorye sdelali Ameriku bogatoi: Materialy k slovar'iu* (Vladivostok: Izd-vo VGUES, 2008), 180.

listed in his internal passport as late as 1905.[24] He witnessed the spiritual struggles of his older brother, Ivan, who ultimately decided to commit his life to Christ in November 1886. On 17 January 1887—the day that Aleksandr turned 16—Ivan joined the local Vladikavkaz Baptist congregation by immersion baptism in the Terek River. In the summer of 1890, Aleksandr helped Ivan to publish an illegal, clandestine Christian journal *Beseda* (*The Conversation*), which the brothers hectographed and sent by mail to their evangelical subscribers.[25] Despite his participation in this illegal enterprise, Aleksandr was no extremist. Unlike the most radical pacifists who rejected all military service, he fulfilled his obligation as a non-commissioned officer of the Terek Corps of Engineers, shortened from six years to a few months thanks to the education he received in the Vladikavkaz Realschule. Honorably discharged in 1890, he began his medical studies in Dorpat (present-day Tartu).

Political repression in Russia encouraged him to study abroad. In 1894, the Committee of Ministers declared the nascent Russian Baptist movement a "most harmful" sect. As a direct result of the new laws, Aleksandr's father, Stepan, was exiled to Geriusy (present-day Goris, Armenia) in Elizavetpol' province. To escape the persecution, Aleksandr's older brother Ivan fled abroad in 1895.[26] Aleksandr moved to Paris to continue his medical education; he also attended courses at the liberal state-supported Protestant Theological Faculty. He then spent a year at London Hospital Medical College. By 1899, he had returned to Russia to study medicine at the University of Moscow, graduating in December 1900 as a district physician.[27]

The Society of Educated Molokans

Prokhanov's theological studies in Paris shaped his understanding of Christianity and his project to revive and reform his ancestral religion. In 1899, soon after returning to Russia, he tried to create a Society of Educated Molokans that would reconcile science and faith, a major preoccupation of his French professors. Later, as the editor and publisher of *Dukhovnyi khristianin*, he proudly highlighted his status as an auditor of the "Paris Theological Faculty," a qualification that puzzled at least one Russian Orthodox reviewer.[28]

Much of Prokhanov's thinking was influenced by the liberal unitarian Amy Gaston Charles Auguste Bonet-Maury (1842–1919), a theologian who championed freedom of

24. RGIA, f. 776, op. 8, d. 2015, l. 4.

25. Prokhanov, *In the Cauldron of Russia*, 48, 67–69, 160.

26. Prokhanov, *In the Cauldron of Russia*, 89, 115–16, 160–61; Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 21–22.

27. RGIA, f. 776, op. 8, d. 2015, l. 3; Werner Benecke, "Die Allgemeine Wehrpflicht in Russland: Zwischen militärischem Anspruch und zivilen Interessen," *Journal of Modern European History* 5, no. 2 (2007): 250–51; Pavel Ivanov, "A. S. Prokhanov," *Sovremennoe slovo* (April 6, 1912).

28. Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov, ed., *Dukhovnyi khristianin*: *Molokanskii religiozno-ekonomicheskii zhurnal* 1, no. 1 (Tiflis: Tipografiia Metekhskogo Tiflisskogo zamka, 1905), 47. "Tserkovno-obshchestvennaia zhizn': Molokanskii religiozno-ekonomicheskii zhurnal," *Tserkovnyia vedomosti, Pribavleniia* 19, no. 3 (1906): 134–37.

conscience, ecumenicism, and the integration of theology with science.[29] As a historian of religious liberty, Bonet-Maury was especially sympathetic to the persecuted Russian Protestants he met in his classes. Aleksandr and Ivan Prokhanov provided him with extensive information about the religious situation of Baptists in Russia.[30] Bonet-Maury admired Leo Tolstoy's religious thought; in 1896, he made a pilgrimage to the Russian novelist's estate in Iasnaia Poliana to present a personal invitation to a congress of religions to be held in Paris in 1900—an invitation Tolstoy politely declined.[31]

Bonet-Maury was also a noted ecumenicist. When Prokhanov arrived in Paris, Bonet-Maury had recently returned from the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, which he celebrated as a sign of progress toward religious liberty and harmony. "Men from twenty races, priests of sixteen different religions, came from five parts of the world, many dressed in their sacred vestments," Bonet-Maury wrote enthusiastically to the *Journal des débats*.[32] Comparing the Parliament to the ecumenical projects of the Roman emperor Alexander Severus and the Mughal emperor Akbar, the French theologian triumphantly concluded that "the world was ripe for a peaceful conference of the great religions of the earth." All particular religions, Bonet-Maury declared, were simply derivations of the one universal religion.[33] Some of Bonet-Maury's ecumenical spirit seems to have influenced Aleksandr Prokhanov. In articles that outlined his conception of true religion, Prokhanov also drew upon speeches given at the Parliament.[34]

Bonet-Maury was also a strong believer in the compatibility of religion and science, a conviction that Prokhanov shared. In 1899, after he had returned from France, Prokhanov attempted to organize a Society of Educated Molokans that included believers across the empire, from the Amur River to the Volga to the Caucasus—wherever Molokans had settled. He sent a copy of the society's proposed charter to Vladimir Prokof'evich Efremov, a Molokan from Siberia who was studying medicine in St. Petersburg, and asked whether there were any "intellectual sectarian youth, who were interested in and loved their sectarianism" among the Molokans on the Amur.[35] Prokhanov was also in contact with another potential member of the society, Grigorii Korotkov, a Molokan from Saratov Province studying in the Mining Institute in St. Petersburg. Yet in a letter to his older brother Ivan, Aleksandr expressed deep misgivings about

29. Gaston Bonet-Maury, *Histoire de la liberté de conscience en France depuis l'édit de Nantes jusqu'à Juillet 1870* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1900); Gaston Bonet-Maury, *Le Congrès des religions à Chicago en 1893* (Paris: Hachette, 1895); Theodore Stanton, "Professor Gaston Bonet-Maury," *Open Court*, no. 10 (1898): 630–34; "Prof. G. Bonet-Maury," *Forty Portraits and Biographical Sketches for the Fourth International Congress of Religious Liberals, Held at Boston, U.S.A., September 22–28, 1907* (n.p., 1907), 4–5.

30. Prokhanov, *In the Cauldron of Russia*, 102

31. Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 90 vols. (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo khudozh. lit-ry, 1928–1958), 69: 198–201.

32. Quoted in Gustave de Molinari, *Science et religion* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1894), 238.

33. Quoted in Molinari, *Science et religion*, 255.

34. Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov, "Fundament nashego molokanstva," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 2 (1906): 1–4; Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov, "Fundament upovaniia dukhovnykh khristian (O priiatii i otluchenii za veru)," *Dukhovnyi khristianin*, no. 7 (June 1906): 9–15. See below for a fuller discussion of these articles.

35. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 102, Departament politsii Osobyi otdel (DPOO), 1898 g., op. 226, d. 12, *chast'* 2, l. 3

his hope for the Molokan community, which he regarded as crippled by ignorance, fanaticism, and superstition: "I asked myself, can I live and do something among the sectarians in the Caucasus? Is some compromise possible between me and this superstitious, fanatical milieu? Can any work be done among them? Could there be a society there where I could feel at home?"[36]

Unfortunately for Prokhanov, the czarist police, increasingly fearful of radical sectarian religion, perlustrated his correspondence and passed on their intelligence to the overprocurator of the Holy Synod, who immediately turned it over to the Synodal missionary Vasilii Mikhailovich Skvortsov (1859–1932). First in a speech to the Tauride Missionary Congress of May 1899 and then on the pages of his journal *Missionerskoe obozrenie* (*Missionary Survey*), Skvortsov publicly critiqued Aleksandr's attempt to reconcile science and religion. Quoting tendentiously from the organization's charter, Skvortsov presented the new association as godless and nihilistic, even though it simply reflected the rationalistic, liberal Protestantism of the French theological faculty.[37] Prokhanov's charter called for "the transformation of traditional ... sectarianism with the help of a scientific, but religious worldview."[38] In particular, the charter rejected "the literal inspiration and authority of the Bible" in scientific questions such as "the origin of our solar system" and of humanity. While affirming the existence and unity of God, the charter denied the Trinity, the deity of Christ, original sin, the devil, and the eternity of hell. At the same time, it affirmed that human beings possessed free will, moral responsibility, immortal souls, and a natural sense of right and wrong.

Much to Prokhanov's bewilderment, Skvortsov's attack was picked up by right-wing newspapers, such as the nationalistic St. Petersburg daily *Svet* [*The Light*]. Dismayed by the way his society was mischaracterized, Aleksandr wrote his younger brother, Vasilii, on February 2, 1900, asking how a newspaper could have learned about the society and published its founding document. He asked Vasilii to burn the letter after reading it, to no avail; by the time it reached Vladikavkaz, the letter had already been intercepted. A copy remains in the police archive to this day.[39]

The 1905 Revolution and the Struggle for Religious Freedom

His hopes for a Society of Educated Molokans stifled by the authorities, Prokhanov continued his medical studies, moving to St. Petersburg to enroll in the Imperial Military Medical Academy, where he defended his doctoral dissertation in histology in 1910.[40] During these eventful years, he witnessed the 1905 revolution from his seat in the capital. Mass political and social protest forced Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917) to reform

36. GARF, f. 102 DPOO, 1898 g., op. 226, d. 12 *chast'* 2, l. 15.

37. Vasilii Mikhailovich Skvortsov, "O starykh sobytiiakh i novykh iavleniiakh v oblasti sektantstva i missionerskogo dela (Rech' pri otkrytii Tavricheskogo missionerskogo s"ezda 24 maia 1899)," *Missionerskoe obozrenie*, no. 10 (October 1899): 312.

38. Skvortsov, "O starykh sobytiiakh," 310.

39. GARF f. 102, DPOO 1898, op. 226 d. 12 ch. 2, l. 19.

40. Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov, *K voprosu o patologo-anamoticheskikh izmeneniiakh miokarda pri ostrom i khronicheskom oteke serdtsa*, Seriia doktorskikh dissertatsii dopushchennykh k zashchite v Voenno-meditsinskoi akademii v 1909–1910 uchebnom godu, vol. 27 (St. Petersburg: Tip. I. V. Leont'eva, 1910).

his autocratic system, expand religious toleration, and introduce a legislative assembly. On 17 April 1905, the czar issued a manifesto of religious toleration, providing a legal foundation for nonconformist associations, publications, congresses, and conferences.[41] One month later, on May 18, Prokhanov petitioned the Interior Ministry for permission to establish a monthly periodical called *Dukhovnyi khristianin* (*The Spiritual Christian*), which would serve as a thick journal both for the faith of his ancestral community and for the radical Christian vision that he hoped to propagate. The journal's twelve-point program envisioned historical, theological, and legal articles related to the Molokans, as well as short stories, literary essays, debates, and book reviews. The journal would also cover "other Russian and foreign sects and confessions," especially "the English sect called the Quakers," hinting at Prokhanov's aspirations for his own movement: the Society of Friends might serve as a model for the kind of Christianity he hoped to nurture in Russia.[42]

Permission from the St. Petersburg authorities, who had to check with the police and the governors, took several months—too long for an impatient Prokhanov, who traveled back to Tiflis so that he could make his appeal directly to the newly appointed viceroy of the Caucasus, Illarion Vorontsov-Dashkov (1837–1916, r. 1905–1916). Mass political unrest had led the Senate to reestablish the viceroyalty in February 1905. In early September, the viceroy met a delegation of Molokan elders, led by Prokhanov, and allowed them to launch the journal, as long as it was subject to preliminary censorship.[43] A few weeks later, on 3 November, Prokhanov also finally received permission to publish his journal from the Main Directorate of the Press in St. Petersburg.[44]

The Legendary Decree of 1805

With the very first issue of his journal, Prokhanov faced the challenge of reconciling his commitment to scientific truth with his desire to revive and strengthen Russian Spiritual Christianity. For decades, Russian Molokans had treasured the conviction that in 1805, Emperor Alexander I had issued a decree granting them the liberty to practice their faith. By the late 19th century, Molokans were circulating many manuscript copies of this mythical decree and the petition to which it responded.[45] Over the summer of 1905, Molokans immediately took advantage of the April declaration of toleration to organize congresses celebrating the centenary of the decree in the villages of

41. *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, sobranie 3-e, vol. XXV (1905) (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1908), 257–58; Paul W. Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia*, Oxford Studies in Modern European History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 201–06; Coleman, *Russian Baptists*, 22–26.

42. RGIA, f. 776 , op. 8, d. 2015, l. 15.

43. Prokhanov 1905 Nov-Dec: 4–6. An imperial decree in November removed the requirement for preliminary censorship.

44. RGIA, f. 776, op. 8, d. 2015.

45. Nikolai Dingel′shtedt, *Zakavkazskie sektanty v ikh semeinom i religioznom bytu* (Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1885), 93–94; Frolov, "Religioznoe dvizhenie dukhovnykh khristian Molokan," 41; Aleksei L'vovich Vysotskii, "K voprosu o polozhenii molokan v tsarstvovanie imperatora Aleksandra I (Proshenie na vysochaishee imia molokan Tambovskoi i Voronezhskoi gubernii ot 22 iiunia 1805 g., s prilozhennym k nemu molokanskim obriadnikom)," *Izvestiia Tavricheskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii* 32/33 (1902): 18–46.

Vorontsovka (present-day Tashir, Armenia) in July and Astrakhanka, Tauride Province (today in Zaporizhia Oblast', Ukraine) in early September.[46] These congresses celebrated the centenary of the decree, which established a venerable pedigree for official recognition of Spiritual Christianity.

Prokhanov fully supported these congresses. At the same time, he was also aware of the many flaws in the documentary evidence for the legendary ukase, which was extant only in Molokan manuscripts. According to these sources, three Molokan representatives—the townsman Petr Zhuravtsov of Tambov Province and the peasants Maksim Losev and Matvei Motylev of Voronezh Province—appeared before the emperor in July 1805 with a written request that they and their co-religionists receive permission to worship God in their own way. "Free us from the yoke of slavery of the Orthodox religion and from the tortures and slanders against us by the priests...free us from the demands of the lords and the torments of the chief officials and from the parish priests.... Forbid them from entering our homes with their demands so that they might never be able to burden us with slanders through false denunciations."[47]

The manuscripts then offer a mythologized account of the emperor's response to the petition. Alexander convokes a committee of his advisors, including Metropolitan Amvrosii (Andrei Ivanovich Podobedov, 1742–1818) of St. Petersburg (incorrectly identified as archbishop); the overprocurator of the Holy Synod Aleksandr Nikolaevich Golitsyn (1773–1844); the interior minister Viktor Pavlovich Kochubei (1768–1834); the future field marshal (and hero of the Napoleonic wars) Mikhail Illarionovich Kutuzov (1745–1813), the minister of justice Petr Vasil'evich Lopukhin (1753–1827), the prominent landowner Count Sergei Vasil'evich Sheremetev (1792–1866) (whose serfs included many Molokans), and Mikhail Mikhailovich Speranskii (1772–1839), the author of much of Alexander I's reformist legislation. Except for Sheremetev, all of the royal counselors —even the Orthodox archbishop—support the Molokans' petition, noting the impossibility of preventing them from reading the Word of God. For his own venal motives, Sheremetev, the owner of Molokan serfs, opposes the czar's merciful decision: the law should recognize only ancient faith traditions, not "those who have fallen away from the Orthodox Church and its law."[48] Over Sheremetev's objections, the czar decides in favor of the Molokans, who "are not to be hindered in the thoughts of their faith nor to be constrained in the hope that they uphold."[49]

Although no copy of this petition has been found outside of the Molokan manuscript tradition, it may well have a historical basis. On several different occasions, Molokans did petition Emperor Alexander for relief from the pressures put upon them by lo-

46. "Stoletnii molokanskii iubilei," *Dukhovnyi khristianin*, no. 1 (December 1905): 6–38.; Ivan Fedos'evich Kolesnikov, "Iubileinyi s"ezd v Vorontsovke," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 3 (February 1906): 31–33; Daniil Evteevich Aver'ianov, "S"ezd v Astrakhanke," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 3 (February 1906): 33–40.

47. A. V. Loskutov, M. I. Bletkin, and M. M. Maksimov, eds., *Otchet o Vserossiiskom s"ezde dukhovnykh khristian (molokan), sostoiavshemsia 22-go iiulia 1905 g. v selenii Vorontsovke, Tiflisskoi gubernii, Borchalinskogo uezda, po povodu 100-letnego iubileia samostoiatelnogo ikh religioznogo sushchestvovaniia v Rossii so dnia opublikovaniia vysochaishego ukaza blazhennnoi pamiati blagoslovennogo monarkha Aleksandra Pavlovicha, ot 22-go iiulia 1805 g. 1805–1905 gg.* (Tip. Gub. pravl., 1907), 20; Vysotskii, "K voprosu o polozhenii Molokan," 28–29; "Stoletnii molokanskii iubilei," 13.

48. "Stoletnii molokanskii iubilei," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 1 (December 1905): 16.

49. "Stoletnii molokanskii iubilei," 16

cal officials.[50] However, the Molokan record of Alexander's response has clearly been mythologized. The text contains several anachronisms that reveal it as a forgery. For example, Kutuzov is identified as a field marshal and holds the honorific "Smolenskii," titles that he received only in 1812 during the war against Napoleon. Although he never served in the military, Speranskii is given the rank of cavalry general. Vasilii Sheremetev, the greedy landowner, was only twelve years old in July 1805, and so could not have participated in an imperial council.[51]

For his part, Prokhanov was perfectly aware that the 1805 decree of religious freedom was a fiction, albeit a useful one. In the first issue of his journal, he published a critical analysis of the manuscript by an author (probably Prokhanov himself) who used the pseudonym Zealot. Zealot declared that "no educated person in the world" would accept the Molokan manuscripts as genuine records of a czarist ukase. Not only did these manuscripts contain many orthographic and grammatical errors, but they also incorporated the internal debates of the czar's advisors—something that no official decree would include. The Molokan manuscripts recorded only a story [*rasskaz*], but a story that did have some basis in the truth. After all, Alexander I was characterized by remarkable religiosity and tolerance, showed interest in Russian sectarianism, and even conversed readily with the leaders of minority religious movements, including even the infamous Castrates [*skoptsy*]. One could not entirely preclude the possibility that Alexander had decreed freedom of religious confession for the Molokans, Zealot concluded, even if the version preserved by the Molokan community was not authentic. Molokans now had a duty to show the world that such a decree really did exist by scouring the archives and gathering oral traditions from the oldest members of the communities where the descendants of the petitioners still lived. Zealot ended his critique by hinting that the petitioners' surnames, which were each derived from the names of animals, might belong to folklore rather than history: Zhuravtsev came from the Russian word for crane (*zhuravl'*); Losev, from elk (*los'*); and Motylev, from butterfly (*motylek*).[52] Later, Prokhanov argued that the legendary decree had a historical basis in Alexander I's efforts to mitigate persecution of religious dissenters through specific edicts issued in 1800, 1801, and 1803.[53]

Authentic or not, the legend of the czar who graciously responded to the humble request of his dissenting subjects was valuable for the Molokans who were seeking to expand religious liberty and obtain a more respectable position in Russian society during a period of revolutionary upheaval. The story, with dates amenable to commemoration, offered a convenient rallying point to unite the theologically and politically disparate Molokan movement that included both wealthy monarchist merchants and

50. Frolov, "Religioznoe dvizhenie dukhovnykh khristian molokan," 97–99; Vysotskii, "K voprosu o polozhenii Molokan," 20–22.

51. "Stoletnii molokanskii iubilei," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 1 (November-December 1905): 14.

52. Revnitel', "Kriticheskii razbor dokumenta," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 1 (November-December 1905): 20–22.

53. Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov, "Podlinnyi ukaz tsaria Aleksandra I-go naiden," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 3 (February 1906): 28–30; Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov, "Kak my napali na sled startsa Zhuravtsova," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 5 (April 1906): 64–70.

revolutionary apocalyptic prophets. Molokans of all persuasions continued to celebrate anniversaries of the decree through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[54]

Prokhanov's Vision: A Rational Religion of Love

Through his journal, Prokhanov sought to shape a new kind of Russian Christianity, an alternative to both the established Orthodox Church and the Western evangelical Protestantism propounded by his father and brothers. His vision called for a popular (*narodnoe*) and democratic Christianity, characterized by a love that could overcome doctrinal division. At the same time, he hoped to bring Molokanism into dialogue with Western biblical scholarship and with the global ecumenical movement. On the pages of his journal, he brought Molokan elders and leaders into conversation with each other, with other sectarians, and even with members of the revolutionary intelligentsia.

Prokhanov celebrated the unique contribution of Spiritual Christians, whose approach to faith, ethics, and scriptural interpretation was distinct from Western Protestantism. In an article titled, "We Must Return to Our Own Originality," Prokhanov warned of a "silent struggle ... between our original Spiritual Christian theology and a foreign theology, planted in our Zion with unusual zeal and energy by an entire special organization!"[55] Molokans were too quick to give up their theology and practice. In too many congregations, "the former patriarchal order of worship, consisting of mutual discussions while seated," had been replaced by a single preacher who alone had the right to speak. Likewise, Spiritual Christians also abandoned their own theology, developed consensually over many years of respectful dialogue. "And our theological views! All of them, beginning with baptism and ending with the dogmas of the Trinity, the Second Coming, and the resurrection of the dead—all of our original Spiritual Christian concepts have been transformed by the thirty-year influence of foreign doctrines!"[56] Unlike Baptism, which was committed to the literal interpretation of the canonical scriptures, Russian Spiritual Christianity was marked by "freedom of spirit ... which is the essence of our hope and without which we will turn into dead slaves of the letter, of ritual, and of an iron presbyterian bureaucracy."[57]

Progressive theology was not to be found abroad, but within the Molokan tradition itself. In particular, Prokhanov lionized the mid-nineteenth-century Spiritual Christian elder Ivan Andreevich Pashatskii (fl. 1860s) as a model for his religious project.[58] A

54. San Francisco Obshchina dukhovnykh khristian molokan postoiannykh, *Otchet Dukhovnykh khristian molokan (postoiannykh) po povodu 150-ti letniago iubileia samostoiatel'nago ikh religioznago sushchestvovaniia so dnia opublikovaniia vysochaishago ukaza gosudaria rossiiskago prestola Aleksandra Pavlovicha ot 22-go iiulia, 1805 goda i 50-letniago iubileia so dnia pereseleniia ... iz Rossii v Soed. shtaty Ameriki, sostoiavshagosia 22-23 i 24-go iiulia, 1955 goda v gorode San-Frantsisko* ([Obshchina], 1955); Ivan Aleksandrov, "'Vozliubivshie slovesnoe moloko': Molokane otprazdnovali iubilei darovaniia svobody veroispovedaniia," *NG-Religii*, October 5, 2005; Arkadii Sosnov, "Poslanie ot molokan," *Poisk*, August 26, 2016.

55. Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov, "My dolzhny vozvratit'sia k svoei samobytnosti," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 6 (May 1906): 47.

56. Prokhanov, "My dolzhny vozvratit'sia," 47.

57. Prokhanov, "My dolzhny vozvratit'sia," 48.

58. "Molokanskaia bogoslovskaia shkola dlia podgotovleniia nastavnikov i uchitelei molokanskogo veroucheniia imeni Ivana Andreevicha Pashatskogo, nezabvennogo Saratovskogo nastavnika i pervogo nashego bogoslova," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 2 (January 1906): 33–56.

wealthy Molokan merchant in Saratov Province, Pashatskii wrote a defense of his faith in 1862, which was smuggled out of Russia and published three years later by Alexander Herzen's Free Russian Typography in Geneva. Fully committed to progressive revelation, Pashatskii expressed the conviction that future generations would advance in their knowledge of divine truth: "As for our religious confession, we wait and hope for the day when understanding of the infinite truth will be explained even more by our descendants who will have the zeal to penetrate even deeper into the sense of the divine revelation, and therefore we do not pile anathemas on such people, but on the contrary, we tell them, 'rejoice.'"[59] In this spirit, Pashatskii interpreted Adam and Eve's exile from Paradise (Genesis 3) as a necessary step in humanity's spiritual evolution, not as a punishment for original sin. Adam's innocence was no better than that of brute beasts; to advance spiritually, he had to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Driven from Paradise, humanity must now "by their own efforts gain the blessing of union with God."[60] Convinced that Molokans needed their own version of the Bible, independent of the Orthodox Church, Pashatskii financed a translation of the scriptures, which was never completed. One of the translators was arrested and exiled to Siberia, his work confiscated and destroyed. All that remained of Pashatskii's project was a partial translation of the psalms kept in the personal possession of a Molokan elder.[61]

Despite his expressed suspicion of Protestantism, Prokhanov also drew on his training at the University of Paris to help Molokan presbyters prepare edifying discourses on scriptural passages. In a series of articles, Prokhanov translated and paraphrased many of the homiletical anecdotes collected by the German Methodist preacher August Rodemeyer (1837–1899).[62] Prokhanov published biblical criticism and theological essays in an effort to introduce these tools to Spiritual Christian leaders. In his lectures and writings, Prokhanov consistently defended the Septuagint and the Slavonic Bible, with their inclusion of deutero-canonical books such as Tobit, against the Protestant preference for the Masoretic text. In the year before his death, Prokhanov published an introductory textbook on the Old Testament for Molokan families and schools that deliberately undermined the doctrine of biblical inerrancy by carefully unveiling the contingent nature of the process of canonization and by surveying the many apocryphal and lost works that had failed to become part of the Bible. He attacked literal readings of scripture, preferring freer and more figurative interpretations. He also emphasized the inferiority of the Old Testament, with its burdensome ritual prescriptions and prohibitions, to the New Testament, the covenant of the Spirit, which had replaced it.[63]

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59. [Ivan Andreevich Pashatskii], *Veroispovedanie dukhovnykh khristian, obyknovenno nazyvaemykh molokanami* (Geneva: Vol'naia russkaia tipogragiia, 1865), xv–xvi.

60. [Pashatskii], *Veroispovedanie*, 9.

61. "Molokanskaia bogoslovskaia shkola," 37–38.

62. [August Rodemeyer], "Bud'te gotovy," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 4 (1906): 3–6; [August Rodemeyer], "Iskry Bozhiia. Dushespasitel'nye khristiianskiia pritchi dlia besed i propovedei.," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 4 (1906): 38–44.; A. S., "Tsarstvo Bozhie vnutri vas (pritcha)—iz Rodemeiera," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 3 (1906): 6–8.

63. Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov, *Zakon Bozhii Vetkhogo zaveta ili vvedenie v Vetkhii zavet* (Tipografiia I. V. Leont'eva, 1911).

Prokhanov did not live long enough to complete supplementary volumes introducing the New Testament and his approach to philosophy.

In a series of articles published in the first years of his journal, Prokhanov set out his understanding of the foundation of Molokanism, drawing several of his illustrations from the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago. For example, Prokhanov used a story recounted at the Parliament by the Jain teacher Virachand Raghavji Gandhi (1864–1901) about a group of blind men who argue over the nature of an elephant that they have encountered. One, who touched only the animal's leg, believes it to be similar to a big, round post; another, who felt only the ear, imagines it to be a winnowing fan; a third, who came into contact with the tail, thinks of it as a tapering stick. Only when a bystander points out that each man has but a partial understanding do they recognize the necessity of examining all viewpoints before coming to a definite conclusion.[64]

In another article, to demonstrate the superiority of Molokanism as a religion of love, Prokhanov cited a Russian folktale that the art critic Prince Sergei Mikhailovich Volkonskii (1860–1937) had recounted at the Parliament—a slightly different version of the tale incorporated by Fedor Dostoevskii into his last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879–80). A wicked woman, damned to eternal torment, almost escapes from hell thanks to the single good deed that she performed during her life. Because she had once given a carrot (an onion in Dostoevskii's rendering) to a hungry beggar, God instructs an angel to use that carrot to pull her out of hell. But as the angel lifts her up, another sinner grabs tightly to her legs so that he, too, might be carried to heaven. Then a third clings to the second, and a fourth to the third until an endless chain of humanity stretches from the tiny carrot to the fiery abyss. Afraid that the carrot would not withstand the weight of so many people, the woman cries out, "Leave me alone! Get your hands off me! After all, the carrot is mine!" As soon as she pronounced the word "mine," the carrot suddenly breaks in two, plunging all the sinners back into the pit.[65]

Curiously, neither Volkonskii nor Prokhanov showed any awareness of Dostoevskii's use of the folktale. As Gary Saul Morson has pointed out, Dostoevskii employed the story to illustrate his vision of the Christian life as consisting of small, practical acts of

64. Prokhanov, "Fundament upovaniia," 9–11. Prokhanov cites the work of the Moscow Theological Academy professor Vasilii Aleksandrovich Sokolov (1851–1918), *Parlament religii v Chikago* (Sergiev Posad: A. I. Snegirevoi, 1894).

65. Aleksandr Stepanovich Prokhanov, "Fundament nashego molokanstva," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 2 (1906): 1–4. Prokhanov quoted the story from V. A. Sokolov, "Parlament religii v Chikago," *Bogoslovskii vestnik* 1, no. 3 (1894): 502–4. The original can be found in Serge Wolkonsky, *Addresses* (J.C. Winship & Co., 1893), 68–70. Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevskii's version is in *Brat'ia Karamazovy*, *Sobranie sochinenii v 15-ii tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, Leningradskoe otdelenie, 1991), 9: 394, 685–86. In a letter of 16 September 1879 to his editor Nikolai Liubimov, Dostoevskii explained that he had recorded his version of the tale directly from a peasant woman. George Gibian, "Dostoevskij's Use of Russian Folklore," *The Journal of American Folklore* 69, no. 273 (1956): 248–49. N. K. Piksanov, "Dostoevskii i fol'klor," *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, no. 1–2 (1934): 161–62. Although Dostoevskii claimed that he was the first to put this oral tale into written form, other folklorists had already published similar versions. See "Stranstvovanie po tomu svetu," in *Zapiski o iuzhnoi Rusi*, ed. Panteleimon Oleksandrovych Kulish (St. Petersburg: A. Iakobson, 1856), 307–8; "Sankt Peters Mutter," in *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder-u. Hausmarchen der Bruder Grimm*, ed. Johannes Bolte and Jiří Polívka, vol. 3 (Leipzig: Dieterich′sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1918).

kindness rather than dramatic, ostentatious miracles.[66] By contrast, for Volkonskii, the lesson of the tale was that every religion had a portion of the truth and that everyone should share the portion of the truth that they possessed: "If any individual, any community, any congregation, any church, possesses a portion of truth and of good, let that truth shine for everybody, let that good become the property of everyone. The substitution of the word 'mine' by the word 'ours,' and that of 'ours' by the word 'everyone's,' this is what will secure a fruitful result to our collective efforts as well as to our individual activities."[67]

The lesson that Prokhanov drew was quite different and it pointed to the superiority of Spiritual Christianity over its rivals. Molokans, unlike other Christian groups, emphasized love over dogma and allowed for major doctrinal disagreements within their spiritual family. Whereas other groups demanded creedal purity even in relatively minor matters, Molokans could disagree over basic elements of the faith and still love one another and embrace each other in Christian fellowship. For Prokhanov, the folktale offered a way of vaunting his own natal Molokanism over other movements, especially the Baptism of his brother and father. "We Molokans recognize the deep truth in the words of the Apostle Paul that love is the highest of the Christian virtues."[68] Clearly pointing the finger at the Baptist movement, Aleksandr Prokhanov went on to criticize the classical Protestant emphasis on faith, which, in his view, contradicted Paul's teaching. "There are people who place faith higher than love and on this foundation construct their salvation and their ecclesiastical and social life."[69] Such Christians associated only with those who shared their dogmas and excluded all those who, for reasons of conscience, understood dogmatic questions (baptism, communion) differently. They preached "nothing other than self-love (*my* carrot), fanaticism, intolerance, and contempt for the others who have, in their opinion, gone astray."[70]

Under Prokhanov's philosophy, *The Spiritual Christian* became a lively venue for opposing views on many doctrinal and ritual questions. Should the text of the New Testament be the final, infallible rule of faith for Christians? Or did the Holy Spirit continue to provide new guidance and revelation?[71] Molokan elders debated whether the prophecies of Christ's Second Coming should be taken literally or metaphorically.[72] Likewise, they argued about the resurrection of the dead, with many denying the possibility of any physical resuscitation. Molokans were divided over the Apostle Paul's command to "greet one another with a holy kiss" (Romans 16:16). Some exchanged holy kisses as an essential part of their weekly assemblies; others considered the practice to be

66. Gary Saul Morson, "The God of Onions: *The Brothers Karamazov* and the Mythic Prosaic," in *A New Word on the Brothers Karamazov* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 107–24.

67. Wolkonsky, *Addresses*, 70.

68. Prokhanov, "Fundament nashego molokanstva," 2.

69. Prokhanov, "Fundament nashego molokanstva," 2

70. Prokhanov, "Fundament nashego molokanstva," 2.

71. Nikifor Vasil'evich Rakhmanov and Dukhovnyi uchenik Gospoda, "Ob istochnikakh verouchenii" *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 9 (August 1906), 4–15.

72. Dukhovnyi uchenik Gospoda, "Besedy startsev o vtorom prishestvii," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 1, no. 9 (August 1906), 34–40.

a form of debauchery. Although most Molokans held funerary repasts and prayed for their dead, many rejected these practices as pagan.

The nature of the Godhead also provoked debates on the pages of *The Spiritual Christian.* Although many Molokan statements of faith, dating back to the early nineteenth century, affirmed the Trinity, many Molokan elders rejected traditional Trinitarianism. For example, in his 1862 confession of faith, Pashatskii dismissed the idea of a three-person Godhead as "the absurd doctrine" of the Greco-Russian Church. "God is one and indivisible," Pashatskii firmly declared, anticipating Prokhanov's own unitarianism. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were simply different names for the same being.[73] Likewise, many Spiritual Christians rejected the idea that Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, could have had a human body. Instead, they reasoned, his body was like that of the angel Raphael in the deutero-canonical book of Tobit; consisting of spirit, it only seemed to be physical.

Dukhovnyi khristianin published many articles to help congregations with legal problems, especially the complex process of registration established in 1906.[74] It also welcomed writers from outside the community of Spiritual Christians. Baptists and Russian Orthodox missionaries also contributed to the journal, participating in debates about immersion baptism, the authority of scripture, and the necessity of temples. Such articles were invariably paired with Spiritual Christians offering a different point of view. Tolstoyans, vegetarians, and revolutionaries also participated in the ongoing conversation about true religion. Viktor Aleksandrovich Danilov (1851–1916), a Populist who had been exiled to Siberia for his participation in the 1874 "Going to the People" movement, expounded on his own vision of a rational religion, criticizing Leo Tolstoy for failing to live up fully to his ideals.[75] Iurii Osipovich Iakubovskii (1857–1929), a Tolstoyan in Turkestan, made his case for ethical vegetarianism.[76] The politically engaged Pavel Vasil'evich Ivanov (who later used the name Ivanov-Klyshnikov, 1885?–1937), the son of a prominent Baptist missionary and a future leader of the Baptist movement, also enjoyed close ties to the Socialist Revolutionaries; he regularly contributed a column on contemporary politics for the journal.[77]

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73. [Pashatskii], *Veroispovedanie*, 5.

74. T. G. Pankratov, "Bez registratsii obshchiny," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 6, no. 10 (1911): 67–69; Il'ia Kishko, "Registratsiia obshchin v Rossii. Iz sela Ivanovki, Novouzen. u. Samar. Gub.," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 6, no. 1 (1911): 38–45; Mikhail Kursiakov, "Registratsiia obshchin," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 6, no. 4 (1906): 39–40.

75. Viktor Aleksandrovich Danilov, "Chelovek bez shapki," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 5, no. 12 (1910): 25–36; Viktor Aleksandrovich Danilov, "Otvet na 50 voprosov cheloveka religii-znaniia," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 5, no. 11 (1910): 3–27; V Danilov, "Zhivoi 'Ikonostas,'" *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 10, no. 1 (1915): 31–43; Viktor Aleksandrovich Danilov, "Sushchnost' i znachenie religii v zhizni chelovechestva," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 5, no. 11 (1910): 27–33.

76. Iu. O. Iakubovskii, "Chem pitat'sia razumnym sushchestvam," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 5, no. 12 (December 1910): 63–71; Peter Brang, *Ein unbekanntes Russland: Kulturgeschichte vegetarischer Lebensweisen von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Cologne, Germany: Böhlau, 2002), 210.

77. A. Dolotov, "Nutro religii," *Sibirskie ogni*, no. 1 (February 1929): 139; Coleman, *Russian Baptists*, 253, n. 3; 254, n. 27.

Conclusion

Aleksandr Prokhanov's tragic death on April 2, 1912, from typhus contracted from a patient whom he was treating in the Tiflis hospital, put an end to his personal participation in the Molokan revival of the early twentieth century. He was unable to realize his dream of a pure religion of love, where doctrine, ritual, hierarchy, and institutions yielded to spiritual freedom (*svoboda dukha*).

Prokhanov's wife, Anastasiia Titovna (née Fefelova), the daughter of a prominent Molokan who had joined the Baptist movement, took over the editorship of the journal, with help from a circle of like-minded supporters. *Dukhovnyi khristianin* continued to be published until the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Prokhanov's democratic vision of Christianity animated the journal throughout its existence. It published verses and stories written by Spiritual Christians from across the empire. It also published debates among Spiritual Christians over theology and ritual, including such questions as the Second Coming of Christ, the nature of conversion, the place of works in salvation, the place of the Old Testament, and the appropriateness of praying for the dead. Prokhanov and his successors actively solicited essays on the history and practices of Spiritual Christianity throughout the empire. The journal gave space to widely differing visions of Spiritual Christianity. On the one hand, it included missives from the apocalyptic and radically pacifist followers of the Molokan prophet Maksim Rudometkin (1818–1877), who fled to the United States to escape persecution and military service. On the other hand, the journal celebrated the service of Molokan soldiers fighting in the Caucasus during World War I. The journal joyfully greeted the February Revolution of 1917, which led to Nicholas II's abdication. However, the *Spiritual Christian* did not limit itself to Molokan voices alone. It included debates between Molokans and Baptists, Molokans and Orthodox missionaries. It published accounts from other religious minorities, including the followers of Leo Tolstoy, the community of "New Israel" who were led by the Voronezh peasant Vasilii Semenovich Lubkov (1869–1937?), and the charismatic teetotaling peasant preachers Ivan Alekseevich Churikov (1861–1933) and Ivan Koloskov, who, though Orthodox, were suspected of heresy by the church hierarchy.[78] Ultimately, the journal succumbed to a lack of funds and the repression of the Bolshevik Revolution. Molokans continued to publish in the 1920s, but these publications represented the work of the official Molokan religious denomination, dissolved in the first five-year plan. The democratic and utopian vision of Christians united in spirit, perhaps always unrealistic, did not long survive the Russian empire, with its much different understanding of democracy, citizenship, and the church-state relationship.

78. Semen Antonovich Sushkov, "Golos Novogo Izrailia: Put' k poznaniiu Boga i Tsarstviia Boga na zemle," *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 6, no. 4 (1911): 54–57; I. M. Vel'mozhin, "Sredi izrail'tian (molitvennye sobraniia molodezhi i ikh prepony)." *Dukhovnyi khristianin* 10, no. 9 (September 1915): 78–82; Page Herrlinger, *Holy Sobriety in Modern Russia: A Faith Healer and His Followers* (Ithaca, NY: NIU Series in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, Cornell University Press, 2023). Unfortunately, Herrlinger's work is marred by its uncritical use of the fraudulent memoir *I Was Stalin's Bodyguard* (London: F. Muller, 1952) by the notorious serial forger Grigorii Zinov'evich Besedovskii (1896–1951), writing under the pseudonym "Achmed Amba." On Besedovskii, see François Kersaudy, "Quelques faux ouvrages remarquables sur l'URSS," *Communisme: Revue d'etudes pluridisciplinaires*, no. 29–31 (1992): 6–25.; N. Galay, "Atomzaren-Geflunker," *Ost-Probleme* 23 (1955): 934–35; Paul W. Blackstock, "'Books for Idiots': False Soviet 'Memoirs,'" *Russian Review* 25, no. 3 (1966): 285–96.

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Paul B. Anderson, Nikolai Berdyaev, and Russian Christian Culture

by Matthew Lee Miller

Paul B. Anderson (1894–1985) focused his career on serving young Russians and the global Orthodox Christian community. During his years of outreach, Anderson's understanding of Orthodox worship and thought grew, and he emerged as one of the first Western experts on religion in the Soviet Union. Anderson began his service with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in China and Russia (1917–18). In 1920, he received a YMCA assignment to serve émigrés from Russia; he conducted this work from bases in Berlin (1920–24) and Paris (1924–41). During this period, he worked to assist émigrés in partnership with the Russian Correspondence School, YMCA Press, Russian Student Christian Movement, and Orthodox Theological Institute. In 1922, Anderson and Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1874–1948) began to collaborate on several significant projects, including the Free Philosophical Academy, the YMCA Press, and the journal *Put' (The Way).* Anderson recognized the unique value of Berdyaev's thought and experience, working to build an organizational support system which assisted his creative vision. Anderson quietly worked alongside Berdyaev and several other émigré leaders in a way that enabled the preservation, enrichment, and expansion of Russian Orthodox culture.

Keywords: Paul B. Anderson, Nikolai Berdyaev, Orthodox, Ecumenical, Émigré, YMCA Press, Russian Student Christian Movement, Orthodox Theological Institute, Berlin, Paris

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Paul B. Anderson (1894–1985) focused his career on serving young Russians and the global Orthodox Christian community. During his years of outreach, Anderson's understanding of Orthodox worship and thought grew, and he emerged as one of the first Western experts on religion in the Soviet Union. His global efforts led to four prominent accomplishments: 1) building bridges of communication and relationship among Eastern and Western Christians, 2) developing publishing and educational opportunities for Orthodox believers, 3) speaking out for the protection of religious freedom in the USSR, and 4) providing reliable information on religion in the Soviet Union. Anderson began his service with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in China (1913–17) and Russia (1917–18). In 1920, he received a YMCA assignment to serve émigrés from Russia; he conducted this work from bases in Berlin (1920–24) and Paris (1924–41). During this period, he worked to assist émigrés in partnership with the Russian Correspondence School, YMCA Press, Russian Student Christian Movement, and Orthodox Theological Institute. In 1922, Anderson and Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev began to collaborate on several significant projects, including the Free Philosophical Academy, the YMCA Press, and the journal *Put' (The Way).* Anderson recognized the unique value of Berdyaev's thought and experience, working to build an organizational support system which assisted his creative vision. Anderson quietly worked alongside Berdyaev and several other émigré leaders in a way that enabled the preservation, enrichment, and expansion of Russian Orthodox culture.[1]

By 1920, Anderson understood that he would not be able to return to Russia. However, he received a YMCA assignment to serve émigrés from this country in Poland and Germany; this developed into his years of ministry from bases in Berlin and Paris. This article explores the development of his work among émigrés during this period. Anderson had developed an interest in Orthodox Christianity during his 1917 service with John R. Mott, and he gradually developed a deeper appreciation for Eastern Christian doctrine and practice through his reading and relationships. During his years in Berlin and Paris, he served as a leader within the YMCA for shaping the Association's approach to Orthodoxy: over the years, it had shifted from resigned toleration to prag-

1. For an introduction to the work of the YMCA among Russians, see Matthew Lee Miller, *The American YMCA and Russian Culture: The Preservation and Expansion of Orthodox Christianity, 1900–1940* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013).

matic assistance to limited support to enthusiastic partnership.[2] During this period, Anderson worked with Berdyaev to make significant contributions to building bridges of communication and relationship among Eastern and Western Christians and supporting Orthodox publishing and educational opportunities. They also spoke out for the freedom of conscience in the USSR and provided reliable information on religion in the Soviet Union.[3]

Anderson's trip to Copenhagen, Denmark, in the summer of 1920 served as a transition that initiated his next stage of work in Berlin, Germany. He had an opportunity to explore Sweden and Norway before he received a telegram from John R. Mott, asking him to travel to Poland and Estonia and visit new YMCA programs to assist refugees. Mott (1865–1955) provided leadership for YMCA global outreach and the expansion of the ecumenical movement. This exploratory trip led to Mott's invitation to oversee service for Russian POWs in Germany.[4] Anderson traveled to Warsaw and secured government permission to provide Y assistance to Russian refugees who had been living in prisoner of war camps in Poland since the war. He then received authorization to expand service to 50,000 Soviet prisoners from the Russo-Polish War of 1919–1920, who were in transit to camps within Germany. Due to this time, he was invited to participate in a Repatriation Committee organized by Fridtjof Nansen, the Norwegian humanitarian leader. Anderson represented the YMCA in the Kowno (Kaunas) Repatriation Conference, which included Nansen and a delegation from Moscow. This conference negotiated the exchange of prisoners between Russia, Germany, and the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.[5] Nansen was named High Commissioner of Refugees by the League of Nations in 1921. He requested Association assistance for work with refugees and received 50,000 dollars; the YMCA operated twenty camps in 1920–21 with this funding.[6]

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2. See Paul B. Anderson, "The YMCA and the Russian Orthodox Church," November 27, 1926, Russian Work – Europe, Restricted, Correspondence and Reports, 1920–29, Annual Reports, 1920–29, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis (KFYA); *Objectives, Principles, and Programme of Y.M.C.A's in Orthodox Countries* (Geneva: World's Committee of Y.M.C.A.s, 1933), Paul B. Anderson Papers, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives (PBAP); Paul B. Anderson, "A Study of Orthodoxy and the YMCA," booklet printed in Geneva by the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1963, 15 (Pamphlets on Orthodoxy, YMCA of the USA, Anderson, Paul B, 1, KFYA).

3. Three of the most useful monographs on this topic are: Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Robert C. Williams, *Culture in Exile: Russian Émigrés in Germany,* 1881–1941 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972); and Robert H. Johnston, *"New Mecca, New Babylon": Paris and* the *Russian Exiles, 1920–1945* (Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988). See also A. V. Anashkin, K. M. Antonov, and G. V. Bezhanidze, eds., *Russkaia emigratsiia: Tserkovnaia zhizn' i bogoslovsko-filosofskoe nasledie* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Pravoslavnyi sviato-Tikhonovskii Gumanitarnyi Universitet, 2022).

4. Paul B. Anderson, letter to Berta [his sister], August 17, 1920, Paul B. Anderson and Family Papers, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis (PBAFP KFYA). For developments in Mott's thinking at this time, see Benjamin L. Hartley, "The 1921 Founding of the International Missionary Council in the Life of John R. Mott," *International Review of Mission* 111:2 (November 2022): 253–67.

5. Paul B. Anderson, "Introduction to the Topic," written July 17, 1976, for the panel, "The 'Homesick Million': Russian Emigration, 1917–1975," American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies national convention, St. Louis, Missouri, October 8, 1976, 1–2, author's copy.

6. Donald E. Davis, "The American YMCA and the Russian Emigration," *Sobornost* 9 (1987): 25. See also Paul B. Anderson, "Russian Work – Policy Study," November 23, 1943, 3 (PBAFP KFYA).

Anderson continued his YMCA service with civilian refugees in spring 1921; they reached several points along the Polish/Russian border for processing and transfer to refugee camps throughout Poland. He recalled "the great exodus of civilian refugees from Russia ... due to the repression, terror and famine which combined to make life in Russia unbearable."[7] At Narva, Estonia, he recognized familiar faces among these refugees,

> I remember seeing refugee men, women, and children unloading from Russia at Narva. They were dumped ... some distance from town and walked as best they could the two miles to the formidable looking fortress of Ivangorod, which looked like anything but a welcome home. Their luggage, much of it simply wrapped in a blanket and tied with a rope, was either carried or brought in local horsedrawn wagons. All were tired, hungry, and still anxious lest they had not yet actually left the Russia they feared. Among these refugees from Russia there came my good friends from Moscow, Mme. Alexandra Shidlovsky and her daughter Sophie.[8]

These two women were the wife and daughter of Sergius Shidlovsky, who had been vice president of the Duma.[9]

Work in Berlin, 1920–1924

Anderson set up a headquarters for service to refugees in Berlin in a large apartment at 51 Kurfurstenstrasse, where he lived with Donald Lowrie and James Sommerville, fellow Y secretaries. They were joined by a Mr. Hillman, who had previously served with the Y in Russia and France. The apartment had eight rooms, plus kitchen and bath. The team divided responsibilities according to their strengths. Lowrie focused on developing contacts and relationships with government officials; Anderson explained that Lowrie spoke German and Russian better than he did himself and had an ability to connect with people in a friendly way. Sommerville worked in the office, dealing with correspondence. Anderson traveled extensively, visiting camps where Russian prisoners of war and refugees had been held since 1914 in crowded and difficult conditions.[10]

Anderson invited Mrs. Shidlovsky and Sophia to join the group for dinner one evening, after their arrival in Berlin. They had experienced multiple difficulties and had not had enough to eat. He had developed a friendship with the family during his time in Moscow:

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7. Anderson, "Introduction to the Topic," 2.

8. Paul B. Anderson, "No East or West: The Memoirs of Paul B. Anderson," ed. Donald E. Davis, unpublished manuscript, [1982], author's copy, 83.

9. Anderson, "No East or West," 83–84; see Sophie Koulomzin, *Many Worlds: A Russian Life* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980). Her sister Mania (Maria) worked as a secretary in the YMCA office until it closed in 1918; she was imprisoned with Anderson and other Russian secretaries for a few days.

10. Paul B. Anderson, letter to his mother, October 10, 1920, 1–3 (PBAFP KFYA). Two key overview documents for the study of the YMCA Russian work are [International Survey Committee], "Survey of North American YMCA Service to Russians in Europe" [1930], Russia, International Survey – 1930, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Box 12, KFYA; and Paul B. Anderson, "YMCA Russian Work," interview with Donald E. Davis, September 9, 1971, Russian Work, Restricted, General, Personal Accounts, KFYA.

> [Mrs. Shidlovsky] was a great friend of all of us Y men there, and one of her daughters, Mary, was with me when we were locked up. They were a very wealthy family and influential in liberal political movements. Of course now they are quite stranded, but Mrs. Shidlovsky takes a very practical view of her situation and is eager to set to work. The unfortunate thing is that she both looks and is half-starved, though she does not admit it; and Sophie, the younger daughter who came with her, has been quite ill, partly with excitement and partly with fever and is just now getting on her feet. Except of course for the San Galli family, I knew them better than any others in Russia.[11]

Sophie and her mother later participated very actively in YMCA programs to serve refugees in Berlin and Paris. One immediate need for émigrés was a passport, since the Soviet government deprived them of citizenship in October 1921. After 1922, émigrés were able to apply for a "Nansen passport," a stateless person's passport, issued by the League of Nations Office of High Commissioner for Refugees; this allowed them to be authorized for employment.[12]

In 1920 and 1921, Anderson made multiple trips to locations assisted by the YMCA Russian Service, primarily camps in Poland, in order to experience the lives of men who would interact with the correspondence school and publishing program. He also traveled to explore regions where he hoped to provide Russian-language books; his destinations included Sofia, Kishinev, Uzhhorod, Warsaw, Riga, and the Pochaevo Lavra near Lvov (Lviv).[13] For example, in Volumin (Wolomin), eastern Poland, he visited a "colony" authorized by the Polish government for ninety-eight former imperial Russian military officers. They were organized in work groups to manufacture shoes, dishes, buckets, decorative boxes, and other goods for resale; the YMCA provided tools for this program.[14]

During these years, several YMCA staff members with experience in Russia were able to work with the American Relief Administration (ARA) famine relief program in Soviet territory: Ethan T. Colton, Lowrie, Sommerville, S. M. Keeny, H. Dewey Anderson, and Edgar and Stella MacNaughten. Paul B. Anderson submitted an application and completed an interview in London with Colonel Haskell, a representative of ARA chairman Herbert Hoover. However, his visa application was denied, apparently due to his 1918 arrest and interrogation in Lubianka; Anderson believed he was the only Y secretary rejected for ARA service. This program, funded by the US government, provided food during the 1921–22 famine and saved over one million lives.[15]

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11. Paul B. Anderson, letter to his mother, October 10, 1920, 4 (PBAFP KFYA).

12. Donald E. Davis, "The American YMCA and the Russian Emigration," *Sobornost* 9 (1987): 24, 28.

13. Anderson, "No East or West," 94, 98–99.

14. Paul B. Anderson letter to Berta, March 31, 1921, 1–3, PBAFP KFYA. For reflections on the motivations and outcomes of the YMCA's work in Poland during this period, see: Sylwia Kuźma-Markowska, "Railroad Workers, Civilization and Communism: The Young Men's Christian Association on the Interwar Polish Frontier," *European Journal of American Studies* 13:3 (2018), http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/13718, DOI: 10.4000/ejas.13718.

15. Anderson, "No East or West," 101; Paul B. Anderson letter to Sergei Grigorievitch Troubetzkoy, February 6, 1975, 1 (PBAFP KFYA). See Bertrand M. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand: The American*

The YMCA's 1920s program for Russian-language publishing developed after a wartime program led by Julius Hecker. He was born in St. Petersburg and received his education in the United States before his Methodist ordination. Hecker was hired by the YMCA for work among prisoners of war, which included literacy courses among Russians held in Austro-Hungarian camps and the development of educational textbooks. Hecker also connected with émigrés in Switzerland and developed a plan for a publishing program that could encourage adult education more broadly. He organized the translation of books by US Protestant pastor Harry Emerson Fosdick and planned to distribute the works of popular science author Nikolai Aleksandrovich Rubakin.[16] These books were published in Geneva with the imprint World Alliance YMCA, and Hecker expanded his vision for Russian adult education. Many Russians and Y leaders supported his work, but eventually he faced strong resistance due to the theological liberalism presented in several works and his radical political views; Hecker was required to resign from the Association. Hecker and Anderson talked about the program and its possibilities, and eventually, Paul was appointed to continue the project.[17]

The YMCA books published under Hecker's leadership were not widely distributed, and many books were placed in a warehouse. However, several copies of these books were received by leaders of *Licht dem Osten* (Light to the East), a German-Russian Protestant missionary organization. These leaders were very critical of the views promoted in the books, so they contacted Mott; Anderson's mentor told him to stop the production and distribution of these books, and he complied.[18] He discussed the situation with his YMCA coworkers. Personally, he understood that the content of the books might offend many Orthodox readers. However, some of the books did include useful scientific information, so he recognized the complexity of the situation. His colleagues agreed that he should visit Rubakin personally to explain the decision. Anderson wrote, "He took my explanation silently and began to shed tears. I realized that I had been talking with a man of great integrity and a representative of his time."[19]

Beginning January 1921, the YMCA authorized Anderson to begin work as director of a Correspondence School for Russians, while James Niederhauser was appointed as director for publications and printing. Niederhauser had previously served with the Y in Siberia; the two men worked together as colleagues until 1924, after which Anderson directed both programs. He continued working with a number of technical specialists

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Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). A documentary film "America's Gift to Famine-Stricken Russia" was created in 1922: https://www.hoover.org/events/americas-gift-famine-stricken-russia-1922-film-screening-live-musical-accompaniment. See also the collection of photographs in Bertrand M. Patenaude and Joan Nabseth Stevenson, *Bread and Medicine: American Famine Relief in Soviet Russia, 1921–1923* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2023); and Benjamin L. Hartley, "Saving Students: European Student Relief in the Aftermath of World War I," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 42:4 (2018): 295–315.

16. Paul B. Anderson, *No East or West,* ed. Donald E. Davis (Paris: YMCA Press, 1985), 27.

17. Ibid., 28.

18. Anderson, "No East or West," 104.

19. Ibid., 105; for a detailed study of Hecker's vision and work with the YMCA, see Natal'ia Pashkeeva, "U istokov russkogo izdatel'stva Soiuza YMCA Severnoi Ameriki: Deiatel'nost' shveitsarskoi izdatel'skoi gruppy 'Zhizn' i Kniga' (1917–1921)," *Issledovaniia po istorii russkoi mysli,* vol. 10 (2010–2011), eds. M. A. Kolerova and N. S. Plotnikova (Moscow: Modest Kolerov, 2014): 273–362.

hired by Hecker in fields such as engineering and agriculture. He set up the Correspondence School in Berlin due to its center as the Russian Work Headquarters on Kochstrasse, with 100,000 refugees in the area. The International Committee authorized 250,000 dollars to fund the venture.[20]

By 1922, Niederhauser set up the publishing enterprise in Prague with the name IMKA TISK (YMCA Publishers in the Czech language). The location had been chosen for financial reasons and due to the Russian émigré population in the city; Anderson traveled back and forth from Berlin to Prague multiple times. However, in 1923, the Soviet Union established an embargo on the importation of reading materials, which created a significant obstacle for the plans. The Prague printing plant was closed; Anderson attempted to open a small bookshop in Berlin, but low demand led to its closure. Fortunately, the Y was able to sell the buildings and equipment in Prague without a significant loss of investment.[21]

During this challenging era, Anderson and his editorial committee began to develop plans which correlated with the educational needs and reading interests of those they met within the Russian émigré community. Y staff members Gustave Gerard Kullman, Amos Ebersole, and Fyodor Pianov began to make connections within Berlin and met a network of students, professors, and writers who had arrived in the area due to the war and those who had been exiled from Petrograd, Moscow, and Kiev (Kyiv). Anderson and his colleagues began to consider how to help those in need—a common YMCA reaction. However, as Anderson wrote, "One day it came to me that perhaps we were looking at them from the wrong angle—how to be of help to them—whereas, we should solicit their aid to us. I brought this up at a staff meeting, where the idea received encouragement."[22] This began a lifelong habit for Anderson—viewing people in need not as inferior, but as equals with valuable experience and intelligence.

Pianov had met Boris Petrovich Vysheslavtsev, a professor of philosophy from Moscow University who had been exiled by Lenin. Anderson met with him and learned more about this man and his fellow intellectuals, their personalities and aspirations. He then invited him for a second meeting at his home, along with Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev and Simeon Ludvigovich Frank, to talk about future collaboration. Berdyaev told Anderson about professors who had been expelled from their posts in Moscow and had responded by organizing a Free Philosophical Academy, which attracted many young people to public lectures. This step had led to their exile, and believed that they could organize a similar program in Berlin. Anderson asked Pianov to rent lecture halls during the evening at a Berlin high school and promote events featuring Berdyaev, Frank, and Vysheslavtsev. The opening night served as a celebration, attended by students, professors, church leaders, and a wide variety of Russians, as well as key figures in the emigration, such as Metropolitan Evlogii, novelist Boris Zaitsev, and Madame Maria Germanova of the Moscow Art Theater.[23] Berdyaev's opening lecture set a tone for the evening and the Academy. He spoke on "the terrible crisis through which Russ-

20. Anderson, *No East or West,* 29.

21. Ibid., 31.

22. Ibid., 31–32.

23. Ibid., 33.

ian culture was passing in the homeland and this opportunity to keep it alive abroad."[24] The Academy's lecture series continued with many in attendance, in rented facilities, with lecturers paid for each event. In this way, "the YMCA became recognized as a Russian cultural organization."[25] This venture led to the formation of the Y's vision for this project: "the preservation and development of Russian Christian culture, which was submerged by the communist ideologists in the Soviet Union."[26]

YMCA staff members had earlier developed a strong connection to Evlogii within Russia during the revolutionary era. Y men such as Colton had served members and leaders of the Orthodox church through the famine relief outreach of the American Relief Administration (ARA) in 1919–1923. Metropolitan Evlogii (Georgievskii) (1868–1946) served as a leader of émigré believers in Europe during the interwar period, based in Berlin and Paris. Metropolitan Antonii (Khrapovitsky) (1863–1936) led a synod of bishops established in Sremski Karlovci in Serbia in 1921. The synods led by Evlogii and Antonii competed for influence among émigré believers as they provided different visions of Orthodox interaction with European culture and western Christian churches. Antonii's synod sharply criticized those who wished to cooperate with non-Orthodox believers in contexts such as the Russian Student Christian Movement and meetings of the ecumenical movement.[27] Anderson explained the role played by the YMCA in church leadership dynamics in this way:

> On one of his visits with Patriarch Tikhon in Moscow, Ethan Colton had been requested by him to carry to Archbishop Evlogy the message that he was considered by the Patriarchate as being in charge of the Church in Western Europe. When Colton reached Berlin after this interview, he asked me, as the staff man best acquainted with the Russian language and Church, to accompany him to deliver the message. It was subsequently confirmed in writing, but in the meantime it gave comfort and assurance to Archbishop Evlogy. This conversation was Archbishop Evlogy's first contact with the YMCA, and he never forgot it.[28]

Colton and Anderson communicated Tikhon's instruction to Evlogii to lead the Church in western Europe; they also delivered Tikhon's message that Metropolitan Platon should lead the Church in America. As Anderson stated,

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24. Ibid., 34.

25. Ibid., 34.

26. Paul B. Anderson, "Distinctive Aspects of Culture in Russia and China," lecture presented at Wheaton College, Norton, MA, May 8, 1972, text marked April 24, 1972, 11 (PBAFP KFYA). For a survey of the YMCA's interaction with Russian émigrés, especially in Berlin and Paris during the interwar period, see E. G. Pashkina, "Amerikanskaia organizatsiia 'YMCA' i russkaia emigratsiia pervoi poslerevoliutsionnoi volny," *Amerikanskii ezhegodnik,* ed. V. V. Sogrin (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo 'Ves' Mir,' 2010), 332–341.

27. Anderson, *No East or West,* 34. For discussion of Russian church conflicts of this period, see A. A. Kostriukov, *Russkaia zarubezhnaia tserkov' v 1925–1938 gg.: Iurisdiktsionnye konflikty i otnosheniia s moskovskoi tserkovnoi vlast'iu* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Pravoslavnyi sviato-Tikhonovskii Gumanitarnyi Universitet, 2012).

28. Anderson, *No East or West,* 34–35; John R. Mott had met Tikhon earlier during the Root mission in the summer of 1917. See also Jane Swan, *Chosen For His People: A Biography of Patriarch Tikhon,* preface by Scott Kenworthy (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2015).

> Let me return again to Dr. Colton. He came out from Moscow when I was stationed in Berlin. This was in late April or May, 1922. He brought the verbal message (subsequently in writing) from Patriarch Tikhon to Metropolitan Eulogius, also in Berlin, living in the residential corridors of the Russian Church located in the premises of the old Russian embassy on Unter den Linden. Dr. Colton asked me to go with him and interpret in conveying his message to Metropolitan (then Archbishop) Eulogius to the effect that Eulogius should confirm to Metropolitan Platon the Patriarch's desire to have him rule the Orthodox Church in America. I kept no written record of this conversation, but Dr. Colton was asked to testify in court in New York in the controversy between the Living Church representative and the lawyers for the Metropolia, and this is to be found in the court record. ...[29]

Anderson visited the metropolitan many times in Berlin and later in Paris (at the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, 12 rue Daru) until his death in 1946. Anderson summarized, "He was the chief and most loyal ecclesiastical sponsor of our work, whether as the YMCA or as the Russian Student Christian Movement Abroad."[30] The connections of the Y to Tikhon and Evlogii led to ongoing cooperation; for example, Mott secured funds for the publication of an English-language Orthodox service book, and Tikhon provided written authorization, which was printed in the book.[31] Years later, Anderson provided clarification about his connection to Tikhon:

> I did not personally meet Patriarch Tikhon at any time. There is some confusion in this regard, as two of my close colleagues in Moscow in 1918 saw him several times then and again in 1922. They were Dr. E. T. Colton and Dr. Donald A. Lowrie, and their work and mine naturally found common expression in what has been told or written. Their visits chiefly came when they returned to Moscow in 1922 as YMCA workers under the umbrella of the ARA, charged with relief service to ecclesiastical and university personalities.[32]

Anderson had met a number of Orthodox leaders during his time in Russia, but his understanding of this confession and his relationships with leaders grew during his years in Berlin. For example, in Russia, Boris Pash and his father, Fr. Theodore Pashkovsky, became involved with YMCA activities after returning to the country from the US just before the 1917 Revolutions. In June 1918, the father and son served with the YMCA Volga Agricultural Exhibit steamer. They left the country by the Black Sea route in 1919 and came to Berlin, where Boris continued Y activities. In 1922 the Y brought him to the US and he enrolled at Springfield College; after graduation he became a teacher in

29. Anderson to Troubetzkoy, 1–2.

30. Anderson, *No East or West,* 35.

31. Paul B. Anderson, "Russian Work – Policy Study," November 23, 1943, 6 (PBAFP KFYA).

32. Anderson to Troubetzkoy, 1.

California. His father later became Metropolitan Theophilus, head of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USA from 1934 to 1950.[33]

During the early 1920s, Russian students began to meet for discussion and study at university centers across Europe. Several of these students had participated in the prewar Russian Student Christian movement, and two proposed a student conference for the summer of 1922, with sponsorship by the YMCA, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and the World's Student Christian Federation (WSCF). This gathering was organized for August 1922 in Prerov, Czechoslovakia. The daily celebration of the liturgy stood out as a highlight for many participants, and Fr. Sergei Bulgakov played a highly influential role.[34]

Students gathered for a similar conference in 1923, and the movement was formally established as the Russian Student Christian Movement Abroad with Prof. Vasily Zenkovsky from Kiev (Kyiv) as president. Three men were invited to serve as secretaries for the movement, with the sponsorship of the YMCA, YWCA, and WSCF: Lev Nikolaevich Liperovsky, Alexander Ivanovich Nikitin, and Lev Nikolaevich Zander. Anderson participated in RSCM developments and built many close friendships with participants.[35] They adopted this specific formal purpose statement:

> The Russian Student Christian Movement abroad has as its fundamental purpose the association of believing youth for the service of the Orthodox Church and bringing unbelievers to faith in Christ. It seeks to aid its members to work out a Christian view of life, and sets itself the task of preparing defenders of the Church and faith, able to conduct struggle with contemporary atheism and materialism.[36]

As Anderson observed the religious transformations within the movement, he considered how to respond through the activities of the YMCA Russian service publication program. He believed that books could help support the intellectual and spiritual goals

33. Paul B. Anderson letter to John Randle, YMCA National Board, Archivist, September 29, year unknown, PBAFP KFYA. Anderson was given a copy of the book *The Alsos Mission* by the author, retired Colonel Boris T. Pash. See "His Eminence, Metropolitan Theophilus (Pashkovsky)," Orthodox Church in America, https://www.oca.org/holy-synod/past-primates/theophilus-pashkovsky (accessed November 6, 2023).

34. Anderson*, No East or West,* 37. See Ul'iana Gutner, *Russkoe studencheskoe khristianskoe dvizhenie: Istoki, vozniknovenie i deiatel'nost' v 1923–1939 godakh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Sviato-Filaretovskogo Instituta, 2023).

35. Anderson*, No East or West,* 38. See Paul B. Anderson, "Notes on the Development of Y.M.C.A. Work for Russians Outside Russia, 1919–1939," unpublished paper, 1940, PBAP. The centennial of the Russian Student Christian Movement Abroad was marked by a number of conferences in 2023: 1) An online event "The Russian Student Christian Movement: A Case for Conciliarity from Below" was hosted by the University of Tartu, School of Theology and Religious Studies, on March 21. 2) In Moscow the St. Filaret Institute and the Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn House of Russian Abroad co-hosted a conference on October 4–5: "The Russian Student Christian Movement: The Experience of the Churchification of Life." 3) The Russian Student Christian Movement (Action Chrétienne des Étudiants Russes-Mouvement de Jeunesse Orthodoxe) hosted a Paris symposium on the occasion of the centenary of ACER-MJO on October 28–29 and November 1.

36. Paul B. Anderson, "North American Y.M.C.A., Russian Service in Europe, Administrative Report for the Year 1936," 9. Annual Reports 1933–49. Russian Work – Europe, Restricted, Budgets and Appropriations, Correspondence and Reports, 1950–, Financial Transactions. KFYA.

of the movement.[37] He asked Vysheslavtsev, his closest advisor, what books might be appropriate to present to an Orthodox young person to encourage his or her spiritual development. He replied that saints' lives were a classic form of edification, but they would need to be updated in style to meet the current era. In response, they decided to invite the well-respected novelist Boris Zaitsev to write a work of historical biography on the life of Sergei of Radonezh, a national and spiritual hero to many. This book was soon published, and it was well received in the community, requiring three printings to meet demand. This book was directed at a wide range of readers, and the second volume was directed at the intellectual community. After a conversation, Anderson worked with Berdyaev to publish a symposium, a collection of philosophical essays by thinkers in his circle, *Problems of the Russian Religious Mind,* with contributions by Berdyaev, Bulgakov, Vysheslavtsev, Frank, and Nikolai Arseniev. This was published in 1924 with the inscription "YMCA Press," and as Anderson explained, it

> made an impression on the Russian reading public as showing that the YMCA was not a Protestant proselytizing organization, but one which held to the idea that its work must represent the indigenous thought and aspirations of the Russian people. It set the tone for our program and heralded the later production in Paris of practically all the great theological and philosophical books produced by the writers at St. Sergius Theological Institute. The YMCA had thus identified itself with creative Orthodox doctrine. Our policy and motto became: "the preservation and development of Russian Christian culture."[38]

As noted earlier, Anderson held a measure of sympathy for Julius Hecker, but he did not express any approval of his former colleague's support of the renovationist Living Church movement:

> Some Western Protestant reformers, such as Julius Hecker and Methodist Bishop Blake, declared that a new age had come to the Russian Church and people. Thus they showed their lack of understanding of the inner spiritual unity between the Orthodox faith and the soul of the Russian people. After prospering outwardly for two decades, this reform movement collapsed when anxieties and suffering brought on by the Second World War demanded real spiritual relief and moral support.[39]

The Living Church was a diverse movement within the Russian Orthodox Church from the 1920s into the 1940s. Most participants were open to cooperating with the Soviet authorities and introducing reforms, such as the use of the contemporary Russian language in the liturgy. Hecker lived for several years in the USSR but came to Paris for a

37. Anderson, *No East or West,* 38. For a first-hand reflection of the 1923 RSCM conference in Prerov, see V. Zen'kovskii, "Psherovskii s"ezd R. S. Kh. D. (1–7 oktiabria 1923)," *Russkaia mysl',* no. 2085, December 12, 1963, 5.

38. Anderson, *No East or West,* 39–40. See E. V. Ivanova, "Deiatel'nost' izdatel'stva 'YMCA-Press' v Berline," *Vestnik russkogo khristianskogo dvizheniia* 188:2 (2004): 334–63.

39. Anderson, *No East or West,* 123. Anderson provides his most direct critique of Hecker's published theological views in Paul B. Anderson, "Religion and Communism," *Journal of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius* 1 (1934): 35–37.

visit. He contacted Anderson for a meeting and asked to meet with Berdyaev. Anderson set up a meeting for the two men, and Hecker later reported that they had a good conversation and "see pretty well eye to eye." Anderson then shared this comment with Berdyaev, who replied with a "little twinkle," "I think there may be two points on which we differ, one is our conception of God, and the other is our conception of man."[40]

Anderson and other YMCA staff members did not regularly attend church services while in Berlin. He explained that the American congregation, which had operated in Berlin before the war, had not reopened, and the Anglican church did not have anyone in attendance when he visited. He did occasionally attend German-language services at the Evangelical (Lutheran) St.-Matthäus-Kirche near his residence on Kurfurstenstrasse.[41] Anderson enjoyed connecting with fellow believers in Berlin, even without the support of a congregation: "Our little YMCA group was a congenial one, and we three bachelors (the Troika) were glad to go on outings with American and Russian girls, especially Marjorie Mallory, Mary Bell, and Sophie Shidlovsky."[42] Y staff members also received support from occasional conferences, such as a summer 1923 global gathering held in the resort town of Portschach in southern Austria. Representatives of 53 countries attended, with sessions addressing the significance, methods, and organization of Christian ministry among boys. Sherwood Eddy and Mott were plenary speakers, and Pianov spoke to the group about work among Russian boys.[43]

In 1923, Anderson and Lowrie took a vacation trip to Jerusalem; they visited Archibald Harte, a former supervisor of YMCA service to prisoners of war in Petrograd, who at the time was serving as General Secretary of the Jerusalem YMCA.[44] On this trip they visited key sites connected with biblical times. Anderson reflected after viewing the location of the former temple and remembering the life of Jesus: "How His heart throbbed with joy at the sight, and with sorrow for the people whose hearts were hardened and would not believe that their Messiah had come."[45] He reflected on the presence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam within the city, as well as the interaction of Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Armenian confessions: "... we tried not to forget that our visit was spiritual in purpose, and we especially prized those occasions which led us into the religious life of the Holy City."[46] Anderson commented on many of the different ethnic and national groups on his visit, and he admitted that his

40. Anthony Polsky, interview with Paul B. Anderson, at his home near Asheville, NC, March 21, 1980, 67 (PBAFP KFYA). For information on Hecker's fate in the Soviet Union, see Alan Cullison, "Stalin-Era Secret Police Documents Detail Arrest, Executions of Americans," *Los Angeles Times,* November 9, 1997. https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1997-nov-09-mn-51910-story.html (accessed October 4, 2023). For Berdyaev's published critique of Hecker's views, see Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), 173–182.

41. Anderson, "No East or West," 121.

42. Ibid.

43. "P. B. Anderson Tells of YMCA Meet," *Madrid Register-News* newspaper clipping, no author or date on clipping, [1923] (PBAFP KFYA). This article includes a printing of a June 24, 1923, letter from Paul B. Anderson to his parents about a recent conference.

44. Paul B. Anderson, "A Pilgrimage: The Pilgrimage of Donald A. Lowrie and Paul B. Anderson to Jerusalem, 1923," privately printed, 8. PBAFP KFYA.

45. Ibid., 12.

46. Ibid., 14.

observations were simply impressions rather than informed perspectives. He expressed skepticism about the recent rise in the Jewish population related to the Zionist movement and the possibility of future economic and political success. He did not comment on the reasons for the Zionist movement, such as widespread European antisemitism.[47]

Anderson noted at the end of his pilgrimage journal,

> Tradition and the desire of pilgrims to see everything told of the gospel stories have attached significance to many places which manifestly are false. In recent years a number of competent investigators have given serious study to this problem and by noting their conclusions the visitor is spared many wrong impressions. We need not believe, for instance, that our Lord walked the very streets which he followed in Jerusalem; for excavations have showed that the streets of that time lie often as much as twenty and thirty feet below the present ground level of the city, which has been built upon the ruins and debris of the many destructions which Jerusalem has suffered. On the hills it is different, for they change less. Yet even in the city these investigations are an aid rather than hindrance in appreciation of the sanctity of the place.[48]

Anderson referred to Lowrie and himself as "modern pilgrims," seeking light for their life and work.[49]

Work in Paris, 1924–1940

This section provides insights into Anderson's involvement with the YMCA Press, Russian Student Christian Movement, and the Orthodox Theological Institute in France; it also discusses his contributions to the careers of prominent Christian scholars Berdyaev and Bulgakov. In the spring of 1924, the YMCA Russian Work programs moved its offices due to the migration of many Berlin émigrés to Paris and industrial regions from Lille to Grenoble. Anderson arrived in France on June 17, 1924, and he estimated that 60,000 Russian refugees had settled in or near Paris. The first office for the programs was located in St. Maur des Fosses, a southeastern suburb of Paris.[50] Vysheslavtsev supported the move of the office to France from Germany, due to the larger number of Russian-language readers in Paris, the greater number of potential authors, and lower printing costs.[51]

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47. Ibid., 21.

48. Ibid., 44–45.

49. Ibid., 46.

50. Anderson, *No East or West,* 40. For information on the Russian émigré community, see Boris Raymond and David R. Jones, *The Russian Diaspora: 1917–1941* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2000); Iu. A. Poliakov, *Istoriia rossiiskogo zarubezh'ia: Problemy adaptatsii migrantov v xix-xx vekakh* (Moscow: Institut Rossiiskoi Istorii, Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1996); and W. Chapin Huntington, *The Homesick Million* (Boston: Stratford, 1933).

51. B. P. Vysheslavzeff letter to Paul B. Anderson, March 28, 1924, PBAFP KFYA. For discussion of the earlier development of Russian Orthodoxy in France, see Heather L. Bailey, *The Public Image of Eastern Orthodoxy: France and Russia, 1848–1870* (Ithaca, NY: Northern Illinois University Press, 2020).

The year 1925 brought additional changes to Anderson's life with his summer marriage to Margaret Holmes on July 8. Paul and Margaret served as close and trusted partners throughout his career. For their honeymoon, the couple traveled to Stockholm for the World Conference on Christian Life and Work, an ecumenical conference that included participation of many YMCA and denominational leaders. The Andersons set up their home in Paris and hosted many guests from the Y and Russian communities. Their children, Mary (born 1928) and Peter (born 1931), met many from these groups during their childhood.[52] Paul and Margaret had known each other since 1919, when they met on a family vacation at a Minnesota lake.[53] Margaret was born on January 24, 1900, to Ella Whiting and Charles Guernsey Holmes in Whiting, Iowa, a town named for her grandfather, Charles Edwin Whiting. She had three older brothers, Edwin, Russell, and Whiting. Margaret graduated from Whiting High School in 1917 and attended Grinnell College for two years before transferring to the University of Iowa in Iowa City. She graduated from the university in 1921 with a major in music and a minor in French. She taught school for two years in Whiting and then moved to Freeport, Illinois, where she served as a YWCA secretary in "Girls Work."[54] As a child, Margaret enthusiastically participated in a Congregational church with her family. She recalled, "On one occasion a returned missionary from China came to speak to us. She made such a great impression that I decided that I wanted to go to a foreign land and be a missionary when I grew up." After college and four years of teaching and YWCA work, she married Paul and moved to Paris.[55] In France, the Andersons moved from St. Maur to Paris, where they rented an apartment at 5 rue Berite, about a ten-minute walk from the future YMCA center at 10 Boulevard Montparnasse. Their four-room apartment was on the fourth floor of a new building, and they needed to buy furnishings for their new home, since they had not brought many belongings from the US.[56]

Anderson worked with two YMCA staff colleagues in Paris, Kullman and MacNaughten. Kullman focused his work on the RSCM, which moved its central office to Paris in 1925. By this year Paris had become the center of Russia Abroad. Anderson focused his primary attention on education and publishing, the Correspondence School, and the YMCA Press. He was also responsible for administrative support of the work, including financial and legal matters. By 1926, Anderson realized that his administrative role demanded a central office in the city of Paris rather than a suburb. This led to the rental of a 22-room house at 10 Boulevard Montparnasse, the building which became the hub of Y outreach among Russians.

52. Paul Limbert, "Paul B. Anderson: This is My Life," Blue Ridge Assembly, October 4, 1983, 4 (PBAFP KFYA); Paul B. Anderson, proof entry for "Anderson, Paul B.," for *Biographical Encyclopedia of the World*, 1 (PBAFP KFYA).

53. Limbert, "Paul B. Anderson," 4.

54. Mary Anderson Glenn, "Notes on the Life of Margaret Holmes Anderson," c. 1998; "Anderson, Paul B. and Margaret, Biographical Data, January 1960–October 1975"; Biographical Records, Paul B. Anderson, Box 4 (KFYA).

55. Margaret H. Anderson, "Churches Around the World," November 1, 1977, 1. PBAFP KFYA.

56. Paul B. Anderson, "Personal Study at Oxford, English Notables" [notes for "No East or West"], no date, 378 (PBAFP KFYA); Paul B. Anderson, "Russian Work – Policy Study," November 23, 1943 (PBAFP KFYA).

During this year, MacNaughten was able to move to Paris and take on new responsibilities for fundraising and programs for boys.[57]

During the Paris years, Kullman worked with the RSCM as it developed its intellectual and spiritual philosophy, rooted in the Russian Orthodox heritage but emphasizing a spirit of personal freedom. Professors shared lectures and writings with students, and Anderson worked to publish them in order to distribute them to a wider audience. He wrote, "I was the servant of all. The leaders and professors looked to me as a colleague and friend."[58] The RSCM expressed its philosophy as "the churchification of life," the application of Orthodox Christian teachings to every aspect of culture.[59]

Berdyaev also moved his Free Philosophical Academy to Paris in 1924, and the Association welcomed it to use the building on Montparnasse. Anderson asked Berdyaev to serve as chief editor for the YMCA Press, Vysheslavtsev as editor, and Boris Mikhailovich Krutikov as business manager. Anderson worked as director of the Correspondence School, and he hired specialists to supervise instruction in a range of fields; Alexandra Shidlovsky served as instructor for English.[60] The Correspondence School provided an excellent program for those who needed vocational support, but it could not provide the facilities required for the awarding of an academic degree, which would be recognized by the French Ministry of Education. A significant number of Russian professors and engineers with prerevolutionary experience were now living in Paris and ready to contribute to an evening technical school for young émigrés.[61]

The Russian Correspondence School of the North American YMCA opened in Berlin in 1921 and transferred to Paris in 1924. The school began with six subjects, and by 1931 the number of subjects increased to 173. The number of students enrolled by 1931 was 1248. The total number of participating students over ten years was 8894, who lived in sixty-one countries. In 1931, a new program was announced: the Russian Superior Technical Institute, a residential college-level educational program set to operate at standards set by the French Ministry of Public Education. At this time, the Russian Correspondence School was reorganized as the Home Study Section of the Technical Institute. These programs were widely recognized as a valuable contribution to the economic stability of the emigration. The dean of the engineering faculty was Professor Kozlovsky, who had previously served as dean of the Harbin Polytechnic Institute. One hundred sixteen students enrolled for the first year of the Russian Superior Technical Institute.[62] During the interwar years, Anderson developed an understanding of the political movements within the émigré community—he established a wide network through his work

57. Anderson, *No East or West,* 41. Edgar MacNaughten (1882–1933) served with the Y in Russia and Europe. Gustave Gerard Kullmann (1894–1961) was the closest advisor to the Russian Student Christian Movement in Europe.

58. Anderson, *No East or West,* 42–43.

59. Ibid., 46.

60. Ibid., 43.

61. Ibid., 45.

62. Paul B. Anderson, "Ten Years of Service in Adjustment Education," October 10, 1931, 1–2. PBAFP KFYA.

with the educational program. The programs were diverse and could be broadly described as liberal, nationalist, or monarchist.[63]

As the activities of the Y and RSCM expanded from a base in Paris during the 1920s, disagreements arose as to the relationship between the partnering organizations. The International Committee of the YMCA was a global and inter-confessional organization, while the RSCM was intentionally Orthodox. How would they cooperate in the future? In 1927, a meeting was held, and an "Agreement" was made that the RSCM would play the leading role in work with Russian youth, with the exceptions of the YMCA Press, Correspondence School, and Technical Institute, which would continue as before. Anderson held this agreement as a guideline throughout his career.[64]

In the summer of 1926, Berdyaev presented a new idea as he met with Anderson, Vysheslavtsev, and Kullman at a Paris café. He had been energized by the philosophical, spiritual, and literary developments in émigré Paris, which had roots in the pre-war conversations of St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Kiev (Kyiv). He proposed the publication of a new journal which would provide a platform for continuing discussions about Russian cultural questions. Anderson understood that this project would require financial investment and recalled that Mott had promised funding for significant Russian projects. He quickly set up a meeting between Berdyaev and Mott, who promised support for a new interdisciplinary journal *Put' (The Way),* which was published regularly until the outbreak of World War II.[65] The YMCA Press included *Put'* as a key project within its activities. Berdyaev was the only editor for the journal, but he regularly discussed his plans with Anderson, Kullman, and Vysheslavtsev at their weekly editorial meetings. Eventually, Lowrie replaced Kullman on this committee.[66] From 1925 to 1940, this journal provided a cultural and intellectual meeting place for the thinkers of the emigration and a connection point with Western conversation partners on topics of theology, history, philosophy, and more. Antoine Arjakovsky's masterful book *The Way: Religious Thinkers of the Russian Emigration in Paris and their Journal, 1925–1940* summarizes that "the journal is one of the most brilliant in all Russian intellectual history."[67] He provides a detailed study of the authors, audiences, themes, and debates of this publication.

Berdyaev played a key role in the émigré community in developing connections with French Catholics and Protestants. Berdyaev was a dedicated Orthodox believer, but he believed that the church should not live in isolation. He hosted regular gatherings at his home in the suburb of Clamart, southwest of the center of Paris. The eminent French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain and his wife were regular guests, as well as the Swiss theologian Fritz Lieb. Berdyaev's wife Lydia Yudiforovna was Catholic, and his family roots included members of the French nobility. In addition, Berdyaev

63. Anderson*, No East or West,* 44.

64. Ibid.*,* 46.

65. Ibid.*,* 48–49.

66. Anderson*, No East or West,* 49. For an index to the articles in *Put,*' see Boris Danilenko, *Zerna edinogo khleba: Ukazatel' statei i publikatsii zhurnala "Put'" (Parizh, 1925–1940)* (Moscow: Sinodal'naia Biblioteka Moskovskogo Patriarkhata, Business Forms Company, 1998).

67. Antoine Arjakovsky, *The Way: Religious Thinkers of the Russian Emigration in Paris and Their Journal, 1925–1940* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 1.

hosted secret weekly interconfessional meetings at the YMCA Montparnasse building, which included presentations and discussions by a small group of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant theologians. Participants included Bulgakov and Marc Boegner, a leading French Protestant theologian. These meetings continued until they were forbidden by the local archdiocese, which followed the strict guidelines of Pope Pius X.[68] Berdyaev was an aristocrat by birth but adopted Marxist views as a young man before his intellectual journey in search of freedom led him to Orthodox Christianity and a distinct career as a philosopher. His wife Lydia was a revolutionary as a young woman and participated in the events of 1905; later she became a devout Roman Catholic. Lydia's mother also lived with them. Margaret Anderson and Eugenie Rapp, Berdyaev's sister-in-law, developed a close friendship.[69] Berdyaev became a well-known author in the English-speaking world after Anderson introduced him to a representative of Sheed and Ward, the English Catholic publishing house. This firm published his book *The Russian Revolution,* and his reputation grew.[70] In addition to *Put'*, the YMCA Press published *Novyi grad (The New City)* (1934–1939) and *Pravoslavnaia mysl' (Orthodox Thought)* (1928–1954). *Novyi grad*, edited by G. P. Fedotov, had more social-political content than *Put'*. *Pravoslavnaia mysl'* included articles written by professors at the theological institute.[71]

The Press published a range of works during the interwar period, but the core of its collection was books written by the faculty of the Orthodox Theological Institute of Paris (Institut de Théologie Orthodoxe de Paris), later known as the St. Sergius Theological Academy. On the fifteenth anniversary of the school in 1940, Evlogii formally changed the Russian (not the official French) title to St. Sergius Theological Academy.[72] Anderson described this project as "one of our greatest contributions to Russian religious culture."[73] These books provided a theological foundation for a new era of Orthodox believers after the closure of theological educational institutions in Soviet Russia.[74] The first textbook published by the press was Georges Florovsky's *Fathers of the Fourth Century,* followed by his book *Byzantine Fathers.* Other members of the talented faculty continued this trend. In addition, authors from around the Orthodox world submitted manuscripts for consideration. Theology was a primary subject, along with philosophy, memoirs, novels, and children's works.[75] These faculty members made significant contributions to the institute: Nikolay Afanasiev, Sergei Sergeevich Bezobrazov

68. Anderson*, No East or West,* 50.

69. Paul B. and Margaret H. Anderson, "N. A. Berdyaev and His Household in Clamart," no date, 1–5. PBAFP KFYA.

70. Anderson*, No East or West,* 51.

71. Paul B. Anderson, "A Brief History of YMCA Press," February 1972, 10. Corr. and Reports 1950–. Russian Work, Restricted, Publications, YMCA Press in Paris. KFYA.

72. Donald A. Lowrie, *Saint Sergius in Paris: The Orthodox Theological Institute* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 90, 19–20.

73. Anderson*, No East or West,* 51. See also Anton Arzhakovskii, "Sviato-Sergievskii Pravoslavnyi Bogoslovskii Institut v Parizhe," in *Bogoslov, filosof, myslitel': Iubileinye chteniia, posviashchennye 125–letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia o. Sergiia Bulgakova (sentiabr' 1996 g., Moskva)* (Moscow: Dom-muzei Mariny Tsvetaevoi, 1999).

74. Anderson*, No East or West,* 51.

75. Ibid.*,* 52.

(Bishop Kassian), Archimandrite Cyprian (Kern), Paul Evdokimov, Anton Vladimirovich Kartashev, Florovsky, Pyotr Kovalevsky, Mikhail Mikhailovich Ossorgine, Lev Zander, and Vasily Zenkovsky.[76]

Anderson expressed deep appreciation for Kartashev, who served as Assistant Procurator and then Procurator (after June 1917) of the Holy Synod during the period of the Provisional Government. Later, he served as professor of church history at the theological institute in Paris. Anderson described him as "one of the wisest and most level-headed of the Academy staff in reaching important decisions."[77] The YMCA Press also began to publish the works of literary authors, such as Alexei Remizoff.[78] By 1939, the Press had published a total of 274 titles and gained the position as the primary publisher of philosophical and religious books in the Russian language.[79]

Berdyaev himself stood out as a primary author for the early era of the YMCA Press, editing sixty-one issues of *Put'* before the war.[80] Lenin had exiled Berdyaev and one hundred others in 1922.[81] Berdyaev's works presented an Orthodox worldview with an emphasis on creativity and freedom.[82] Here is Anderson's explanation of Berdyaev's fundamental approach to humans:

> All his life he had been struggling over the place of the individual in creation, and he came to prefer speaking of the *person*. By *person* he meant the individual enshrouded in all the attributes resulting from having relationships with things and with other persons, with happenings, with the world, and with God. Some writers have, therefore, referred to Berdyaev's essential philosophy as "personalism." In all of the many contacts I had with him and his family, we always felt we were dealing with one who was not just an individual in the abstract but an essential part of God's creation.[83]

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76. Ibid., 58. For a brief introduction to the history of the YMCA Press and a bibliography of its publications, see A. L. Gurevich, *Istoriia izdatel'stva "YMCA-Press"* (Moscow: Kompaniia Sputnik+, 2004). For an index of the books written by the faculty of the institute, along with the writings of other émigré authors, see Nicolas Zernov, ed., *Russian Émigré Authors: A Biographical Index and Bibliography of their Works on Theology, Religious Philosophy, Church History and Orthodox Culture, 1921–1972* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1973). For discussion of the thought and ecumenical involvement of Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky, see Ross Joseph Sauve, "Georges V. Florovsky and Vladimir N. Lossky: An Exploration, Comparison and Demonstration of their Unique Approaches to the Neopatristic Synthesis" (Ph.D. diss., Durham University, 2010).

77. Anderson, "No East or West," 187–8.

78. Anderson, proof entry, 3.

79. "Paul B. Anderson," *The Christian Century* 102:25 (August 14–21, 1985): 730.

80. Anderson, *No East or West,* 53–54. For an assessment of the support of the YMCA for Berdyaev and the influence of Berdyaev on readers in the Soviet Union, including Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, see Donald E. Davis, "A Reassessment of N. A. Berdyaev," *Cithara* 27 (1987): 41–56.

81. Anderson, *No East or West,* 55. For discussion of the views and activities of these exiles and the reasons for their expulsion, see Stuart Finkel, *On the Ideological Front: The Russian Intelligentsia and the Making of the Soviet Public Sphere* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007) and Lesley Chamberlain, *The Philosophy Steamer: Lenin and the Exile of the Intelligentsia* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006).

82. Anderson, *No East or West,* 55.

83. Anderson, *No East or West,* 55. For two early reviews of Berdyaev's life and work, see Donald A. Lowrie, *Rebellious Prophet: A Life of Nicolai Berdyaev* (New York: Harper, 1960) and Michel Alexander Vallon, *An Apostle of Freedom: Life and Teachings of Nicolas Berdyaev* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1960). For a more recent reflection, see Lisa Radakovich Holsberg, "Creative Act: Nikolai Berdyaev and

Bulgakov also stood out as a primary author for the early era of the YMCA Press.[84] Anderson recognized his intellectual and political significance and the role he played in the emigration: "The combination of his remarkable intellectual and spiritual gifts with his completely Russian attachment to Church and people made him a natural leader among people of the Russian religious renaissance in Paris, and in the West, generally. He was the Father Confessor for many."[85] Anderson worked with Bulgakov within the context of publishing his works with the YMCA Press and within the ecumenical movement. Bulgakov actively participated in the Anglo-Russian student conferences and the Anglican-Orthodox partnerships which followed. Anderson explained,

> At first he was quite stiff in his position, adhering strictly to the traditional Orthodox claims to uniqueness and superiority, but in these meetings he came to realize and appreciate the authentic quality of Anglican personal and congregational piety and to lend his voice in favor of the movement towards sacramental unity. The same position characterized his present participation in the meetings which formed the ecumenical prelude to the World Council of Churches.[86]

Anderson also witnessed the sorrow Bulgakov felt when receiving sharp criticism from more traditional Orthodox leaders for his views on Sophia, the wisdom of God. Bulgakov expressed innovative views of Sophia as an attempt to explain the connections of the divine and the human in the world; he experienced "great spiritual agony."[87] Bulgakov made a deep impression on this American's understanding of the tradition: "I personally gained greatly from reading his manuscripts and from many conversations in private. My comprehension of Orthodoxy as a Church of infinite worth grew in this way, reaching high above controversies within its ranks on both small and great topics."[88]

Years later, author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn reflected on the contribution of the YMCA Press:

> The Russian YMCA-Press had had a glorious history within the Russian diaspora. In the decades when Communism's triumph in the USSR seemed limitless, with every glimmer of light extinguished and stamped out forever, YMCA-Press had conserved, carried on, and even strengthened that light, emanating from the religious renaissance at the beginning of the century, from *Vekhi,* by bringing out in small editions our foremost thinkers who had

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the Spiritual and Intellectual World of a Russian Philosopher in Exile, 1922–1948" (Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 2021).

84. Anderson, *No East or West,* 55.

85. Anderson, *No East or West,* 56. See Catherine Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Robert Bird, "In Partibus Infidelium: Sergius Bulgakov and the YMCA (1906–1940)," *Symposion* 1 (1996): 93–121; and Robert Bird, "YMCA i sud'by russkoi religioznoi mysli (1906–1947)," in *Issledovaniia po istorii russkoi mysli: Ezhegodnik za 2000,* ed. M. A. Korelov (Moscow: OGI, 2000), 165–223.

86. Anderson, *No East or West,* 57.

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid., 58.

> managed to survive: a Russian distillation of philosophical, theological, and aesthetic thought.[89]

Scholar Kåre Johan Mjør demonstrated the contribution of the YMCA Press to the cultural and intellectual historiography of Russia through his analysis of four works written by members of the émigré community of Paris and published by the Press: *Saints of Ancient Russia* by Georgy Fedotov (1931), *Ways of Russian Theology* by Florovsky (1937), *The Russian Idea* by Berdyaev (1946), and *The History of Russian Philosophy* by Zenkovsky (1948–50).[90]

After his arrival in Paris, Anderson became acquainted with a number of Russian émigré booksellers. They represented a wide range of cultural and political backgrounds and sold books for a variety of audiences. A lack of professional cooperation hindered the progress of all firms. Anderson was invited to conversations that led to the formation of a trade association, United Publishers *(Les Editeurs Reunis)*, which fostered cooperation and increased the chance of mutual benefit. He relied on the experience of his business manager, Boris Mikhailovich Krutikov, and was elected as president of the new corporation.[91]

In 1926 Anderson and the YMCA were drawn into a conflict due to the expansion of the RSCM. The synod of Orthodox bishops based in Sremski Karlovci in Serbia argued that students of the RSCM should submit to its authority, rather than the authority of Evlogii, which they did not recognize. Here is Anderson's analysis of the conflict:

> The Russian emigre bishops in Serbia resented any initiative or activity which seemed to diminish their episcopal standing and authority. They felt that the RSCM was doing just that, and they blamed the YMCA for leading earnest young Orthodox down the garden path to their personal peril and to the destruction of the Russian Orthodox Church as it had been in Russia.[92]

The Orthodox Theological Institute was a fully Russian organization, but Anderson, Mott, and the Y played key roles during its formation. Mott first discussed the idea for a theological institution with Lev Liperovsky, Lev Zander, and Alexander Nikitin at a 1922 meeting of the World Student Christian Federation. In 1923 Mott met with Russian theologians at a meeting hosted by the National Office of the Czechoslovak YMCA, with Anderson and Lowrie in attendance. In July 1924, Evlogii learned that Mott would be in Paris, so he invited Mott, Kullman, and Anderson to meet and discuss the possibility of purchasing a property. Mott pledged five thousand dollars for a down payment, and the next day Anderson and others inspected and approved the property. The progress led to the formation of the Institute, with a building, faculty, and organizational committee.[93] Anderson served on the organizational committee, along with Rev. Canon John Douglas,

89. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *Between Two Millstones,* Book 1: *Sketches of Exile, 1974–1978* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), 94.

90. Kåre Johan Mjør, *Reformulating Russia: The Cultural and Intellectual Historiography of Russian First-Wave Émigré Writers* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

91. Anderson, *No East or West,* 60.

92. Anderson, *No East or West,* 61–62.

93. Ibid., 63.

Foreign Relations Counselor of the Archbishop of Canterbury. From the beginning, Anderson played a key financial and administrative role: "The Metropolitan and the staff at the Institute came to depend on my counsel." He actively supported the fundraising for the institute and RSCM with donors from the Church of England, the Episcopal Church of the US, and churches in Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.[94]

The establishment of the Orthodox Theological Institute and RSCM led to increased conversations among students and professors and their Anglican counterparts. The British Student Christian Movement and a number of leaders of the Church of England became involved.[95] There had been a long history of interest in Anglican-Orthodox relations, and these conversations began a new stage of this story; Cosmo Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury, participated. Anglo-Russian student conferences in 1928 and 1929 led to the formation of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius.[96]

Anderson played a role in supporting Nicholas Zernov, a key participant in Orthodox-Anglican relations. He joined with John Douglas of the Church of England and Robert Mackie of the British Student Christian Movement in providing sponsorship for Zernov to study at the University of Oxford on the history and thought of the early church fathers and the ecumenical councils. This was supported with the goal of preparing this young émigré to provide future guidance for the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius. He pursued his studies with enthusiasm and earned a Ph.D. degree before his appointment as the Spalding Lecturer on Eastern Orthodox Culture at Oxford.[97] Years later Zernov described his appreciation for the work of American YMCA leaders, specifically MacNaughten, Anderson, and Kullman:

> Their experience and benevolence were very valuable for the Movement. With them we immediately developed a relationship of full trust and friendship. Although financial assistance from foreigners passed through their hands they never behaved as a boss. On the contrary, they were attracted to Orthodoxy and Russian culture, they spoke Russian well, and identified themselves completely with the Movement. Each of them were specialists in their own sphere of work.[98]

Since Anderson was focused on the YMCA Press and Correspondence School, MacNaughten took on the primary responsibility for raising funds for the theological institute, which was funded primarily from the US and England during its early years. MacNaughten and Kullman traveled to the US in 1927 to raise funds. MacNaughten approached the Episcopal Church Center for a grant from the Bishop White Memorial Fund to buy books for the institute's library. Florovsky was able to build up the library by making purchases of patristic literature from Russian émigré libraries, using resources provided by this Fund. Kullman worked with Henry Knox Sherrill, Bishop of

94. Ibid., 64.

95. Ibid., 65.

96. Ibid., 67; see Paul B. Anderson, "The Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius," *The Christian East* 13 (1932): 2–7.

97. Anderson, *No East or West,* 67–68.

98. N. M. and M. V. Zernov, eds., *Za rubezhom: Belgrad-Parizh-Oksford (Khronika sem'i Zernovykh)* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1973), 144.

Massachusetts, to make contacts among Episcopalians in Boston. Kullman met Ralph Adams Cram and his wife, who formed a Committee for Aid to the Paris Institute, which served as the most significant source of US revenue for many years. Cram was the chief architect for New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Another committee was formed in New York with participation by William T. Manning, Bishop of New York, Frank Gavin, professor at General Theological Seminary, James DeWitt Perry, Presiding Bishop, and Reginald Belknap, treasurer of General Theological Seminary. In western New York, Lauriston L. Scaife chaired the National Episcopalian Committee for Institute support. During this period, three RSCM leaders visited the Boston and New York committees to provide personal accounts on the value of the institute: Zenkovsky, Shidlovsky, and Liperovsky.[99]

During the 1920s and 30s, Anderson was promoting outreach among the émigré community, but he was also researching the Soviet government's promotion of an anti-religious campaign and promotion of atheism. The Church of England was following these developments with alarm, and leaders organized the RCAF (Russian Churches and Clergy Aid Fund). The Archbishop of Canterbury and John Douglas invited Anderson to a meeting at Lambeth Palace for RCAF and other leaders. These leaders learned of his efforts in Paris to collect information from the USSR on the conditions and challenges of religious organizations and believers; he had been distributing monthly bulletins with this information. He provided updates on Soviet conditions to this group at Lambeth Palace and developed a range of connections within the Anglican communion with those sharing an interest in ecumenical progress and support for persecuted Christians. His new contacts included Sir Bernard Pares, head of the School of Slavonic Studies at the University of London, and R. M. French, secretary of the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association. On the continent, Anderson's new like-minded colleagues included Adolph Keller in Zurich, Dutch pastor F. Krop, and French Reformed theologian Marc Boegner. This group met in Basel, Switzerland, along with Anderson and Bulgakov.[100]

Anderson provided information to many of these concerned colleagues within a "Study on Religion in Russia" group through a series of mailed bulletins. Tudor Pole of RCAF proposed that he lead an effort to produce a regular series of printed pamphlets on this topic. He worked with volunteers such as RSCM secretary Ivan Lagovsky to create these pamphlets, which included translations of articles and documents from the Soviet Union. Ten pamphlets were created over the years, with 500 copies printed in Paris and distributed by Pole. Anderson's effort led to another request from Bernard Pares at the University of London to create a quarterly "Chronicle on Soviet Russia" to be published in the *Slavonic and East European Review.* This feature appeared regularly until the outbreak of World War II. These projects created a demand on Anderson's time, but he saw it as an opportunity as well: "All of this was excellent research into

99. Anderson, "No East or West," 157–8.

100. Ibid., 70–71.

the nature and purpose of the anti-religious movement as well as the vestiges of real religion somehow portrayed in Soviet material."[101]

By the 1930s the Y center at 10 Boulevard Montparnasse had become a vibrant center for the activities of the YMCA Press, the Correspondence School, the RSCM, and other programs. However, it gradually became a center for activities that grew organically from within the émigré community. As Anderson observed, it became a

> center for all kinds of activities—intellectual, spiritual, physical—for Russian refugees in Paris. Theologians, engineers, book dealers, boys' clubs, student circles, volleyball games, and soon even hungry destitute men and women filled the place from morning to night. The combination represented an earnest attempt to discover and meet the needs of a special constituency. Apart from the Correspondence School and the Press, all the rest was a spontaneous response of young people and their senior compatriots to express their sense of fellowship with one another and with the needy outside.[102]

Anderson was pleased to observe the many forms of social outreach that emerged in this community during the era of the economic depression of the 1930s. Perhaps the most outstanding movement was led by Elizaveta Yurievna Skobtsova (Mother Maria). Her early life in Russia was shaped by revolutionary politics, but in Paris her life was deeply influenced by the RSCM, Berdyaev, and the faculty of the theological institute. She dedicated her life to serving those in need and became a nun under the authority of Evlogii. Her efforts led to the formation of Orthodox Action and programs to provide food and shelter to those in need in Paris. Mother Maria's bold calls to action were matched by her impressive organizational abilities. She brought in active participation from RSCM leaders, such as Fyodor Pianov and Dmitry Klepinin.[103] During this era of expansion, the Movement decided to establish its own center at another facility in Paris at 91 rue Olivier de Serre. Alexander Nikitin provided leadership for this transition, with financial support from the WSCF and ecumenical sponsors.[104]

It is interesting that Anderson showed openness to Metropolitan Antony Khrapovitsky after the criticism the hierarch had expressed against the RSCM and YMCA. In his memoir he wrote,

> Archbishop Anthony and Sergei Bulgakov, men with contradictory conceptions of churchmanship, and their respective followers, carried abroad and into the non-Orthodox world the two main currents of Orthodoxy which the atheist movement fought against: the spiritual power in the church sacraments and the proven verity of an intellectual grasp of the doctrines inherited from the Apostles and Fathers of the Church.[105]

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101. Ibid., 72. See Natalia Pashkeeva, "Building an Informal Transnational Information Network on the USSR from Paris: An Outside Perspective on Soviet Life in 1923–1939," *Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research* 16(2) (2024): 57–94. DOI: 10.25285/2078–1938–2024–16–2–57–94.

102. Anderson, *No East or West,* 73.

103. Ibid., 74–76.

104. Ibid., 77.

105. Ibid., 124.

He later reflected on this experience in the midst of the conflict of the Russian Orthodox émigré world:

> MacNaughten, Kullmann, Lowrie, and I had all come to feel ourselves truly at worship when attending Orthodox services. We were convinced about the preeminent role which the Orthodox Church should have in Russia. Lowrie and I also had good relations with some of the Belgrad bishops as well as the President of its Synod, Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky, a famous person in prerevolutionary Russia, who had come to tea with my wife Margaret and me in our St. Maur home, and as long as he lived I went to call on him in Belgrad or Sremsky Karlovo every time I visited Yugoslavia. It would have been very hard not only for the Movement but for the Theological Institute in Paris if the Synod of Bishops had been chosen to control these institutions instead of the benevolent and wise Metropolitan Evlogy and his successors. After all, Evlogy was himself a famous Russian patriot having been both a ruling bishop and a member of the Duma where he represented not only the Church but also the mind of the faithful laity of his constituency. If the Synod of Bishops had gained control over the Movement and the Theological Institute in Paris, could we have worked together over the many years?[106]

Anderson later concluded,

> The so-called "Montparnasse years" was, indeed, a very rich time in every sense of the word—intellectually, culturally, socially, theologically. It marked the blossoming of a spectacular religious renaissance in the Russian immigration that the YMCA was privileged to serve. How thankful I am to have been a part of it. By the middle of the 1930s, it had reached its maturity and other problems and questions sapped its creative energies. These problems, profoundly affecting Europe itself, helped to disintegrate the interwar emigration.[107]

Anderson began his participation in the ecumenical movement as a representative of the YMCA, which was a Christian organization, not a church. He compared his agency to other historical missionary societies, which were ecumenical, because they included staff members from a variety of churches. As he explained, "They were fully ecumenical in the sense of inclusiveness, although we use the word in most cases as referring to bodies which have the marks of Christian churches." He pointed out that the Student Volunteer Movement and World Student Christian Federation also served as ecumenical organizations. The Student Volunteer Movement sent out 20,500 enrolled members to work as global missionaries. Anderson observed the ecumenical approach of the YMCA in China: Association speakers gathered large crowds to present the Christian faith and recommended that those who wanted to learn more should attend the church closest to their home. This avoided "narrow denominationalism."[108]

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106. Anderson, "No East or West," 153. See Donald A. Lowrie, *The Light of Russia: An Introduction to the Russian Church* (Prague: YMCA Press, 1923).

107. Anderson, "No East or West," 188–9.

108. Ibid., 203–4.

The Orthodox Theological Institute later awarded Anderson an honorary doctoral degree. As his colleague summarized, "through the YMCA Press and related undertakings in Paris you were able to take a leading part in bringing new hope and intellectual vigor to thousands of Russians displaced from their home country."[109]

On July 15, 1928, Paul and Margaret sailed from Le Havre, France, to New York for a scheduled furlough. They traveled to Whiting, Iowa, where they stayed with Margaret's parents. She was expecting their first child, and Paul traveled within Iowa for YMCA speaking assignments. They rented a furnished apartment in Des Moines, and their daughter Mary was born on November 20 at the Swedish Hospital in the city. During the following months, the young family visited Paul's parents and relatives. In March they traveled to New York for meetings with International Committee executives related to the Russian work and with the Episcopal Committee on Aid to the St. Sergius Academy in Paris. On March 15, they returned to Paris. Later that spring Paul attended the Anglo-Russian Student Conference (later renamed the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius). There Paul became acquainted with the Principal George Francis Graham-Brown of Wycliffe Hall, an Anglican theological college at Oxford. Anderson shared his interest in studying Orthodoxy, and the principal invited him to attend for the Michaelmas term (October-December) 1929. The principal also said that he would find a house for Paul and Margaret and help him register for non-credit classes.[110]

In October 1929, Paul and Margaret Anderson arrived in Oxford to begin a term of study at Wycliffe Hall. Paul was classified as a non-resident member and his focus was early church history: "This period in Church history has long attracted me, but closer acquaintance with it has become essential in connection with our Russian work, for the Russian Orthodox ideal of the Christian life is still as in the early Church, that of the ascetic, the searcher after God."[111] In his letter to friends, he wrote about his study of early Christian writers, such as Anthony and Basil, who wrote about their physical and moral struggles for holiness. He also explained his belief that "When Constantine made Christianity the officially approved religion, the Christian life became too easy, and this tradition has lasted, with notable exceptions, until this day. ... It is in the early Church that we find the positive, the practical process of being Christian by trying hard to keep Christ foremost."[112] Anderson's reading program included the Apostolic Fathers, the early ascetics of the Egyptian desert, and the Cappadocian Fathers (especially the monastic instructions of St. Basil). He attended lectures and wrote that those by Dr. Kenneth Kirk (later Bishop of Oxford) were especially helpful. He met regularly with a tutor, a fellow of Merton College, who discussed his readings. Margaret attended lectures on medieval European history.[113] The Andersons enjoyed conversations with students and attending Anglican services during their time in Oxford. Before returning to Paris, they were invited to visit the home of Bishop Walter Frere of Truro in Corn-

109. Limbert, "Paul B. Anderson," 4.

110. Anderson, "Personal Study at Oxford," 379.

111. Paul B. Anderson in Oxford letter to "Friends Who have been Interested in our Doings," December 20, 1929, 1. PBAFP KFYA.

112. Anderson, "Friends," 5.

113. Anderson, "Personal Study at Oxford," 379.

wall, whom they had earlier met at an Anglo-Russian student conference. The bishop was a member of the Community of the Resurrection, an Anglican monastic order, and he invited the Andersons to attend services for a day. Paul wrote, "It warmed our hearts and stirred our souls."[114]

Anderson deeply valued the opportunity to study in Oxford and described it as "one of the richest experiences of our lives." His readings on church history provided information that he had not received in his previous education; his study also provided guidance for his work in publishing books on Orthodox Christian culture. He expressed regret that he did not have additional time to focus on studying Russian Christian works of the 19th and early 20th centuries:

> To this day I have found myself handicapped in student Movement circles, in our Press editorial weekly meetings, and in the meetings and discussions of the Ecumenical Movement, by lack of systematic preparation in theology and philosophy as revealed in Russian writers. To be sure, just reading the manuscripts which kept arriving at my desk was helpful, but the fact is that this tended to open up doors calling for more background reading which in the nature of my work I could not undertake.[115]

In Paris, the Andersons became very active at a church of the Anglican Communion, the American Pro-Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, at 23 Avenue George V. Paul later served as a member of the vestry (parish leadership council), and Margaret contributed to the church's Sunday school program.[116]

Anderson continued to travel to other countries in Europe to connect with émigrés. For example, in 1930 and 1931, he traveled to Estonia and Latvia, reported his observations on cultural and religious trends, and described YMCA current programs. He noted that these countries had become more integrated into central and western European economic life and far less connected to the USSR. The Orthodox churches in Estonia and Latvia maintained fraternal connections with the Russian church hierarchy but did not submit to its authority: they had their own archbishops and synods. Anderson wrote that the churches of Estonia were approximately two-thirds Estonian by ethnicity and one-third Russian. In Latvia, the Orthodox churches were two-thirds Russian by ethnicity and one-third Latvian. The Russian minorities of Estonia and Latvia maintained Russian-language schools, newspapers, and cultural organizations. He counted fifty-seven Russian organizations in Riga.[117]

In Latvia, the partner of the RSCM was the Russian Orthodox Student Union, which operated programs for students, boys, and girls with a rented facility; one paid secretary served this work. Many ethnic Russians also participated in Latvian YMCA programs. In addition, the Russian Correspondence School supported an active student club in Riga with twenty-five men and women participating. Anderson knew that organizations

114. Ibid., 380.

115. Ibid., 381.

116. Letter from minister at the American Pro-Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity to Margaret Anderson, November 14, 1937. PBAFP KFYA. See American Cathedral in Paris, https://amcathparis.com (accessed November 3, 2023).

117. Paul B. Anderson, "Report on Visit to the Baltics, Dec. 17, 1933 – Jan. 14, 1934," 1–2. PBAFP KFYA.

had not been cooperating at a maximum level, so he held a meeting on January 10, 1934, for representatives of the Russian Orthodox Student Union, the Riga YMCA, and the Correspondence School club to discuss cooperation and increased connection to the churches.[118]

In Estonia, the RSCM, YMCA Press, and Russian Correspondence School connected with participants in five locations: Tallinn (Reval), Narva, Tartu (Dorpat), Petseri, and Valk. Anderson led discussions during his trip with the goal of increasing understanding and cooperation with churches. Plans were made for a visit by Berdyaev in March 1934. He was encouraged to see that meetings of Orthodox students from the RSCM and Lutheran students from the Latvian and Estonian student movements were continuing.[119]

Due to the Great Depression, the YMCA wrestled with economic challenges along with many other organizations. The New York office of the Association (Foreign Committee of the National Councils of the YMCA), which paid Anderson's salary, was required to reduce his total salary by ten percent for 1932. His total salary had been set at $3750, so the reduction was $375 for the year.[120] He and his colleagues faced difficulties with their projects as well due to funding reductions; this led to an end of the lease on 10 Boulevard Montparnasse on September 30, 1936.[121]

Anderson was clearly motivated by a desire to serve others, rather than by a search for advancement or wealth. He must have been encouraged by a personal letter he received from Bulgakov on March 18, 1939:

> To you, with whom I was given the opportunity to work in peace and harmony for more than ten years, as a kind of guardian angel of the Russian exile, called from a distant land and a foreign people, I would like to say, in the name of the Russian Church and Russian culture and Russian people, a sincere thank you.[122]

A few years later, Bulgakov's gratitude was echoed by Evlogii in his 1947 memoir:

> We [the RSCM] utilized the material support of this organization [the American YMCA], which was wealthy and friendly to us. The YMCA, it is true, helped us and helps us, but we remained faithful to our ideology, which lay at the foundation of our association, and always emphasized our inner independence, which did not prevent us from maintaining the best relationships with our friends. At the head of the YMCA in the first years of the emigration were E. I. MacNaughten, P. F. Anderson, G. G. Kullman, leaders of broad views and considerate relationships to our ideology. They supported

118. Anderson, "Report on Visit," 2–3.

119. Ibid., 4–9.

120. Frank Slack letter to Paul B. Anderson, December 7, 1931, 2–3. PBAFP KFYA.

121. Donald E. Davis, "The American YMCA and the Russian Emigration," *Sobornost* 9 (1987): 35.

122. E. V. Ivanova, "Angel-khranitel' russkogo izgnaniia: Pol Anderson i o. Sergii Bulgakov. K istorii vzaimootnoshenii," in *S. N. Bulgakov: Religiozno–filosofskii put'.* Mezhdunarodnaia nauchnaia konferentsiia, posviashchennaia 130–letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia 5–7 marta 2001 g., ed. A. P. Kozyrev (Moscow: Russkii put', 2003), 115.

> us, never using philanthropy as a means for propaganda of their doctrine among Russians.[123]

The period of World War II led to the end of this remarkable period of cooperation and service. Bulgakov passed away in 1944, and Berdyaev followed in 1948. During the war, Anderson played a leading role in coordinating aid from the United States for Russian émigrés, prisoners of war, and other refugees in France. He continued serving in Paris during the Nazi occupation until he was required to leave the city on June 20, 1941.

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123. Metropolit Evlogy, *Put' moei zhizni: Vospominaniia Metropolita Evlogiia,* izlozhennyie po ego razskazam T. Manukhinoi (Paris: YMCA Press, 1947), 535.

Ecologies of Care:

Gregory of Nyssa and Sergii Bulgakov on Human Dignity and Responsibility

by Daniel Adam Lightsey

This essay aims to demonstrate how Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–c. 395) and Sergii Bulgakov (1871–1944) possess resources for the joyful dilation of one's sense of self simply by the loving acknowledgment of an-other. For all their vital emphases on the unity of the "Whole Anthropos," I aim to show how Gregory and Bulgakov place a primacy *also* on the individual person by way of fostering pathways for all human persons to actualize freedom, self-determination, and creative potential for "personal redemptions of the soul." This *ecology of care* unfolds in both Gregory and Bulgakov's philosophical and theological conceptualizations of *love*, *freedom*, and *life*. This triple-knot of concepts is caught up in larger vision, a kind of theological aesthetic that concerns the human person's perception of and creative movement towards that transcendental horizon of *beauty*. Through discrete analyses of Gregory's abolitionist thought and Bulgakov's personalist metaphysics—each taken on their own merits for the bulk of the essay—we begin to see these portraits form a compelling collage of sorts, offering a religiously humanistic approach to the same "problem," namely, the human person.

Keywords: Gregory of Nyssa, Sergii Bulgakov, theological anthropology, human dignity, freedom, abolitionism, personalism, love, beauty

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Ecologies of Care

Gregory of Nyssa and Sergii Bulgakov on Human Dignity and Responsibility

Daniel Adam Lightsey

The hardest thing of all to see is what is really there.[1]

La splendeur qui ne veut rien appelle pourtant notre chant.[2]

Halfway, or thereabouts, into Henri Bosco's absorbing novel *Malicroix* (1948), the reader encounters a pivotal scene. Until this point, the tale has mostly marked the journey of a young man, a Monsieur Martial, to an estate on a remote island in the Camargue region with rarely another soul present save a taciturn shepherd, Balandran, and his dog, Brequillet. Committed to a rather opaque though perilous task, Martial—roiled by competing bloodlines in his veins though steadily gaining poise—is finally accepted by Balandran into the shepherd's distant world of wind, water, and care of the flock. By this act of loving acknowledgement, Martial feels a joyous dilation to his very person, recounting that Balandran's words of confidence bound "my future and were worth more than any solemn promise I myself might have made, … My whole life was what this wild shepherd expected from me. I was no longer alone. Someone had begun to love me in this immense solitude. … In expressing his faith, Balandran had just given himself; and in giving himself, he had enlarged me beyond myself."[3]

What I aim to demonstrate in this essay is how Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–c. 395) and Sergii Bulgakov (1871–1944) possess resources in their written corpuses that evoke Bosco's account of the joyful dilation of one's sense of self simply by the loving acknowledgment of an-other. My desire is to show how both Gregory and Bulgakov, for all their vital emphasis on the unity of the "Whole Anthropos," place a primacy *also* on the individual person by way of fostering pathways for all human persons to actualize freedom, self-determination, and creative potential for what Bulgakov terms the

1. J. A. Baker, *The Peregrine* (New York: NYRB, 2005), 19.

2. Jean-Louis Chrétien, *L'effroi du beau* (Paris: CERF, 2011), 73.

3. Henri Bosco, *Malicroix,* trans. Joyce Zonana (New York: NYRB, 2020), 137–138. On the theological, literary notion of dilation as a joyous expansion of one's very self in love, see Jean-Louis Chrétien, *La Joie spacieuse: Essai sur la dilatation* (Paris: Minuit, 2007).

"personal redemptions of the soul."[4] I am calling this an ecology of care, which is built upon how both Gregory and Bulgakov develop *love*, *freedom*, and *life* in their distinct *oeuvres*.[5] This triple-knot of concepts is caught up in a larger vision, a kind of theological aesthetic that—though not greatly elaborated upon in this essay—concerns the human person's perception of and creative movement towards the *beautiful*.[6]

Why place the fourth-century Cappadocian bishop and twentieth-century Russian dogmatician in the same essay? First is to honor Nikolai Berdyaev (1974–1948), who both prized Gregory's work for stressing humanity's royal origins and nature and was an important companion of Bulgakov's.[7] Second, Bulgakov calls upon Gregory often

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4. Sergii Bulgakov, "Карл Маркс как религиозный тип," in *Сочинения в Двух Томах*, ed. I. B. Rodnianskaia (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), 2:246. (Henceforth "KM"). All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

5. In a recent, formative essay, Rowan Williams too brings to the surface a thematic of *care* in Bulgakov: "Bulgakov in effect claims that hypostatic existence is intrinsically a form of life characterized by *care*: to exist hypostatically is to be in a relationship of 'nurture' towards the world that is encountered. To put it still more strongly, any account of subjecthood that ignores the responsibility to nurture and include the environment in the construction of human meaning is illusory and destructive," in "Sergei Bulgakov's Christology and Beyond," in *Building the House of Wisdom. Sergii Bulgakov and Contemporary Theology: New Approaches and Interpretations*, eds. Barbara Hallensleben, Regula M. Zwahlen, Aristotle Papanikolaou and Pantelis Kalaitzidis (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2024), 36–37, emphasis original. My thanks to the anonymous reader who pointed out this important text.

6. As said, this essay does not set out to define or develop a theory of beauty or the beautiful, but a brief aside as to how it is utilized throughout may prove beneficial. By the *beautiful*—a manifold concept for both Gregory and Bulgakov—one may regard it as the attractive aspect of that transcendental horizon saturating every nook and cranny of creation proper as well as a *name* of God who never ceases in summoning all of creation to theosis: "God is good; He is Goodness itself. God is true; He is Truth itself. God is glorious, and His Glory is Beauty itself," as Sergii Bulgakov put it in his essay, "Religion and Art," in *The Church of God: An Anglo-Russian Symposium,* ed. E.L. Mascall (London: S.P.C.K. 1934), 175. For both thinkers, though they formulate it by diverse means, God *is* beauty and beautiful—oft times cast in terms of the immanent trinity's ineffably infinite life of bliss and joy; mutually beholding and being beholden, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share the eternally mutual gaze of love, ever enjoying the radiant dance of perfect unity-in-difference. Thus, at least one implication of this is that beauty is not *only* a quality or property of God's relationship with the world (e.g., that God *only* creates the world beautiful, or God *simply* relates to the world eschatologically as drawing it toward beauty) nor *only* a designation of those encounters when human perception of internal and external realities escape one's grasp, those very real moments when something, someone, some experience elicit "an instinct for an order beyond the one it enacts," as Christian Wiman phrases it in his book, *Zero to the Bone: Fifty Entries Against Despair* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2023), 126. The beautiful, therefore, exceeds and evades, in the final analysis, purified propositional analysis. Much more, of course, would need to be said about the nature of "ugliness" or "grotesquery" vis-à-vis beauty in distinctly Christian thought, since at the center of this religious tradition is the "God-Man" who gives himself over to be brutally tortured and executed as well as resurrected with the wounds still visible. Furthermore, the history of the use of beauty-language and thought-forms is as violent and violating as any other. However, no space will be given to developing these thematics here. Instead, for one work that does address these issues in relation with Gregory, see Natalie Carnes, *Beauty: A Theological Engagement with Gregory of Nyssa* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), especially 17–36, 125–250.

7. Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act,* trans. Donald Lowrie (San Rafael: Semantron Press, 2009), 82. If the honorific nature of this statement seems like a bolt out of the blue, the conference to which this essay was originally given in a shorter form was in honor of the 150th birthyear of Berdyaev ("Religion, Human Dignity, and Human Rights: New Paradigms for Russia and the West," Hamilton Center for Classical and Civic Education, University of Florida, November 1–2, 2024). Furthermore, the conference concerned an interdisciplinary exploration of various genealogies of human rights vis-à-vis religious ideas, traditions, and institutions, specifically regarding freedom, dignity, and rights—hence the thematics of this essay. On Berdyaev and Bulgakov's philosophical relationship regarding their conceptions of the human, see the excellent work of Regula Zwahlen, *Das revolutionäre Ebenbild Gottes: Anthropologien der Menschenwürde bei Nikolaj A. Berdjaev und Sergej N. Bulgakov* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2010); cf. also

throughout his own work. And third, though the chief reason, through discrete analyses of Gregory's "abolitionist" thought and Bulgakov's personalist metaphysics—each taken on its own merits for the bulk of the essay—we begin to see these portraits form a compelling collage of sorts, offering a religiously humanistic approach to the same "problem," namely, the human person. We will begin with Gregory's pronouncements regarding the legal manumission of all slaves (argued on distinctly theological grounds) that each person may experience a prefiguring of eschatological life and bliss as they grow into that radiant Beauty which is Divine Goodness. Then, we will move to Bulgakov, who concretizes in his own way the interdependence of persons who possess the dignity and, indeed, responsibility to see in the face of the other divine beauty-in-relationality. Then, in conclusion, both Gregory and Bulgakov will be brought into more direct dialogue.

The precarity of placing two figures separated by well over a millennium of culture, language, geography, political alignment, theological and philosophical development, empires falling, states rising, *etc.*, is not lost on the author though neither is it overly much a concern for the narrow purposes of this essay. As far as a short *apologia* regarding methodology—first, what this brief essay is *not*. It is not an analysis of Bulgakov's mostly positive though at times critical reception of Gregory's thought (which, of course, would be greatly welcome).[8] Furthermore, it is *not* a straightforward comparison of certain words or concepts within these writers' respective writings nor a comparison of their theological "systems" *in toto*. What this constructive essay *is*, on the other hand, is an attempt to sketch how both Gregory and Bulgakov, initially taken as distinct signposts, build a Christian theological case for a religiously humanistic view of personhood as honoring the individual dignity of each human body and life as well as necessarily entailing a robust capacity for relationality, whether this is with companions, strangers, friends, enemies, embedded communities, and so on. And lastly, for some readers, the primacy of the human in Gregory and Bulgakov will seem like a relic of the past, one that could be critiqued as having contributed to the ecological crises of the present (and future) as well as implicated in certain utilitarian approaches towards animal and plant life. It is not my intention to assuage such fears or provide an apologetic as to the opposite. However, if simply due to intellectual uprightness, one will find diverse resources within Gregory and Bulgakov that show care for the environments humans are gifted to steward.[9]

Zwahlen's distillation of the aforementioned in "Different Concepts of Personality: Nikolaj Berdjaev and Sergej Bulgakov," *Studies in East European Thought* 64, no. 3/4 (2012): 183–204.

8. Bulgakov utilizes Gregory's thought throughout the later portion of his life—for example, see his 1914 essay "The Meaning of St. Gregory of Nyssa's Teachings about Names" on through to an appended essay to *The Bride of the Lamb* (posthumous, 1945) titled "On the Question of the Apocatastasis of the Fallen Spirits (in Connection with the Teaching of Gregory of Nyssa)," as well as many places in between. In the secondary literature, the majority of Bulgakov—Gregory couplings involve their staunch adherence to forms of universal salvation. On *apokatastasis,* see Paul Gavrilyuk, "Universal Salvation in the Eschatology of Sergius Bulgakov," *Journal of Theological Studies* 57, No. 1 (2006): 110–32.

9. In other words, the extreme, and certainly caricatured, notion of *why polish the brass of a sinking ship?* (i.e., the latter symbolizing the world on the way to the fires of the eschaton) certainly does not apply to Gregory or Bulgakov. For example, see Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection,* in *Ascetical Works,* trans. Virginia Woods Callahan (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1967), 270. (Henceforth *OSR*). Here, Gregory's older sister, Macrina, teaches him that in the resurrection, "None of

Gregory of Nyssa

For the towering fourth century figure, one can build a case for a kind of religious humanism via any number of texts or directions in his thought. The one I choose to focus on here is his denunciations of slavery on decidedly *theological* grounds.[10] *In nuce*, Gregory's argument is that one consequence of spiritual slavery is legal slavery, which is thus in need of eradication; furthermore, the sheer hubris of one human subjecting another—both of them sharing in the dignity of imaging God's freedom as well as unified in one nature—to a life of slavery amounts to an arrogance beyond reckoning.[11] In an Easter sermon likely preached in 379, Gregory does not denounce legal slavery only on the grounds of philanthropic goodwill towards the other (although, of course, this would be commendable in and of itself), nor does Gregory only direct his comments to those seeking to live an ascetical life.[12] Instead, he addresses all households

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the beauties we see now, not only in men, but also in plants and animals, will be destroyed in the life to come." Also, to anticipate the argument below, Hans Boersma judges correctly that Gregory's argument for the abolition of slavery in the eschaton is likely due to Gregory's "conviction that the eschatological reality of freedom from sin must take shape in the social structures of this world. His anagogical theology does not render him indifferent to material and bodily concerns." See Hans Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa: An Anagogical Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 159. For his part, Bulgakov writes, "God put *everything* into His creation that could be put into it. This gift of the Creator to creation, ... as a task to be realized, contains fullness and perfection to the extent they can be received by creation, which is created out of nothing and permeated by this nothing as its inner boundary. However, the creature receives the possibility of ascending to perfection, of removing boundaries, of overcoming the 'individual' as self-isolating, nonuniversal being in the ongoing sophianization of creation." Sergii Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 149, emphasis original. (Henceforth *BL*). See too later in *BL,* "the figure of the new Jerusalem signifies the transfigured and glorified world, which contains the principles of the natural world and the synthesis of human creative activity in history" (523). Cf. Sergii Bulgakov, *The Tragedy of Philosophy (Philosophy and Dogma)*, trans. Stephen Churchland (Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2020), 117. (Henceforth *TP.*) For a helpful discussion, see Bruce Foltz, *The Noetics of Nature: Environmental Philosophy and the Holy Beauty of the Visible* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 88–112.

10. Bulgakov too refers to the incompatibility of human dignity and institutions of slavery. For example, in "Первохристианство и новейший социализм" (1909), Bulgakov speaks of the internal revolution of the individual that Christianity instantiates in history, a revolution that ultimately eschews any depersonalizing collective as well as overcomes, eventually, all legal and societal organizational boundaries such as the relations of master and slave. See Bulgakov, *Два града: Исследования о природе общественных идеалов,* ed. Vadim V. Sapov (St. Petersburg: Издательстбо Русского Христианского гуманитарного института, 1997), 195. My gratitude to the anonymous reviewer who pointed me to this text.

11. The scholarly literature on Gregory's anti-slavery thought is immense. For but a few works, see Trevor Dennis, "The Relationship between Greogry of Nyssa's Attack on Slavery in his Fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes and his Treatise *De Hominis Opificio*," *Studia Patristica* 17.3 (1982): 1065–1072; *idem.,* "Man beyond Price: Gregory of Nyssa and Slavery," in *Heaven and Earth,* eds. Andrew Linzey and Peter J. Wexler (Wexler, Worthing: Churchman, 1986), 129–145; Daniel F. Stramara Jr., "Gregory of Nyssa: An Ardent Abolitionist?" *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1997): 37–60; Richard Klein, *Die Haltung der Kappadokischen Bischöfe Basilius von Caesarea, Gregor von Nazianz und Gregor von Nyssa zur Sklaverei* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000); Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue,* 146–177; Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 172–211; David Bentley Hart, "The Whole Humanity: Gregory of Nyssa's Critique of Slavery in Light of his Eschatology," in *The Hidden and the Manifest: Essays in Theology and Metaphysics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 237–252; and J. Kameron Carter, "Interlude on Christology and Race: Gregory of Nyssa as Abolitionist Intellectual," in *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 229–251.

12. One often encounters in the secondary literature on Gregory's abolitionism Seneca's laudable 47th epistle, which too concerns the plight of slaves. Seneca is, however, not making any overt *theological*

within the congregation: by manumitting slaves in this present context—releasing and acknowledging them "with equal decency" as all other persons of the community, letting "the beauty of the feast blossom like a flower upon everyone"—a prefiguring of the resurrection of all persons from the grave occurs; thus, the end of spiritual slavery, progressively unfolding *in part* through the abolition of legal slavery, restores humanity to its original condition of *freedom* and *life* without death.[13]

Freedom and life are intertwined in Gregory's thought concerning humanity and the cosmos in general. "[L]ife," he preaches in his marvelous *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, "is the very center of God's plantation. Death, on the contrary, is, in and of itself, rootless and unplanted, since it has no place of its own."[14] In other words, an ecology of care, as Gregory helps build it, begins by acknowledging that life and the paths of life are characteristic of the givenness of things as they are crafted at their origin, whereas death and the ways of death, including spiritual and legal slavery, are by way of privation.[15] *Life*, for Gregory, ultimately concerns the creature's infinite ascent of desirous love to the Good, which constantly forms the pursuer of the Good by way of attracting them "to that ascent" and "*constantly expands* as one progresses in pressing on to the Good."[16] This *epektic* logic—a "stretching forth" into the divine infinite—is foundational for all of Gregory's thought, a vision of the spiritual life as an erotic summons by and to as well as participation "in the transcendent Beauty," whereby one's "desire increases in proportion to [one's] progress toward" that ever old, always new "Light."[17] And since it is constitutive of humanity's nature to be shaped by and become in some regard whatever "it determines upon, ... whatever goal the thrust [of which] its choice leads," all the while undergoing "alteration in accord with what it seeks," then proximity to the Good for the ascender opens them to take in more of Divine life and love without it ever being exhausted.[18] As Gregory's sister Macrina teaches him near the end of their captivating dialogue, *On the Soul and the Resurrection,* humanity was made in wisdom as a kind of "receptacle" for rationality, freedom, and divine goods, "a place that always becomes larger because of what is additionally poured into it. For participation in the

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claims here (for which, of course, he is not at fault, though it should be pointed out how different this is from Gregory's *theo*-logic).

13. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Sanctum Pascha,* trans. Stuart George Hall, in *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa*, eds. Andreas Spira and Christopher Klock (Cambridge, MA: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1981), 8–9. Cf. "Faire sortir les esclaves de la honte ... préfigure la résurrection des morts," as Marguerite Harl writes in her, "L'Éloge de la fête de Pâques dans le Prologue du Sermon In Sanctum Pascha de Grégoire de Nysse," in *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa*, 91. Cf. Ramelli, *Social Justice,* 175; Hart, "The Whole Humanity," 239; Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue,* 160–161—all of whom make a similar argument.

14. Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs,* trans. Richard Norris Jr. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 369. (Henceforth *HSS*).

15. *HSS,* 371.

16. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses,* trans. Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 2:238, emphasis mine.

17. *HSS,* 171. See J. Warren Smith, "Becoming Men, Not Stones: *Epektasis* in Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Song of Songs,*" in *Gregory of Nyssa, In Canticum Canticorum: Analytical and Supporting Studies: Proceedings of the 13th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Rome, 17–20 September 2014),* eds. Giulio Maspero, Miguel Brugarolas, Ilaria Vigorelli (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 340–359.

18. *HSS,* 113.

divine good is such that it makes larger and more receptive that in which it exists," ever allowing one to grow in "power and size," becoming more "capable" and "spacious."[19] As one grows, one abounds in nourishment from the source of wisdom, love, and life as such. Regarding the faithful ways of life in relation to God's making of the human in his image and likeness, the keystone is the concept of *freedom*. As Gregory makes plain in his *Catechetical Orations,*

> If some necessity presided over human life, the image would have been false in that part, being alien to the archetype by [its] dissimilarity; for how would it be called the image of the kingly nature if it were under yoke to and enslaved by some necessities? Therefore what is similar to the divine in all things must by all means have self-mastery and independence by nature, so that the prize for virtue may be participation in good things.[20]

Furthermore, humanity, Gregory avers, is created with one unified nature, possessing the "form of every beauty, all virtue and wisdom, and every higher thing that can be conceived."[21] Gregory argues that God "craft[s] the genesis of such a living thing out of an excess of love,"[22] "love for man" being "the characteristic property of the divine nature."[23] Also, humanity "was born for the enjoyment of divine good things"; therefore, the human possesses a "nature" that holds "some kinship with that of which [the human] partakes."[24] And to be able to do this, God fashioned human nature as "both independent and uncontrolled."[25] Human nature "was made godlike and blessed because it had been honored with free autonomy (as ruling oneself and being without a master is the specific property of divine blessedness), for humanity to be forcibly changed to something else through constraint would have been a removal of its dignity."[26] In responding to those who see nothing but distortion, suffering, and perishability around them, Gregory argues that this is not the origin of human persons: "For he who made man for participation in his own good things, and who fashioned in his nature the origin for all things that are good for him, ... did not rob [humanity] of the best and most honorable of good things, I mean the grace of *independence and self-determination.*"[27]

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19. *OSR,* 244–245.

20. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Discourse: A Handbook for Catechists,* trans. Ignatius Green (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2019), 5.10. (Henceforth *CD*).

21. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Human Image of God,* trans. John Behr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 16.11. Gregory continues, "Of all these, one is to be free from necessity, and not in bondage to any natural domination, but to have self-determining deliberation regarding what we resolve."

22. *CD,* 5.3.

23. *CD,* 15.2.

24. *CD,* 5.5–6. Gregory immediately continues, "Because of this [humanity] was adorned with life and reason and wisdom and all God-befitting good things, so that through each of them [each human person] might have the desire for what is proper [to oneself]."

25. *CD,* 5.12.

26. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Mortuis,* trans. Rowan Greer, in *One Path for All: Gregory of Nyssa on the Christian Life and Human Destiny* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2015), 108–109.

27. *CD,* 5.9, emphasis added, translation slightly modified.

By "independence" and "self-determination," Gregory means the sovereignty to enjoy and adhere to the Good as such, since "choosing" evil (understood as philosophically unsubstantial and thus parasitical) is not ultimately a free act.[28] Gregory is certainly not a kind of parodied libertarian, and thus, *real* freedom is to be found in reaching a point where one does not need to *choose* between good and evil at all. This is because the Good as such is the ultimate end of the human appetite, the radiance to which all desirous intention is ultimately aimed. This, in turn, necessitates *process* and *development* for Gregory's philosophical anthropology. To those who fear or show disgust at humanity's inherent mutability, Gregory gently reminds them in the conclusion of *On Perfection,* mutableness in the creature is not always for the worse but potentially for the nobler, the more beautiful, changing into "something more divine," exchanging "glory for glory" and "becoming greater through daily increase."[29] An ecology of care where this vision of freedom is basic sees true *perfection* as not a final arrival at a promontory of faultlessness nor deserting those associations and idiosyncrasies each person possesses, but never stopping in one's growth towards that which is more radiant.

With all of this in mind, we can approach again what is at issue and at stake in Gregory's severe condemnation of slavery. Firstly, and of great importance given some common stances towards slaves and the practices of legal slavery in antiquity, Gregory does not conceive of slavery as *natural* nor a *necessary evil*. For example, Gregory is adamant that those whom society at large looks upon as downtrodden, the "naked and homeless ... strangers and exiles," were not assigned this life "by birth"—meaning, one cannot shift obligation to the victim of misery and tribulation because it is their so-called *lot in life* (Gregory is, of course, simply reiterating some synoptic accounts, e.g., Luke 13; John 9).[30] If so for those victims of war, plague, famine, *et al.,* then even more for those persons entrapped within the structures of slavery. Indeed, Gregory is unyielding: humanity itself is responsible for splitting into the camps of slave and free. "Not nature," Gregory thunders in his exegesis of the Lord's prayer, "but [a] 'spirit of dominion' has divided humanity into slavery and masters."[31] What's more, this "spirit of dominion" serves to make humanity irrationally enslaved to itself: human self-division into "slavery" and "ownership," making the Whole Anthropos "enslaved to itself, and to be the owner of itself."[32] The farcicality, Gregory seems to suggest in his obloquy, could produce droll amusement, if not for the utterly grave and perverse nature of the absurdity.

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28. Ramelli, *Social Justice*, 184. Cf. *OSR,* 242: "since it is the nature of evil not to exist apart from choice, when all choice resides in God, evil will disappear completely because there will be nothing left to contain it."

29. Gregory of Nyssa, *De perfectione,* in *Ascetical Works,* trans. Virginia Woods Callahan (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1967), 122. Cf. *OSR,* 240.

30. Gregory, *De beneficentia,* 194.

31. Quoted in Ramelli, *Social Justice,* 177. Gregory's "spirit of dominion" and Augustine of Hippo's notion of *libido dominandi,* especially as described in *de Civitate Dei* bk. 14, are worthy of further exploration.

32. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Ecclesiasten homiliae*, in *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on Ecclesiastes,* trans. Stuart George Hall and Rachel Moriarty (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 74. (Henceforth *Eccl*).

In his justly famous fourth homily on Ecclesiastes (exegeting Eccl. 2:7, "I bought male slaves and slave girls, and I had home-born slaves too. Also many herds of cattle and sheep did I have, more than all who were before me in Jerusalem."[33]), Gregory elucidates upon the catastrophic implications of being under the sway of this "spirit of dominion." While the word count for this section of his larger homily is quite small, Gregory's unrelenting critique of slavery and those who ignorantly possess the hubris to believe they "own" another person is something fearsome to behold.[34] First, Gregory warns those who operate as if they are outside the bounds of human nature that it is a "challenge to God" when they "'assume divine power and authority' by considering themselves masters over the life and death of" other human persons, which is nothing more than an aberrantly "mistaken masquerade of government."[35] The pretense of this unfaithful will-towards-division is not of Life as such, which, as constitutive to an ecology of care, concerns the erotic pursuit of Goodness itself since human persons are "lovers of the transcendent Beauty."[36] Furthermore, the pursual of this ultimate end is normative for all patterns of life here and now.[37] Thus, one can best journey when made free of unnatural burdens, including the bondages of legal slavery.

While one should not conflate spiritual slavery with legal slavery in Gregory's thought, neither can they be neatly separated into competing spheres of concern. "All freedom," Macrina tells Gregory, "is essentially the same and identical with itself. Consequently, everything that is free is in harmony with whatever is similar to itself."[38] The context of Macrina's line of argumentation concerns freedom as consisting in virtue, and because the divine nature is the origin of virtue, each person who is truly free (and specifically free of *vice*) resides in the divine life that God may be *all in all.* To be sure, the argument is made in relation to spiritual freedom from the ignorance entailed in the devastating distortions of sin in the world. But, again, considering Gregory does not wholly bifurcate "the beautiful harmonies of Neoplatonism with the radical historicality of Christianity," all quotidian pathways toward freedom in the here and now anticipate the final restoration.[39]

Returning to his fourth homily on Ecclesiastes, Gregory roars against the would-be master: "You condemn man to slavery, when his nature is free and possesses free will, and you legislate in competition with God, overturning his law for the human species. The one made on the specific terms that he should be the owner of the earth, and

33. Translation from Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: Volume Three, The Writings* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019), 682.

34. Ramelli rightly argues that Gregory's forceful denunciations in his fourth homily on Ecclesiastes represents a "structural" argument that "emerges throughout a full range of his works," Ramelli, *Social Justice,* 178. Cf. Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue,* 149.

35. Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus*, in *Gregory of Nyssa: On the Beatitudes,* trans. Stuart George Hall (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 30.

36. *HSS,* 183.

37. Cf. Ramelli, *Social Justice,* 175–176.

38. *OSR,* 243.

39. David Bentley Hart, "Matter, Monism, and Narrative: An Essay on the Metaphysics of *Paradise Lost*," in Hart, *The Hidden and the Manifest: Essays in Theology and Metaphysics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 235.

appointed to government by the Creator—him you bring under the yoke of slavery, as though defying and fighting against the divine decree."[40] Since each human person is more valuable than the entirety of the world (a logic expressed by Bulgakov below), then each person is to be perceived as an "owner of the whole cosmos."[41] Gregory continually lampoons those who think themselves "master" over another image bearer, as if one person can be a "buyer" of another:

> He who knew the nature of mankind rightly said that the whole world was not worth giving in exchange for a human soul. Whenever a human being is for sale, therefore, nothing less than the owner of the earth is led into the sale-room. Presumably, then, the property belonging to him is up for auction too. That means the earth, the islands, the sea, and all that is in them. What will the buyer pay, and what will the vendor accept, considering how much property is entailed in the deal?[42]

Indeed, for Gregory, not even God Most High can enslave humanity in such inhumane fashion, as God's gifts "are irrevocable," and therefore, "God would not therefore reduce the human race to slavery, since ... when we had been enslaved to sin, [it was divine love that] spontaneously recalled us to freedom."[43] And this is key to Gregory's re-imagining of "subjection," witnessed most lucidly in a sermon on 1 Cor. 15:28, where St. Paul expresses that all things will be made subject to Christ, who is subject to God, the one who is "all in all." Gregory schematizes "subjection" here as Christo-eschatological: to be subject to Christ is the "complete alienation from evil," where, to be precise, the enemy *death* is blotted out, and each person rests "in a kingdom, [with] incorruptibility and blessedness living in" all.[44] This re-configuration of "subjection" is in plainer terms *friendship*, where the friend and lover of God "looks toward that divine and infinite Beauty [and] glimpses something that is always being discovered as more novel and more surprising ... and for that reason she marvels at that which is always being manifested, but she never comes to a halt in her desire to see, since what she looks forward to is in every possible way more splendid and more divine than what she has seen."[45] This dazzling, dizzying vision of the human person ever-open to ever-new growth, change, and capaciousness, "enlarging" the self in proximity to divine love,

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40. *Eccl,* 73.

41. Ramelli, *Social Justice,* 178.

42. *Eccl,* 74–75.

43. *Eccl,* 74. Moreover: "But if God does not enslave what is free, who is he that sets his own power above God's?" *Eccl,* 74.

44. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Illud*: *Tunc et Ipse Filius*, trans. Brother Casimir, O.C.S.O., *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 28 (1983): 19, 25, respectively. Gregory closes his fifteenth homily on *Song of Songs* similarly, "For it is the nature common to all ... to press forward in desire ... until that time when, since all have become one in desiring the same goal and there is no vice left in any, God may become all in all persons, in those who by their oneness are blended together with one another in the fellowship of the Good in our Lord Jesus Christ." *HSS,* 497–499.

45. *HSS,* 339. Cf. *OSR,* 240, here Macrina relays to her younger brother how the soul's journey is one that is never sated in the sense that one never grows tired of receiving more: "knowledge becomes love because what is known is, by nature, beautiful. Wanton satiety does not touch the truly beautiful. And, since the habit of loving the beautiful is never broken by satiety, the divine life, which is beautiful by nature and has from its nature a love for the beautiful, will always be activated by love."

beauty, and bliss is, again, normative for Gregory in the present. A baseline perception of the world in this manner—as Gregory stalwartly teaches throughout his sermons, letters, and treatises—helps to secure productive pathways of freedom for all persons in the here and now so that each person, like the Bride from Song of Songs, "never bring[s] her desire for the object of her vision to a halt at what has already been apprehended."[46]

Sergii Bulgakov

As a "creaturely god" and "a cryptogram of Divinity," humanity possesses "a divine, uncreated origin from 'God's breath,'" which gifts it a "spark of divinity," a share in possessing a kind of "uncreatedness," and effectively makes "man … an uncreated-created, divine-cosmic being."[47] So writes Bulgakov in his momentous work of Christology, *The Lamb of God* (1933). With such an elevated anthropology, it is perhaps not shocking that after the appearance of the work, Bulgakov was twice-charged with teaching elements "foreign" to the Orthodox faith during what became known as the "Sophia Affair," a young Vladimir Lossky demanding alacritous "anathemas" be formally composed against Bulgakov.[48] In response, Bulgakov insists that his "starting point" is simply taking seriously, and subsequently teasing out with indefatigable rigor, the "axiom of man being God's image and likeness."[49] In short, to be human is to be a "living image of the trihypostatic God in His Wisdom."[50] And constitutive to understanding the image (and likeness) is *love,* which is not meant to be a simple characteristic or quality or static factoid for categorizing the human, but *capacious*, as love is properly *expansive*.[51]

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46. *HSS,* 339.

47. Sergii Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 112, 116, 186, 143, 140, respectively. (Henceforth *LG*).

48. Antoine Arjakovsky, *The Way: Religious Thinkers of the Russian Emigration in Paris and Their Journal, 1925–1940,* trans. Jerry Ryan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 387. In January of 1936, Lossky published *Спор и Софии,* see Arjakovsky, *The Way,* 386–388. For more background, see too Arjakovsky's formative discussion in *Essai sur la Père Serge Boulgakov (1871–1944): Philosophe et théologien chrétien* (Parole et Silence: 2006), 106–120. For a very fine work in English on the "Sophia Affair," see Roberto De La Noval, "Sophiology in Suspension: The Theological Condemnations of Fr. Sergius Bulgakov" (PhD dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2020), esp. 28–42, 276–363. For some primary documentation of the formal proceedings, see "The Charges of Heresy against Sergius Bulgakov: The Majority and Minority Reports of Evlogii's Commission and the Final Report of the Bishops' Conference" in *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 49, no. 1–2 (2005): 47–66.

49. Sergii Bulgakov, "Докладная записка Его Высокопреосвященству Митрополиту Евлогию профессора прот. Сергия Булгакова," *Путь* 50 (1936): 17. On *image and likeness* in Bulgakov, see Zwahlen, *Das revolutionäre Ebenbild Gottes*, 293–295.

50. *LG,* 140.

51. In a long essay contribution to an ecumenical volume on revelation in the Christian tradition, Bulgakov provides some parameters for how he thinks the image of God in humanity should be approached. He critiques any reduction of the image to a singular aspect such as rationality or intellect or spirit, *et al.,* considering this stratagem an exercise in futility; instead, he holds that the image "belongs to [humanity] as a whole, … [since humanity] is a creaturely god both in the spirit and in the body, in their mutual relatedness, and also in his personal being as well as in his nature." Sergii Bulgakov, "Revelation," in *Revelation,* ed. John Baillie and Hugh Martin, trans. Oliver F. Clarke and Xenia Braikevitch (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1937), 131. Cf. *LG,* 140–141 for much of the same qualification.

In moving from the conceptual portrait of Gregory to Bulgakov and the latter's *theological* resourcing for building a religious humanism, we immediately see a thematic similarity to Gregory's positioning of life, love, freedom, and the pursuit of the beautiful.[52] Surely classifiable as a *theologian of love,* Bulgakov*,* in a 1910 essay on Vladimir Solovyov, famously revised the well-known Cartesian maxim *cogito, ergo sum* to, "One can accept the metaphysical formula: *I love, therefore I am*, because in love is the loftiest manifestation of life."[53] In a nutshell, God gifts out of an "ecstatic act of creative, self-renouncing love" to humanity a created-divine spiritual nature, replete with intellect (holistically conceived) and intentionality in order to pursue the ultimate end of life, namely, ascendency into that ever-unfolding beauty and bliss that is infinite desire, to wit, God.[54] Recalling Gregory's *epektic* logic above, all human persons, each of which bears the image and is called to the likeness of God, are "beings created by love, in love, and for love," since love "constitutes the inner law of their being."[55] An ecology of care in this Bulgakovian key perceives love, life, and freedom as interwoven, and these features are founded, as all things are in Bulgakov's so-called "later" works, on the Triune Person, who "does not love illusory abstractness and deadness, [but] all that is concrete … [having] the power of *life*."[56]

Even before his explicit theological shift, Bulgakov consistently critiques systems that excessively abstract from the concrete individual person—her singular life, personality, creativity, sufferings, etc. Encountering the storm of anthropologies that were present in *fin-de-siècle* Russian (and broader European) thought, Bulgakov's early conceptualizations regarding the priority of the human person as an individual possessing absolute dignity and irreplaceability are in large part what led him to his break with the "legal Marxism" to which he apprenticed himself in his twenties. Critiquing Marxism as a kind of alternative religious tradition in his 1906/1907 essay "Karl Marx as a Religious

52. Bulgakov's personalist thought is well-trodden territory in the scholarly literature. For but a smidgen of sourcing as regards his *theological* developments vis-à-vis his specific personalism, see first the classic study by Lev Zander, *Бог и Мир* (*Миросозерцание отца Сергия Булгакова*), 2 vol. (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1948), especially 2: 315–375. For more recent accounts, see Zwahlen, *Das revolutionäre Ebenbild Gottes,* esp. ch. 6; *idem.,* "Different Concepts of Personality"; *idem.,* "Sergey N. Bulgakov's Concept of Human Dignity," in *Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights*, eds. Alfons Brüning and Evert van der Zweerde (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 169–186; David Bentley Hart, "Masks, Chimaeras, and Portmanteaux: Sergii Bulgakov and the Metaphysics of the Person," in *Building the House of Wisdom. Sergii Bulgakov and Contemporary Theology: New Approaches and Interpretations*, eds. Barbara Hallensleben, Regula M. Zwahlen, Aristotle Papanikolaou and Pantelis Kalaitzidis (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2024), 43–62; Michael Aksionov Meerson, "Sergei Bulgakov's Philosophy of Personality," in *Russian Religious Thought,* eds. Judith Deutsch Kornblatt and Richard F. Gustafson (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 139–153; *idem., The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology: The Love Paradigm and the Retrieval of Western Medieval Love Mysticism in Modern Russian Trinitarian Thought (from Solovyov to Bulgakov)* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1998), esp. 159–186; Joshua Heath, "Sergii Bulgakov's Linguistic Trinity," *Modern Theology* 37.4 (October 2021): 888–912.

53. "Можно принять метафизическую формулу: *amo, ergo sum,* ибо в любви – высшее проявление жизни." Sergii Bulgakov, "Природа в философии Вл. Соловьева," in *Сочинения в Двух Томах*, ed. S.S. Khoruzhii (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), 1: 25–26.

54. *BL,* 115.

55. *BL*, 157.

56. Sergii Bulgakov, "Hypostasis and Hypostaticity: Scholia to the Unfading Light," trans. Brandan Gallaher and Irina Kukota, *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 49, no. 1–2 (2005): 27, emphasis mine. (Henceforth "HH").

Type," Bulgakov reads Marx(ism) as formulating human persons as "algebraic signs"; he argues that there is a general "lack of attention to the concrete, living human person," which inevitably leads to a disregard for "the problem of individuality."[57] Ultimately, Bulgakov maintains that with Marxism, at least as regards the Marxism with which he was acquainted, "the absolutely indivisible core of human personality, its integral nature, does not exist."[58]

Turning towards the face of the person, Bulgakov conceives the "problem" of the individual as shaped by "religious consciousness," having most distinctly to do with humanity's correlation to God, the intuition of being charted along a transcendent-immanent continuum, not reducible to any naturalist, physicalist system of thought. Bulgakov later reasons, "The element of freedom and personhood, i.e., creativity, is irremovable from religious faith: I come forward here not as an abstract, neutral, impersonal, 'normally' organized representative of a genus but as a concrete, unrepeatable, individual person."[59] But even a decade earlier, when composing "Karl Marx as a Religious Type," Bulgakov is already intimating towards the person's "living spirit" as possessing a divine-creaturely origin and telos, and to perceive that which is "real and everlasting"[60] in this living, incarnated spirit is not to reduce her to a privatized subject within an abstract collective. Though he will need close to the next forty years to further expand these thoughts, Bulgakov recognizes that what is at stake is the "irreplaceable, absolutely unique person who only once for a moment flashes in history," summoning his readers to see how this *person* "lays claim to eternity, to absoluteness, to enduring significance."[61]

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57. "KM," 2:244. Bulgakov had begun to critique Marxism before 1906—in fact, he had begun in the late 1890s, partly due to his empirical research abroad as well as his conviction that the kind of Marxism carried out in, for example, Germany would not ultimately take root in a Russian context. Cf. the various articles and reviews collected in Sergii Bulgakov, *От марксизма к идеализму: Статьи и рецензии 1895–1903,* ed. Vadim Sapov (Moscow: AST, 2006). See too Catherine Evtuhov, *The Cross & the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 28–65. For more on Bulgakov's critique of the "religious Marx," see J. R. Seiling, "From Antinomy to Sophiology: Modern Russian Religious Consciousness and Sergei Bulgakov's Critical Appropriation of German Idealism" (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2008), 205–208.

58. "KM," 2:244. Bulgakov had already critiqued Marxism on these very grounds in his contribution to the watershed 1902 volume *Problems of Idealism*: "Marxism takes the formula of the free development of the person without, of course, any metaphysical content. Here the person is not a bearer of absolute tasks, endowed with a definite moral nature and capabilities, but entirely a product of historical development, changing with this development. The concept of the person, strictly speaking, is completely missing here, reduced only to the purely formal unity of the self. But in such a case, what can the formula 'free development of the person' mean? Once more, positive science knocks at the door of metaphysics." Sergii Bulgakov, "Basic Problems of the Theory of Progress," in *Problems of Idealism: Essays in Russian Social Philosophy*, ed., trans. and intro. Randall A. Poole (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 105. (Henceforth "BP.") Bulgakov would hold to his critique of Marx(ism) even into the 1930s, cf. Sergii Bulgakov, "The Soul of Socialism," in *Sergii Bulgakov: Towards a Russian Political Theology*, trans. & ed. Rowan Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 244–245. (Henceforth "SS").

59. Sergii Bulgakov, *Unfading Light: Contemplations and Speculations,* trans. Thomas Allan Smith (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 35. (Henceforth *UL*).

60. "KM," 2:246.

61. "KM," 2:246. Indebted greatly to Vladimir Solovyov, many Russian religious-philosophical thinkers of this era regarded the human person with such a sense of primacy. For some of the historical background, see Randall Poole's excellent, "Editor's Introduction: Philosophy and Politics in the Russian Liberation Movement," in *Problems of Idealism: Essays in Russian Social Philosophy*, 1–78. Cf. too the classic study

This impulse, in fact, is bedrock for Bulgakov throughout his entire career. As witnessed in one of his last pieces, a manuscript from 1941-1942 titled "Racism and Christianity," Bulgakov argues, "Neither the race nor the nation nor any biological collectivity constitutes an original reality ... as is the case of the person. This truth, insupportable for racism, is ... the foundation of the human being. Humanity is composed not of races but of persons who find their common source, as individuals, in the unique total person, in the new Adam, in Christ."[62] While Bulgakov holds no truck with the underlying metaphysics of Marxism that seemingly despoils the concrete person by abstracting society into a quadratic equation,[63] he despises and utterly denounces the "spiritual idolatry" of state absolutism under the diverse machinations of "Fascism," "racism," "*Führerism*," and "Bolshevism," which in various ways follow paths marked by *libido dominandi,* ultimately enslaving "the person to the state." It is telling that he associates these abominations with the false prophets and beasts of St. John's apocalypse.[64]

Clearly, therefore, immense import is afforded human dignity on theological grounds, as Bulgakov makes explicit in the conclusion of his *Tragedy of Philosophy*: "God says *you* to human beings, that He by His Word acknowledges, and, consequently, creates the human being's personhood, and the fact that He gives to the human being, to a created being, the power to approach God as *You*," and thereby God accepts the creature into

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by V. V. Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, trans. George Kline (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), esp. 2: 469–531, 706–916. Bulgakov named Solovyov a great modern Russian "poet-philosopher": Bulgakov, "Без плана. Несколько замечаний по поводу статьи Г. И. Чулкова о поэзии Вл. Соловьева," in *Тихие Думы*, 216–233. Though he later cools in his affections, he regarded "Solovyov as having been my philosophical 'guide to Christ' at the time of a change in my own world outlook." See Bulgakov, *Sophia: The Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology,* trans. Patrick Thompson, O. Fielding Clarke, and Xenia Braikevitc (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1993), 10. (Henceforth *S.*)

62. Translation from Arjakovsky, *The Way,* 436–437. See also Williams, *Sergii Bulgakov,* 293–303, for a critique of Bulgakov's "Расизм и христианство," specifically with regards to Judaism. In short, Williams argues that Bulgakov holds "a nuanced but faintly disturbing position," 295. Cf. too Dominic Rubin, "Judaism and Russian Religious Thought," in *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought,* eds. Caryl Emerson, George Pattison, and Randall A. Poole (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 349–352.

63. It should be noted that while Bulgakov heavily critiques Marxism, he does not dispute that the material, political, and economic features of life are integral to any philosophico-theological personalism: e.g., we may note that Bulgakov holds to the "the completely irrefutable fact that the growth and moral development of personhood are to a certain degree inextricably connected with material progress" ("BP," 102). And later in the same essay, "Pitiful is the person who in our time is incapable of seeing the radiance of the absolute moral ideal in the hearts of people devoting themselves to helping the proletariat in its struggle for human dignity, in the hearts of people capable of living and dying for the cause of freedom, and pitiful is the person who will not see this radiance in the dull and prosaic paragraphs of factory legislation or in the charter of a labor union, and so forth. ... Therefore, the emancipation of the peasants, the introduction of land captains, the limitation of zemstvo revenues, the municipal reform, and the censorship and university statutes are all subject to moral evaluation. Everything is either good or evil" ("BP," 113).

64. Sergii Bulgakov, *The Apocalypse of John: An Essay in Dogmatic Interpretation,* trans. Mike Whitton (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2019), 94–96, 104–106, and elsewhere. To be clear, while he explicitly names Hitler, Lenin, and Stalin in these pages, Bulgakov does not include Marx, whom he decried but for whom Bulgakov also possessed an intellectual respect. In the early 1930s, he writes, "In Marx, the spirit of anti-Christian enmity to God finds a voice of exceptional power; but this spirit is nonetheless bound up with an authentic social pathos and an authentic orientation to the future. There is something in Marx of that outpouring of the Spirit that we find in Israel's prophets, for all the atheistic trappings, the outpouring of the Spirit that conquers the heart" ("SS," 244).

the "Divine *We*."[65] Bulgakov never ceases in his enthusiasms concerning this theological point, that the trihypostatic Person "light[s] from His [own] Light innumerable myriads of spiritual suns or stars, that is, hypostases."[66] It "exceeds all thought," he rhapsodizes, the "ineffability" of such an act of "Divine love and kindness," specifically in regards to the donation of divine breath to the whole humanity at its mysterious origin, "which appears in the creation of new hypostases, created gods."[67]

In conceptualizing God's kenotic, and therefore truly transcendent, communication of *you* to all persons, Bulgakov is not, as has been pointed out by others, utilizing the *image* and *likeness* merely to point out an egalitarianism among all persons (though equal dignity among all persons is obviously present, as amply evidenced by the preceding). Instead, he is alluding to the dynamic ontological structure of spiritual persons who possess a selfhood within a nature defined by sobornost—a unified, Whole Anthropos who images as well as finds its telos in the Divine Life that is ultimately revealed "as a sobornal Person" (какъ соборную Личность),[68] incarnating lives marked by self-determination in actions of freedom and creativity.[69] Bulgakov argues that the self-determination inherent to the likening task makes the undertaking "royal, Godlike," as it is "the path of freedom."[70] *And*, the task of realizing the likeness is the "path of work," an "arduous path" for humanity that requires great enthusiasms and labors as well as even greater feats of love in overcoming the temptations that saturate such a mercurial state of "creatureliness," which "in its untested and un-overcome state is ontologically unstable," bearing "within itself a certain risk of failure, which God's love takes upon itself in its sacrificial kenosis."[71] The givenness of the image and the task to actualize the likeness find purchase in the logic of love that understands the heart of creation as, in the final analysis, purposed towards theosis.

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65. *TP,* 154, emphasis in original, translation modified. Cf. Sergii Bulgakov, *Трагедия философии*, in *Сочинения в Двух Томах*, ed. S. S. Khoruzhii (Moscow: Наука, 1993), 1:444.

66. *TP,* 153.

67. *TP,* 154.

68. Sergii Bulgakov, "Главы о Троичности," *Православная мысль* 1 (1928): 40. On the relation of the individual person and the conciliar whole, Eric Perl's note concerning Dionysius the Areopagite—Bulgakov knowing well the *Corpus Areopagiticum* (cf. *UL,* 125–128, 166, 270–271; *TP,* 140; *LG,* 72–75, 125; and elsewhere)—is instructive: "In Dionysius' metaphysics, then, there is no such thing as an individual, a being conceived as a closed, self-contained unit which extrinsically enters into relations with other beings. Because the principle of reality is pure Openness or Giving, the very identity, the being of each thing, God-in-it, is its giving to and receiving from others. Each thing, indeed, is nothing but its relations to others" due to the "ΠΕΡΙΧΏΡΗΣΗΣ," whereby "the Great Dance in which all beings are only in and through each other." See Eric Perl, *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (New York: SUNY Press, 2008), 80. Bulgakov certainly makes room for the individual person but eschews any form of "individualism" as "self-isolating, nonuniversal being," and, in so doing, Bulgakov attempts to aid *individuals* in their dying as a seed in order to more fully realize their *person*hood, participating sobornally in "the ongoing sophianization of creation" (*BL,* 149).

69. As Zwahlen argues, "Bulgakov behandelt den Begriff 'Ebenbild Gottes' konsequent nicht als eine Wesensgleichheit, sondern als Analogie der geistigen, personalen und dynamischen Struktur von Gott und Mensch: Diese Struktur besteht in einem Akt der Selbstbestimmung des Ich in seiner Natur" (*Das revolutionäre Ebenbild Gottes,* 293).

70. *LG,* 147.

71. *LG,* 147.

The Triune Person communes and thus communicates with created persons through the gate or mode of freedom—which, like Gregory before him, is *not* merely the capacity to choose,[72] as if God's gift of free self-determination to created persons reaches its apotheosis in the choice of the sheer varieties of bread to pick over at the supermarket. Tellingly, Bulgakov concludes the English-prepared *Sophia: The Wisdom of God* (1937) with the crucial caveat: "Freedom is only a mode in which life is participated, not the content of the life itself."[73] Created persons, as creative self-determiners who possess "real, concrete ... modal freedom," are free to undertake and reject possibilities in the life of the world, free to work towards the likening task of realizing the image of God and synergistically bending the world towards its eschatological end or cultivating the lonely image of Lucifer, making hovels in the *underground* for their increasingly diminishing souls.[74] Freedom for the creature is of a different order than God's absolute self-determination and (supra)freedom, where freedom and necessity are ultimately reducible to Divine love.[75] The creature's freedom is *given* and thus *relative*, meaning it can only be antinomically understood as God's kenotic gift to creatures as "the capacity for *creative* self-determination" within the bounds, however grand, of creation.[76]

Thus, conceptualizing a straightforward dualism of freedom as between creaturely and divine choice is entirely insufficient (as well as illogical, as truly transcendent Divinity does not *choose* in the ways creatures as psychological selves do), since, in the end, true freedom "lets itself be convinced and compelled ... otherwise it would remain a motor without a drive."[77] Thus, freedom is not to be witnessed as an exercise of competition between finite and infinite wills, as if an *I* is most free when it wills against God. Wholly to the contrary, instead of being a free act, this is a disfigurement of the freedom gifted to spiritual persons, a sterile rebellion, a reduction to *drive*, which, in

72. "[F]reedom is never the irrational arbitrariness of *sic volo* but is always and invariably motivated with all the power of persuasiveness for each given moment" (*BL*, 145).

73. *S,* 148.

74. *BL,* 191. Regarding humanity's *likeness* to God, Bulgakov usually casts this in terms of a *task* to be realized, something to which all human persons are called, not only certain ascetics, zealots, monastics, holy fools, etc. Furthermore, given the nature of the *likening* task, which in the present form of the world is not realized, Bulgakov considers this "perhaps the supreme dignity of the human being," as he explains in the following passage: "The whole creation thirsts for 'deliverance' from slavery to 'vanity,' for sophianic illumination, for transfiguration in beauty, but it speaks of this with a tongue that is mute. And only the human soul, our own soul—poor, intimidated Psyche—do we know with final, intimate, certain knowledge. What can be more certain than that our present I is *not* I at all, for our eternal essence, our divine genius is quite different from our empirical person, our body, character psychology! *One can never be reconciled with oneself*, and this irreconcilability is perhaps the supreme dignity of the human being." *UL*, 248, emphasis original.

75. For some of the contemporary debates concerning freedom and necessity vis-à-vis God in Bulgakov's thought, see Brandon Gallaher, *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), esp. 70–114, and David Bentley Hart, "Martin and Gallaher on Bulgakov," in *Theological Territories: A David Bentley Hart Digest* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020), 55–64.

76. *LG,* 142; cf. *BL,* 192. The antinomy lies in the following: Freedom for human persons is self-determination or "spontaneity in the sense of causelessness." This is "the very essence of freedom" and it is "a divine gift of the Creator, who communicates to creatures the image of His creative activity." Yet, at the same time, "Creaturely freedom is always actualized within a determinate given; its entire content and its positive possibilities depend on this given." *BL,* 145. On the gift of freedom being a loving act of kenosis, see *BL*, 230.

77. *BL*, 145.

turn, inevitably entails derision for one's neighbor. Since real freedom *lets itself be compelled*, it is still rationally, intentionally, creatively (and *erotically,* as Gregory would have it) participating by allowing itself to be compelled in the very act of being convinced. Thus, Bulgakov, like Gregory long before him, fits snugly in the classical and ancient tradition of imagining freedom to do with the sovereignty to enjoy and adhere to one's natural end: the infinitely attractive Good of all goods.

Conclusion

To conclude, we will interweave a couple of sermons that Gregory delivered during the crisis in the late-360s with a few entries from Bulgakov's spiritual diary, which he kept while in Prague during the first few years of forced exile (1923–1925). I conclude with these because they demonstrate Gregory and Bulgakov's hand-in-hand concern for "the other," concretizing even further, and in a more intimate, interpersonal fashion, the ecology of care—that constellation of life, love, and the productive pathways of freedom.

The famine of 368 C.E. in and around Cappadocia was historically severe.[78] As witnessed from the letters and homilies of Gregory—as well as his brother Basil of Caesarea and their friend Gregory of Nazianzus—how one *saw* the poor, the alien, anyone fleeing famine and pestilence was of great importance in how he championed actively aiding them as persons. Recall Gregory's interpretation of the pleromatic *whole humanity* and the role it plays in the individual dignity afforded each person; if one person is enslaved, then all are enslaved, as humanity as such cannot be bifurcated into two abstracted entities. He beckons hearers to appreciate this logic too in a sermon on loving the poor during these acutely calamitous times: "Do not tear apart the unity of the Spirit, ... do not consider strangers those beings who partake of our nature; ... Remember who you are and on whom you contemplate: a human person like yourself, whose basic nature is no different from your own. ... Treat all therefore as one common reality."[79] Preached in an era shattered by record scarcity and starvation, Gregory's point is plain though formative. One belongs to and possesses a common nature; therefore, to look upon the poor or sick or homeless as intrinsically different than oneself is dangerously erroneous—indeed, damnable.[80] What's more, to categorize humanity as divided into two abstract entities—masters and slaves or those with food and those without—is to divide the unified Human image-bearer into competing entities, a metaphysical absurdity since the Whole Anthropos is founded upon the Person of all persons, the

78. Susan Holman, *The Hungry are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 64–83.

79. Gregory of Nyssa, *De pauperibus amandis II,* trans. in Susan Holman, *The Hungry are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 199–206 (201). (Henceforth *PA*.)

80. "If God sees these scenes—and I am sure He does—what fatal catastrophe, do you think, does He hold in store for those who hate the poor? Answer me!" Gregory of Nyssa, *De beneficentia,* trans. in Susan Holman, *The Hungry are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia*, 193–199 (199). (Henceforth *B*.) While the rhetoric is harsh, it is worth remembering that the gospel according to Matthew, especially the 25th chapter, is none too dissimilar. Furthermore, this rhetoric, it is worth emphasizing for those perhaps dreading the excesses of *old-time religion* and its many *hellfires,* is not aimed at any abstract "sinner" but those specific persons who hoard food during a time of famine, especially in the face of other person(s) actively perishing from hunger in their doorway.

divine-human Christ whose Face is the visage of all faces originally made and finally restored. Gregory would have his audience commit to ways of actively seeing without evasion, a pledge that Rowan Williams describes as the "'staking' of ourselves precisely in recognition of the non-transparent thereness of others, [which is] committed to the risky business of being there with or for them in their radical difference."[81] And by practicing this kind of *staking*, by a disciplining of the gaze ever towards love, one is (and continues to be) indelibly shaped by the encounter.[82] By such growth in an ecology of care, one is continuously able in loving kindness to open avenues of freedom and life for others, aiding all in finding "the port of our rest and desire."[83] And these movements of the soul towards the *beautiful* by acts of "mercy and good deeds," Gregory goes so far as to say, work to "divinize those who practice them and impress them into the likeness of goodness."[84]

Gregory here is working within a context of catastrophe, though (or perhaps especially in such cases) what he runs to repeatedly is the immeasurable dignity, irreplaceability, and worth of the person. So too Bulgakov, who, well before the revolutions of 1917 and his exilic expulsion five years later, names the human soul as a whole cosmos. And by truly *seeing* another, not merely looking at, one can help bring up and out of the depths hidden treasures of the human soul. In a diary entry from March 3, 1925 (Old Style), Bulgakov writes, "The human soul is more precious than the world. ... What a treasury is the living human soul, what gems may lie hidden in its depths, jewels that a person [herself], as well as those around [her], do not suspect," although some are able to see this "beauty as God's creation."[85] He goes on in another entry from June of that year to characterize each human person as possessing "its own spiritual world," containing, because it has been given, "unending depths and riches."[86] These profundities can be, of course, denied or carelessly passed over by oneself or by others in our many avoidances of love, hardening the boundaries of those *immense*

81. Rowan Williams, *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2014), 87.

82. See Natalie Carnes, *Image and Presence: A Christological Reflection on Iconoclasm and Iconophilia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018). Carnes develops a helpful taxonomy (though it should not be reduced, as Carnes points out, to a strict binary): "the gaze of love" and "the gaze of contempt." Carnes argues that the "contemptuous gaze believes that its object is fully known; it believes itself to be the master of the object" and to have power over it. By contrast, the gaze of love "delights in the one it beholds," and resists "the will to master the world" (176). For more, see Daniel Adam Lightsey, "Desirous Seeing: Sol LeWitt, Vision, and Paradox," in *Art, Desire, and God: Phenomenological Perspectives,* eds. Kevin Grove, Christopher Rios, and Taylor Nutter (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 59–70. While Bulgakov, obviously, does not use Carnes' exact taxonomy, he does have much to say regarding the "gaze of love" and the "impure gaze." For the first, see Sergii Bulgakov, *Spiritual Diary,* trans. Roberto De La Noval and Mark Roosien (Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2022), 157. (Henceforth *SD*.) For the second, see Sergii Bulgakov, *The Comforter,* trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 205.

83. *PA*, 206.

84. *B,* 197. A bit later in the homily, Gregory asks, "Is it not necessary rather to let out our compassion and love for one another shine forth radiantly in action?" The proper answer is *of course*: "There is a difference between words and action as great as the difference between a painting and the reality. The Lord affirms that we will be saved, not by our words but by our actions" (*PA*, 203). Also, near the end, Gregory invokes the beautiful again: "It is beautiful for the soul to provide mercy to others" (*PA,* 206).

85. *SD*, 130.

86. *SD*, 157.

solitudes so easily fashioned by each human heart.[87] To be sure, these diverse kinds of avoidances of love are not always or even mostly vicious but often stem from a lack of attention due to the feeling of being overburdened with too many cares. As "a complex of creative potencies,"[88] persons are a mixture of being capable, incapable, capacious, fragile, experiencing many kinds of loneliness (often not by any overt intention), made more whole though often wounded and damaged by our host of associations, interrelations, perceptions, habits, each of these and more contributing to make each person so singular, so incalculably uncategorizable. And yet, when one commits to ways of seeing without evasion, Bulgakov continues in his diary, "sometimes [these depths are] revealed to the gaze of love in all their beauty."[89] The practice of truly seeing an-other forms a person's vision with a greater sense of acknowledgment of love. In the end, this kind of perception "cannot look upon [that] spiritual beauty [of another person] with indifference"—instead, persons "are ignited by love, and in this love they become assimilated to this beauty, they shine with its brightness … love makes holiness shine forth in souls."[90] Their arguments taken together, Gregory and Bulgakov provide generative spiritual resources from which an extraordinary religious humanism can take shape, an ecology of care in which the rudiments of an ontology of personhood—communion, expression, knowledge—dynamically mirrors infinite divine life and love.

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87. *Avoidances of love* is an allusion to Stanley Cavell's masterful essay, "The avoidance of love: A reading of *King Lear,*" in *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 246–325.

88. *BL*, 331.

89. *SD*, 157.

90. *SD*, 158.

Friedrich Schleiermacher and Semyon Frank: On Religion and Dignity

by Annette G. Aubert

This article contributes to efforts to situate modern Russian and German ideas related to human dignity within a comparative framework. It examines the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834)—one of the most influential Protestant theologians in the history of Christian thought—as an alternative to the Kantian secular approach by analyzing texts that highlight his perspectives on dignity, religion, and aesthetics. It further compares and contrasts Schleiermacher's views with those of the Russian philosopher, Semyon Liudvigovich Frank (1877–1950). To date, no scholarly studies have explored the similarities between Schleiermacher's and Frank's perspectives on anthropology and human dignity, despite Frank's familiarity with Schleiermacher's Protestant religious thought. Unlike Kant, who emphasized morality as the essence of dignity, Schleiermacher and Frank connected the ideas of religious experience and human creativity to the concept of human dignity.

Keywords: human dignity, anthropology, aesthetic, creativity, self-consciousness, human soul, Romanticism, individuality

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Friedrich Schleiermacher and Semyon Frank

On Religion and Dignity

Annette G. Aubert

Scholars of Russian culture have long acknowledged the importance of situating ideas and cultural norms within broader comparative frameworks.[1] In his classic *Spirit of Russia* (1918), philosopher and politician Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk noted the "incontestably great" influence of Europe on Russia,[2] with varying influences from specific foreign-based sources,[3] such as German theological texts.[4] In their recent discussion of exploring Russian ideas across diverse fields in the global age, Vlad Strukov and Sarah Hudspith advocate an approach that presents Russia as a transnational space.[5] While the term "transnational" is more frequently found in the social sciences and history than in religious, philosophical, or related studies,[6] English-language scholarship can benefit from studying interactions between Russian religious philosophers and nineteenth-century theological ideas from Germany. Scholars have explored the impact of German idealism on Russian thought,[7] but further investigation is required to under-

1. Iver G. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013). Parts of this article were presented at the conference *Religion, Human Dignity, and Human Rights: New Paradigms for Russia and the West* at the Hamilton Center for Classical and Civic Education, University of Florida, Gainesville, November 2024. I thank the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions.

2. T. G. Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia: Studies in History, Literature and Philosophy*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul, vol. 2 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1919), 559, 560. See also Donald Mackenzie Wallace, *Russia* (London: Cassel, 1886), 397.

3. For a recent study on the cultural transfer between Russia and Europe, see Nikolaus Katzer, "Kulturtransfer zwischen Russland und dem Westen vom späten 17. bis zum beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert," in *Band 6 Deutsch-russische Kulturbeziehungen im 20. Jahrhundert. Einflüsse und Wechselwirkungen*, ed. Horst Möller and Aleksandr O. Cubar'jan (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 1–9.

4. In the 1840s the libraries of educated Russian priests were filled with books written by German theologians such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, August Neander, and David Friedrich Strauss. J. G. Kohl, *Russia: St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kharkoff, Riga, Odessa, the German Provinces on the Baltic, the Steppes, the Crimea, and the Interior of the Empire* (Kiribati: Chapman & Hall, 1842), 268.

5. Vlad Strukov and Sarah Hudspith, eds., *Russian Culture in the Age of Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

6. Andy Byford, Connor Doak, and Stephen Hutchings, eds., *Transnational Russian Studies* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 6.

7. Recent examples include Oksana Nazarova, *Das Problem der Wiedergeburt und Neubegründung der Metaphysik am Beispiel der christlichen philosophischen Traditionen: Die russische religiöse Philosophie (Simon L.*

stand fully the west-to-east flow of ideas produced by German intellectuals such as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), frequently described as "the father of modern Protestantism." This article compares his ideas concerning human dignity with those of the Russian philosopher Semyon Liudvigovich Frank (1877–1950).

In her study of theological ethics, Lydia Lauxmann describes human dignity as a "central theological concept."[8] While Catholicism has placed a greater emphasis on human dignity,[9] multiple discussions of the topic are nevertheless also found in the German Protestant tradition,[10] as well as in Russian philosophical texts written by figures such as Frank.[11] However, recent scholarship in Protestant perspectives on dignity has mostly passed over Schleiermacher's ideas,[12] preferring instead to analyze the views of Immanuel Kant.[13] Unlike Schleiermacher and Frank, Kant deemphasized religion when arguing that morality is at the core of dignity.[14] To illustrate post-Kantian perspectives on dignity in modernity, it will be shown how Schleiermacher and Frank used a theo-

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Frank) und die deutschsprachige neuscholastische Philosophie (Emerich Coreth) (Munich: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2017); Thomas Nemeth, *Kant in Imperial Russia* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2017); Vladislav Lektorsky and Marina Bykova, eds., *Philosophical Thought in Russia in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century: A Contemporary View from Russia and Abroad* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019); and Konstantin Abrekovich Barsht, "Filosofskaia teologiia F. Shleiermakhera i religioznoe reformatorstvo v proizvedeniiakh I. V. Kireevskogo i F. M. Dostoevskogo," *Filosoficheskie pis'ma. Russko-evropeiskii dialog*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2021): 57–79. See also the classic account in Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, trans. R. M. French (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne, 1992).

8. Lydia Lauxmann, *Die Entdeckung der Menschenwürde in der theologischen Ethik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 1.

9. Jadwiga Guerrero van der Meijden, *Person and Dignity in Edith Stein's Writings: Investigated in Comparison to the Writings of the Doctors of the Church and the Magisterial Documents of the Catholic Church* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019); Regis A. Duffy and Angelus Gambatese, eds., *Made in God's Image: The Catholic Vision of Human Dignity* (New York: Paulist, 1999); David G. Kirchhoffer, "Benedict XVI, Human Dignity, and Absolute Moral Norms," *New Blackfriars* 91, no. 1035 (September 2010): 586–608; Alejo José G. Sison, Ignacio Ferrero, and Gregorio Guitián, "Human Dignity and the Dignity of Work: Insights from Catholic Social Teaching," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (October 2016): 503–528.

10. See, for example, Jürgen Moltmann, *Menschenwürde, Rechte und Freiheit* (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1979) and Oswald Bayer, "Martin Luther's Conception of Human Dignity," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. M. Düwell, J. Braarvig, R. Brownsword, and D. Mieth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 101–107.

11. For a fine study on Russian philosophy and human dignity, see G. M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole, eds., *A History of Russian Philosophy, 1830–1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

12. For recent books that deal with the Protestant tradition of human dignity but overlook the contribution of Schleiermacher, see R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead, eds., *God and Human Dignity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); Lauxmann, *Die Entdeckung der Menschenwürde in der theologischen Ethik*; John Loughlin, ed., *Human Dignity in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition: Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant Perspectives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

13. A notable exception to this is Jörg Dierken and Arnulf von Scheliha, eds., *Freiheit und Menschenwürde: Studien zum Beitrag des Protestantismus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). The authors reference Schleiermacher, but they do not offer a detailed analysis of his views. For a study focused on Schleiermacher and the concept of dignity in his published sermons, see Annette G. Aubert, "Human Dignity in the Sermons of Friedrich Schleiermacher," in *Sermons and Human Dignity*, ed. Paul E. Kerry and William Skiles (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

14. Michael Rosen, *Dignity: Its History and Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 20–25; Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4: 434–35.

logical lens (as opposed to Kant's more secular approach) to identify religious experience and human creativity in relation to human dignity.

Frank, whom Vasily Zenkovsky described as Russia's greatest philosopher,[15] was born more than forty years after Schleiermacher's death. To date, no scholarship has examined similarities in Schleiermacher's and Frank's views on human dignity, even though Frank was clearly familiar with Schleiermacher's work on Protestant religious topics, describing Schleiermacher as someone who could "serve as a teacher of life for us,"[16] and writing a detailed sketch of Schleiermacher for Russians who were unfamiliar with his views.[17] In his "Friedrich Schleiermacher's Personality and Worldview," Frank called him "a genius of life" on the basis that Schleiermacher's religious-philosophical opinions created "the foundation and starting point of the entire German Protestant theology ... [and noted that] his historical philosophical research, alongside Hegel's philosophy of history, laid the groundwork for the entire German philosophy of history."[18] Frank (who was proficient in German) was so impressed by Schleiermacher's religious-philosophical opinions that he translated some of his texts into Russian. His first project, completed in 1911, was Schleiermacher's 1799 *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, which Frank considered to be a highlight of the Romantic movement and a core text during his own lifetime.[19] As Frank translated *On Religion*, he came under the intellectual influence of Schleiermacher, especially his romanticist-idealist-pietistic views.[20] The translation project supported Frank's immersion in Schleiermacher's ideas on religion and anthropology in a modern context, including foundational connections among religion, human consciousness, and the creation of humanity.[21]

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15. V. V. Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, trans. George L. Kline, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), 2: 853, 872.

16. S. L. Frank, "Persönlichkeit und Weltanschauung Friedrich Schleiermachers," in *Werke in acht Bänden*, vol. 8, *Lebendiges Wissen: Aufsätze zur Philosophie*, ed. Peter Schulz, Peter Ehlen, Nikolaus Lobkowicz et al., trans. from the Russian by Vera Ammer (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2013), 128.

17. Scholars have commented on Frank's efforts to translate Schleiermacher's work only briefly. Philip Boobbyer, *S. L. Frank: The Life and Work of a Russian Philosopher, 1877–1950* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995), 78, 79. For a study on Frank's use of W. Dilthey's interpretation of Schleiermacher, see K. M. Antonov and M. A. Pylaev, "Vliianie knigi *Leben Schleiermachers* V. Dil'teia na interpretatsiiu *Rechei o religii* F. Shleiermakhera u S. Franka," *Studia Religiosa Rossica* 4 (2021): 14–31. For research on Russian philosophers, such as Sergius Bulgakov, and his connection with Schleiermacher, see Edmund Newey, *Children of God: The Child as Source of Theological Anthropology* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2016).

18. Frank, "Persönlichkeit und Weltanschaung Friedrich Schleiermachers," 106, 98.

19. Frank, "Persönlichkeit und Weltanschaung Friedrich Schleiermachers," 99.

20. Frank's work is shaped by various influences, including Plato, Plotinus, Nicholas of Cusa, Neo-Kantianism, and German Idealism, as well as Goethe and Spinoza. Philip J. Swoboda, "Semën Frank's Expressivist Humanism," in *A History of Russian Philosophy, 1830–1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, ed. G. M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 210. H. Moore, "German Idealism and the Early Philosophy of S. L. Frank," *Studies in East European Thought* 75 (2023): 525–42. For a study on the influence on Hegel's thought on Frank, see George L. Kline, "The Hegelian Roots of S. L. Frank's Ethics and Social Philosophy," *The Owl of Minerva* 25, no. 2 (1994): 195–208; George L. Kline, "The Religious Roots of S. L. Frank's Ethics and Social Philosophy," in *Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Judith Deutsch Kornblatt and Richard F. Gustafson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 213–33.

21. Another translation project was *Monologen*, which resembled J. G. Fichte's *The Vocation of Man* (1799). Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, trans. William Smith, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1910).

A review of Schleiermacher's early writings reveals similarities and differences with Frank's definitions of human dignity. These definitions were based on "religious consciousness" frameworks rooted in "the personal piety of believers," as opposed to Enlightenment definitions based on intrinsic moral values.[22] Moving away from the ethical considerations that preceded them, Schleiermacher and Frank used an anthropological focus that stressed aesthetics and creativity as central to any effort to understand human dignity. Both followed Christian tradition by emphasizing the *imago Dei* concept of human creation, but with a notably stronger Christological emphasis. This essay first introduces Schleiermacher's views on human dignity, then describes parallels with Frank's religious philosophy in a post-Kantian context.[23]

Schleiermacher frequently referred to "*Menschenwürde*" or "*Würde der Menschheit*" ("human dignity") in his writing but never devoted an entire book or essay to the topic. He first addressed the concept in *On Religion* when describing "the dignity of humanity."[24] This text on "Romantic piety" formed Schleiermacher's anthropology and ideas about dignity; this work is considered a primary example of Schleiermacher's influence.[25] Schleiermacher articulated the theme of human dignity both directly and indirectly in collections of academic lectures and dogmatic works: *Aesthetics*, *Dialectics*, *Ethics*, and *Christian Faith*. Schleiermacher grounded his concept of dignity in an anthropology associated with human identity,[26] human consciousness, and the soul. Since Frank never wrote a monograph focused solely on human dignity, to uncover his views on dignity and related topics within a religious framework, we must examine texts such as the posthumously published *Reality and Man: An Essay in the Metaphysics of Human Nature* (1956), *God with Us* (1946), and *The Light Shineth in Darkness: An Essay in Christian Ethics and Social Philosophy* (1949).[27] Frank used the word "dignity" much more frequently than Schleiermacher, especially in texts expressing Frank's "mature philosophy of religion."[28]

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22. Randi Rashkover, *Nature and Norm: Judaism, Christianity, and the Theopolitical Problem* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2021).

23. For religious humanism and Frank in Russia, see Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, "Religious Humanism in the Russian Silver Age," in *A History of Russian Philosophy, 1830–1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity,* ed. G. M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 227–47.

24. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger, 1799), 18. A similar reference appears in the fourth edition of *On Religion* (1831). Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, ed. Günter Meckenstock (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), 24.

25. Günter Meckenstock, "Historische Einführung," in Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion, Monologen*, ed. Günter Meckenstock (Berlin: De Gruyter 1995), vii.

26. Ruedi Imbach, "Human Dignity in the Middle Ages," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity*, ed. Marcus Düwell, Jens Braarvig, Roger Brownsword, and Dietmar Mieth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 64.

27. As Philip Boobbyer notes, "it was in emigration—[Frank] was forced into exile in 1922—that his religious ideas emerged in their most developed form." Philip Boobbyer, "Semyon Frank," in *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Caryl Emerson, George Pattison, and Randall A. Poole (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 495.

28. According to Philip Swoboda, there are "significant differences between the philosophical opinions Frank held in 1904, and those he defended in his mature books." Philip J. Swoboda, "'Spiritual Life' versus Life in Christ: S. L. Frank and the Patristic Doctrine of Deification," in *Russian Religious Thought*,

Details on Schleiermacher's attempts to comprehend human beings appear in his engagement with both Christian and Romantic traditions and portray human dignity through a combination of Romantic aesthetics, religious self-consciousness, and Christian theology. His unique status as a nineteenth-century mediating theologian enabled him to integrate elements from both Christianity and Romanticism into his views of human dignity and identity.[29] Close readings of his lectures and dogmatic work show how his approach to human dignity was based on an understanding of human nature in a post-Enlightenment context. In discussing religious consciousness, Schleiermacher described an indirect connection between human dignity and identity, using the "feeling of absolute dependence" formula involving human dignity and religious experience. According to Schleiermacher, the essence of humanity consists of an absolute dependence on God, with piety as its source,[30] and a strong God-consciousness. This post-Kantian idea distinguished his views from those based on morality.[31]

Human Dignity and Aesthetics

Schleiermacher's concept of human dignity combined ideas from religion and aesthetics when offering insights into human identity.[32] He was not the first to consider the topic of dignity in terms of aesthetics: Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) had integrated the concept into his moral psychology in his *Grace and Dignity* (1793).[33] Long before the nineteenth-century humanist renaissance, thinkers such as Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) and Marsilio Ficino (1443–1499) analyzed dignity as the essence of creative beings. Schleiermacher applied an artist metaphor to explain human creativity, describing God as "the great artist" who created humans in his own image, endowing them with the necessary powers to act as creators and shapers of their worlds.[34] Similar to some Renaissance humanists, he used a creativity lens to describe a humanity created in God's own image.

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ed. Judith Deutsch Kornblatt and Richard F. Gustafson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 235, 241.

29. For Schleiermacher as mediating theologian, see Annette G. Aubert, "Schleiermacher and Mediating Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Friedrich Schleiermacher,* ed. Andrew C. Dole, Shelli M. Poe, and Kevin M. Vander Schel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 505–21.

30. As Maureen Junker-Kenny notes, "Piety which has its seat in *feeling* is in itself something entirely different from morality." Maureen Junker-Kenny, *Self, Christ and God in Schleiermacher's Dogmatics: A Theology Reconceived for Modernity* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 32.

31. Philip M. Merklinger, *Philosophy, Theology, and Hegel's Berlin Philosophy of Religion, 1821–1827* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 128.

32. He considered ideas associated with aesthetics, especially regarding aesthetic feelings and human nature. Holden Kelm, "Philosophy of Art: With Special Regard to the *Lectures on Aesthetics*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Friedrich Schleiermacher,* ed. Andrew C. Dole, Shelli M. Poe, and Kevin M. Vander Schel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 207. For a study on Schleiermacher's anthropology and aesthetics, see Dorothea Meier and Holden Kelm, *Der Mensch und die Kunst bei Friedrich Schleiermacher: Beiträge zur Anthropologie und Ästhetik* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023).

33. Rosen, *Dignity*, 35.

34. Enno Rudolph, *Theologie – diesseits des Dogmas: Studien zur systematischen Theologie, Religionsphilosophie und Ethik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), 75.

A closer examination of Schleiermacher's *Lectures on Aesthetics* (delivered at the University of Berlin in 1819) reveals the romanticist framework of his views on human dignity, especially the ways in which he connected human dignity and identity with aesthetic characteristics and religion. Similar to other early romanticists, in *On Religion*, Schleiermacher discussed the idea of "art as religion" (*Kunstreligion*) when discussing human dignity.[35] Unlike Schiller, Schleiermacher viewed human beings as imitating and possessing the consciousness of God[36]—that is, his perception of aesthetics treated religion as a "general psychological connection" reflecting human religious consciousness.[37] He described music as having the closest connection to religious consciousness, which he expressed as a "feeling of absolute dependence."[38] As Frederick Copleston notes in *A History of Philosophy*, Schleiermacher viewed "religious consciousness" as more closely related to "aesthetic consciousness than theoretical knowledge," with its most salient feature being the "feeling of absolute dependence on the infinite."[39]

Schleiermacher's aesthetic reinterpretation employed the arts as a framework for understanding the concept of dignity, similar to the broader intellectual descriptions of "human dignity through art" (*Menschenwürde durch die Kunst*) offered by Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.[40] As a *Bildungsbürger*, Schleiermacher (who valued both art and culture) perceived art as the door through which the value of an individual is recognized, arguing that "only together with art [do] we become conscious of the dignity of man (*Würde des Menschen*)."[41] His conception of human dignity stressed the importance of human freedom as well as religious consciousness, acknowledging art as being both diversionary and also fulfilling an essential role for humanity. He described art as the only way for humans to attain both an "awareness of freedom" and "an independent, permanent consciousness of the divine within; everything is only ennobled

35. Frank notes this connection between art and religion in his interpretation of Schleiermacher's *On Religion*. Frank, "Persönlichkeit und Weltanschauung Friedrich Schleiermachers," 113. For a study on art and religion in Schleiermacher, see Anne Käfer, *Die wahre Ausübung der Kunst ist religiös. Schleiermachers Ästhetik im Kontext der zeitgenössischen Entwürfe Kants, Schillers und Friedrich Schlegels*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 136 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). For a discussion on *Kunstreligion*, see Jan Rohls, "Sinn und Geschmack fürs Unendliche—Aspekte romantischer Kunstreligion," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 27 (1985): 1–24.

36. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik,* ed. Rudolf Odebrecht (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1931), 67.

37. Eugen Huber, *Die Entwicklung des Religionsbegriffs bei Schleiermacher* (Leipzig: Dieterisch'sche, 1901), 215-17. Frank, in particular, emphasized the significance of Schleiermacher's "psychological description of his religious consciousness." Frank, "Persönlichkeit und Weltanschauung Friedrich Schleiermachers," 111. For a recent discussion that engages with Schleiermacher's reduction of religion to psychology, see Matei Iagher, *The Making and Unmaking of the Psychology of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2024).

38. Albert Blackwell, "The Role of Music in Schleiermacher's Writings," in *Internationaler Schleiermacher-Kongreß Berlin 1984*, ed. Kurt-Victor Selge (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1985), 439–48, esp. 445.

39. Frederick Charles Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 7: *Modern Philosophy: From the Post-Kantian Idealists to Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche* (New York: Image Books, 1963), 152.

40. Egbert von Frankenberg, *Die geistigen Grundlagen der Theaterkunst* (Weimar: Kiepenheuer, 1910), 65.

41. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. Holden Kelm, KGA II/14 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 215 (Kollegheft 1819).

42. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 215.

when it comes in contact with art."[42] In this way, he promoted art and creativity as vital components of human dignity.[43]

Art and dignity occupied central positions in Schleiermacher's lectures on ethics, underscoring the connection between aesthetics and creativity that he described in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*. Specifically, he emphasized the intrinsic value of each individual through the lens of art. In *Grundriß der philosophischen Ethik* (*Outline of the Philosophical Ethics*), he suggested that life can be viewed as a form of art in which every action embodies expressions of creativity—an ontological notion also found in Frank's work. Schleiermacher believed that this creative component can be identified in the sounds and gestures of human infants who express "the peculiar character of the outer person ... formation of the imagination shows itself early, and from it the peculiar character of the inner person develops by which the individual appearances are conditioned."[44]

In his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Schleiermacher added interactions among art, nature, and creativity to his description of human dignity, linking the three elements to the divine and God's creation, and arguing that "just as humans are creative (*schöpferisch*), so God is artistic in the creation."[45] As a romanticist, Schleiermacher gave particular attention to the relationship between creation and art (*Schöpfung und Kunst*), believing that creation and art are essentially intertwined components. By doing so, he elevated human dignity, emphasizing the intrinsic value of human creativity in the context of divine creativity. His central idea was that delight "in divine art is always the highest destiny for humans," thus motivating them to act creatively. In short, Schleiermacher understood creativity as being central to humanity, an idea that Frank also endorsed.[46]

Much like Schleiermacher, Frank addressed the relationship between human creativity and dignity in his *Reality and Man: An Essay on the Metaphysics of Human Nature*, in which he presented a refined version of a philosophical system he had been developing for more than forty years. To address the creative essence of humanity, Frank moved beyond Augustine's opinions that only God can be viewed as a creator and that no human being is capable of creating something. Specifically, while identifying God's acts of creation as miraculous, he also described an inherent human "creativeness" in artistic, cognitive, moral, and political domains.[47] For Frank, "all creativeness bears an artistic stamp ... in so far as [an individual] strives for it and achieves it, he is an artist."[48]

In their respective discourses on human creativity, Frank and Schleiermacher argued that the spiritual dimension of creative expression is an important aspect of human

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43. For a discussion on the aesthetic concept of dignity in Friedrich Schiller's work, see Rosen, *Dignity*, 31. Similarities are found with Renaissance writers whose ideas resurfaced with German idealism; see W. Norris Clarke, *The Creative Retrieval of Saint Thomas Aquinas: Essays in Thomistic Philosophy, New and Old* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 214.

44. Friedrich Schleiermachers, *Grundriß der philosophischen Ethik (Grundlinien der Sittenlehre)*, ed. August Twesten (Berlin: Reimer, 1841), 114, 115.

45. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 43.

46. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 43.

47. S. L. Frank, *Reality and Man: An Essay in the Metaphysics of Human Nature,* trans. Natalie Duddington (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), 153.

48. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 153–54.

nature. Frank posited that an innate artistic force drives humans to express themselves through poetry, music, painting, and other modes. For Frank, the personification of human creative expression had a strong spiritual feature—he wrote, "man's inner being is spirit."[49] Frank regarded creativity as an example of "the divinely-human nature of man," and argued that humans engaging in creative activity experience both freedom and a "dependence upon a transcendent spiritual reality."[50] He described how artists perceive their unique artistic nature as a manifestation of a "super-human spirit" that is inseparable from a human metaphysical position.[51] According to Frank, even though artists might not explicitly mention "God's action," during moments of artistic inspiration, it was impossible for individuals not to encounter God as a "*creative principle* and thereby as the source of his own creativeness."[52] In short, Frank believed that occurrences of creative inspiration were made special by the distinctive connection between individuals and "the creative power of God."[53] This view has important metaphysical implications that fit with Schleiermacher's description of God as the creative source for all beings. Frank perceived God as "the supreme transcendent principle in the human spirit," who bestowed his creative power upon humanity.[54] In other words, Frank's anthropological perspective implied a God who "creates creators," and "creates derivatively-creative beings and grants His creatures a share in His own creativeness."[55] This view underscored the uniqueness of humanity by emphasizing God's presence in the human spirit.

Frank used this relationship between the creative and religious to construct a model of human dignity that included an artistic characteristic—that is, a "superhuman creative principle" in which individuals are cognizant of their status as creators. This awareness, which connects them to the principal sources of their artwork, supports their participation in an enigmatic ontological "process of creation."[56] Frank declared that creative humans were "co-partner[s] of God's creativeness"—a key point in his perception of human dignity.[57] He viewed intrinsic creativity as a fundamental aspect of human existence associated with the divine, with humans actively, freely, and consciously engaging in God's creative process rather than simply obeying his commandments. Frank described God's will as inherently creative rather than governed by rigid laws producing uniform outcomes, enabling individuals channeling their creativity to express themselves uniquely. Frank believed that human identity and dignity are grounded in a cre-

49. Frank, *Reality and Man,* 154.

50. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 155.

51. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 156, 160. In *Man's Soul*, similarly, Frank explains that the entire "domain of spiritual life" in relation to culture and art is a realm where human beings instantly "experience and are conscious of the creative activity of the human spirit." S. L. Frank, *Man's Soul: An Introductory Essay in Philosophical Psychology*, trans. Boris Jakim (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), 263.

52. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 156.

53. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 156.

54. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 157.

55. Frank, *Reality and Man,* 156, 157.

56. Frank believed that artists as "creators" understand they are made in the image and likeness of God.

57. Frank, *Reality and Man,* 156.

ative collaboration with God, rather than in the execution of divine obligations and duties.[58]

Turning to Schleiermacher, a romanticist reading of the interplay between religious art and religious emotions clearly shaped his understanding of human dignity. His initial views reflected Romantic aesthetics in the artistic approach to religion that he expressed in *On Religion*.[59] As a synthesis of art, religion, and human experience, this perception conflicted with the rationalist framework of Enlightenment thinkers. Notable parallels exist between Schleiermacher's ideas and those of the influential early Romantic writer Wilhelm Wackenroder, especially in their shared use of religious sentiment to explain the connection between the arts and religion.[60] In Wackenroder's *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (1797), the degree of unity between art and religion is said to produce "the most beautiful stream of life," thus contributing to Wackenroder's description of religion and art as "the great divine beings" serving as the best guides for our earthly and spiritual lives.[61] In contrast to Frank, both Schleiermacher and Wackenroder emphasized the notion of God in their conceptualizations of dependence, an idea that Schleiermacher reiterated in his description of the essence of humanity.[62] He argued in favor of an inherent connection between human dignity and religious sentiment as marked by an absolute reliance on the divine—that is, a strong connection between religious spirituality and human dignity.

Schleiermacher's Romantic orientation explains both his understanding of human identity as linked to art and the human emotions at the center of his anthropology. While he believed that all art has its roots in human creativity, he made distinctions between different art forms, arguing that some serve as direct expressions of feelings, while others are based on indirect expressions—for example, music and imitation art (*Mimik*).[63] In *On Religion*, he referred to the "music of sublime feelings"[64] when suggesting that music, as the language of emotion, could not be considered separately from religion. In his *Aesthetic Lectures*, he described humans as possessing "the identity of nature in an active way, particularly modified, which expresses the unique relation-

58. Frank, *Reality and Man,* 159.

59. Holden Kelm "Historische Einführung," in Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. Holden Kelm, KGA II/14 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), xxv. Schleiermacher declared that "*religion* and *art* stand beside one another like *two* friendly *souls*." Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, ed. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 69.

60. In *On Religion*, Schleiermacher alludes to Wackenroder's work. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (1799), ed. Günter Meckenstock, KGA I/2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 173. Albrecht Beutel, "Aufklärer höherer Ordnung? Die Bestimmung der Religion bei Schleiermacher (1799) und Spalding (1797)," in *200 Jahre "Reden über die Religion": Akten des 1. Internationalen Kongresses der Schleiermacher-Gesellschaft, Halle, 14.–17. März 1999. Anhang: Spalding, Johann Joachim. Religion, eine Angelegenheit des Menschen. Leipzig 1797*, ed. Ulrich Barth and Claus-Dieter Osthövener (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), 289.

61. Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders: Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst* (Weimar: Kiepenheuer, 1918), 122, 123.

62. Philip Stoltzfus, *Theology as Performance: Music, Aesthetics, and God in Western Thought* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 75.

63. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 196.

64. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 92.

ship of human being[s] to [their] kind."[65] Schleiermacher believed that a general view of human identity could be achieved only if *Volksdifferenz* ("distinctions between people") were eliminated. At the same time, he acknowledged closer connections between certain types of people or nations and greater distances between others, albeit with fluctuations. Schleiermacher understood such "variable boundaries" as proof that "ethnicity belongs to the essence of art."[66]

Another example of Schleiermacher's sense of aesthetics serves as evidence of a romanticist influence: he encouraged human beings to explore the world around them and take on a creative role in their relationship with nature. In his aesthetic lectures, he asserted that humans should "gradually rise to [become] the master[s] of nature" and become "knower[s] of the world."[67] Schleiermacher believed that if this self-cultivation were realized, the result would be a human creativity devoid of inventive influence, appearing in the form of "a mere renewal of things" in which learning without discovery would be a mere tradition leading to something "mechanical, where human dignity could not manifest itself."[68] Frank's discourse on creativity resonated with Schleiermacher's emphasis on a creative role for humanity—that is, the fusion of scientific and philosophical ideas resulting in "the creation of something new."[69]

The concept of nature has often appeared in scholarly discussions of creative human expression, as well as in Romantic literary productions such as Goethe's *Natur und Kunst* (*Nature and Art*).[70] In their respective lectures on aesthetics, Schleiermacher and F. W. J. Schelling described an organic connection between art and nature. Based on his belief that nature is inherently connected to art, Schleiermacher described humans as recreating forms that already exist in nature.[71] In the same manner, Frank argued that "human creativeness in all its forms is obviously profoundly akin to [the] cosmic creativeness" found in nature.[72] Frank distinguished between natural and human forms of creative power, thus echoing Schleiermacher's view concerning the connection between nature and human creativity, describing the first as depersonalized and the second as marked by "a personal self-conscious spirit."[73] In his analysis of human creativity, Frank argued that humans are conscious of their creative actions; therefore, creativeness represents an expression of an independent self—in short, the presence of a higher power is what separates them from other creatures.

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65. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 67.

66. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 67.

67. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 64.

68. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 64.

69. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 153.

70. Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 469–70. On Schleiermacher's reading of Schelling, see Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 1. F. W. J. Schelling, "Ueber das Verhältniß der bildenden Künste zu der Natur" (1807), in *Philosophische Schriften*, vol. 1 (Landshut, 1809), 341–96.

71. *Friedrich Schleiermachers Ästhetik. Im Auftrage der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur – Archiv – Gesellschaft zu Berlin nach den bisher unveröffentlichten Urschriften zum ersten Male herausgegeben von Rudolf Odebrecht* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1931), 9.

72. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 157.

73. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 157.

It is important to note that the ontological aspect of Frank's aesthetic anthropology is aligned with Schleiermacher's belief that all humans are creative beings. According to Frank's *Reality and Man*, creativity is better viewed as an ontological rather than a mere artistic category, with creativeness being a fundamental aspect of human nature rather than a quality reserved for a small number of gifted artists. According to Frank, "every human being is to some extent or potentially a creator. Wherever the purpose of activity springs from the depths of the human spirit, there is creativeness."[74] He argued that creativity is an intrinsic part of human identity—similar to Schleiermacher, he viewed humans as participants "in God's creativeness."[75]

Religion and Human Dignity

Whereas Kant promoted moral value as an essential component of human dignity,[76] Schleiermacher endorsed religion as its transcendental foundation. In *On Religion,* he introduced the idea that humans possess "a consciousness of God" inherently experienced through emotions.[77] In his analysis of Schleiermacher's religious philosophy, Frank paid special attention to the connection between emotions and "religious experience alongside personal self-consciousness with the moment of the individuality in human life."[78] Schleiermacher imagined a collective "consciousness of humanity" entailing ethics and education,[79] while positing a disposition linking religion with humanity and human dignity.[80] He described the spiritual dimension of human dignity as rooted in a dogmatic description of God's image. As part of his consideration of how Christianity is most conscious of God, Schleiermacher emphasized how the first Christians saw "the outlines of the divine image" in humanity and a hidden "heavenly germ of religion," despite the distortions of this image.[81] While agreeing with Augustine's assertion that the image of the divine is greatly tarnished in human nature,[82] he also maintained that traces of the original (though distorted) images were observable, and that humanity had always possessed "a divine character."[83] He used this idea to promote religious sentiment as an essential aspect of the human experience, one in which the idea of dependence occupied a central position among religious emotions. Similar to other Romanticists, he deemed the presence of the divine as an essential aspect of human identity.[84]

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74. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 158.

75. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 157.

76. Rosen, *Dignity*, 144.

77. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 119.

78. Frank, "Persönlichkeit und Weltanschaung Friedrich Schleiermachers," 120.

79. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Monologen (2.–) 4. Auflage*, ed. Günter Meckenstock, KGA I/12 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), 342; Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 115.

80. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 156, 24.

81. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 287.

82. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 285, 287.

83. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 115.

84. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 121.

Unlike Kant, both Frank and Schleiermacher used a religious foundation to address human dignity. In a treatise entitled *God with Us* (written during his exile in France due to political and religious oppression), Frank expressed great interest in the idea of "the religion of personality."[85] In the foreword to the first edition, he wrote, "I am concerned with showing that the fundamental truths of the religious, and, particularly, of the Christian consciousness answer the eternal questions inherent in the very nature of the human spirit."[86] The text shows a clear preference for an understanding of anthropology that favors Christian over Enlightenment values, especially in his understanding of human personality and the soul. When critiquing the assumptions of the German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach's anthropological approach, Frank clearly agreed with the early church father Tertullian in his description of the human soul as inherently Christian.[87] For Frank, Christianity is an "adequate and perfect expression of this direct insight into the ontological basis of human existence."[88] His views on personality could not be separated from the core tenets of the Christian faith, or insights derived from Christian revelation.[89]

Frank's formulation of human dignity extended beyond secular humanism. When discussing humans and characteristics of God in their likeness, he emphasized a Christian interpretation of the concept of dignity, describing it as an "*organic connection* between God and man."[90] He believed the "divine likeness" of human beings and their affinity with God were "in a sense the very essence of Christianity."[91] Frank traced this notion of likeness to the Old Testament, which he incorporated into his understanding of human creation and dignity. In his analysis of Genesis 1:26–28, he described humans as set apart from "the rest of creation," arguing that the source of the distinction was the idea that "human life is the spirit of God." He claimed that their likeness to God elevated humans to "a higher order" that set them apart "from all other [beings]."[92] In an 1817 sermon, Schleiermacher alluded to Genesis 1:26 when proposing that human beings are "the actual goal and end of creation," thus portraying them as "lord[s] over all things," and asserting that individuals display God's image as far as possible.[93]

Similar to Schleiermacher, Frank analyzed the importance of God's image in relation to humanity in terms of "the revelation of Christ," which served as a vital basis for cultivating a new consciousness.[94] Frank's concept of dignity, as expressed in *God with Us*, echoes Schleiermacher's statement that the image of God is revealed in Christ. This

85. S. L. Frank, *God with Us: Three Meditations*, trans. Natalie Duddington (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946), 140.

86. Frank, *God with Us*, 11.

87. Frank, *God with Us*, 138–39.

88. Frank, *God with Us*, 139.

89. Frank, *God with Us*, 140.

90. Frank, *God with Us*, 154.

91. Frank, *God with Us*, 152.

92. Frank, *God with Us*, 152.

93. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Predigten, 1816–1819*, ed. Katja Kretschmar, KGA III/5 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 314.

94. Frank, *God with Us*, 154.

Christological interpretation underscores Frank's emphasis on God's love for humans and God's kingdom as the dwelling place for the human soul. In support of this argument, he pointed to the organic fusion of the Old Testament view of human dependence on God with the Hellenistic ideas of human "dignity" and "kinship with God." Frank believed these two positions converged in the notion of love defining the relationship between God and humans—"that God himself is love." Frank posited that this "divine principle of love is the very root of human existence," one that added existential meaning to human dignity.[95]

Much more so than Schleiermacher, Frank took great care in explaining how "the divine-human ground of human existence" injected new dignity into humanity.[96] He clearly wanted this emphasis on the divine-human connection to move beyond a simple anthropocentric understanding of human identity, and sought to highlight the profound significance of the good news of the gospel, which he believed added a new dimension to human dignity. In this context, Frank highlighted Schleiermacher's idea of "religious experience" over dogmatic theory, suggesting that the significance of this preference stems from the sense of the good news that transforms all human feelings and self-awareness. Frank concluded that every human being, even those who are utterly sinful, is God's child, "born from above" and "from God." Citing Acts 17:28, Frank echoed Paul's assertion that "we are ... his offspring" to suggest a new relationship between God and humanity,[97] and described "God ... the Father [as] the inner foundation of our own being."[98] Frank clearly believed that the fundamental nature of human existence did not depend on a dualistic view of "separateness and heterogeneity between God and man," but on "*kinship, unity*, [and] the *unbreakable connection* of God and man."[99] Frank felt it was essential to demonstrate the perpetual grounding of human existence in the "*Divine-human being*."[100]

Human Dignity and Individuality

One characteristic of Schleiermacher's description of humanity is a strong connection between human dignity and individuality.[101] An example of the transition from an older honor culture to a modern dignity concept is Schleiermacher's view that all individuals are indispensable for achieving a complete understanding of humanity. According to his understanding of personhood, "All that is human is interwoven and made dependent on each other ... every individual is, according to its inner nature, a necessary harmo-

95. Frank, *God with Us*, 155.

96. S. L. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness: An Essay in Christian Ethics and Social Philosophy*, trans. Boris Jakim (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989), 63.

97. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 63.

98. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 63–64.

99. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 64.

100. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 64.

101. Frank's analysis underscores that Schleiermacher's foundational belief is that individuality represents the unique characteristics of each human being. Frank, "Persönlichkeit und Weltanschaung Friedrich Schleiermachers," 120.

nizing piece for the perfect view of humanity."[102] He also emphasized the influential roles that all individuals play in the human tapestry, thus articulating the centrality of dignity in human relationships.[103] However, in his University of Berlin lectures on ethics, he stated that it was important to acknowledge the differences contributing to each person's uniqueness. In agreement with Romanticist principles, Schleiermacher identified "human originality" as the agent of human dignity,[104] and described diversity as fundamental to a sense of human completeness.[105] In his depiction of a framework in which the duality of individuality and relationality could be acknowledged, Schleiermacher described personal identity as constructed according to a mix of isolation and engagement, resulting in human differences that complemented each other.[106] His emphasis on the significance of all individuals within a collective identity honored both personal and communal moral dimensions.

Although Frank also acknowledged the uniqueness of individuals, he observed a shared effort toward "the attainment of perfection and purity of the inner life." Rather than describe this pursuit as an example of a collective ideal of human perfection, he argued that "everyone must have [his] own special perfection."[107] In explaining his belief in a "personalistic religion," Frank noted that while Christianity focuses on the significance of personal ethical experiences, it prioritizes human personality over strict moral rules. Unlike Kant, whose views on dignity were heavily focused on morality, Frank's Christian understanding influenced his conclusion that in matters of dignity, the real "human being is more valuable to it than the principles of moral goodness."[108]

Also, unlike Kant, who understood personhood itself as "morally foundational,"[109] Frank and Schleiermacher took salvation into consideration when embracing the idea of human value. Frank mentioned Martin Luther but not Schleiermacher in his discussion of personality, which is interesting in light of their shared emphasis on the importance of Christ's salvific work, which offers release from the demands of perfect and absolute morality.[110] For Frank, since Christian consciousness takes precedence over the moral,[111] human dignity should not be based on moral value alone. Schleier-

102. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 98.

103. A similar view can be seen in Martin Luther. Bayer, "Martin Luther's Conception of Human Dignity," 103.

104. Christian König, *Unendlich gebildet Schleiermachers kritischer Religionsbegriff und seine inklusivistische Religionstheologie anhand der Erstauflage der Reden*, Collegium Metaphysicum 16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 234. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 18.

105. *Friedrich Schleiermachers Grundriß der philosophischen Ethik* (Berlin: Reimer, 1841), 84.

106. *Friedrich Schleiermachers Grundriß der philosophischen Ethik*, 84–85.

107. Frank, *God with Us*, 143.

108. Frank, *God with Us*, 144. Swoboda notes that "Frank's thinking about human dignity and self-realisation can be described as 'expressivist humanism', in the sense that Frank came to believe that the moral task of each individual was to develop his own unique spiritual individuality and that he generally rejected abstract rules of conduct." Swoboda, "Semën Frank's Expressivist Humanism," 212.

109. Rosen, *Dignity*, 81; cf. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4: 428.

110. Frank, *God with Us*, 144, 147.

111. Frank, *God with Us*, 148.

macher connected salvation with "Christian consciousness"[112] in the form of an "inner consciousness of God" in human beings.[113] In positing that all individuals possess a religious consciousness linked to Christ, Schleiermacher expressed an intrinsic sense of connection between God and human dignity—a view that Frank shared.

Human Dignity and Self-Consciousness

Vorlesungen über die Dialektik, Schleiermacher's collection of lectures on dialectics that served as the foundation for his philosophical system, provides insights into his understanding of human dignity. He used the concept of self-consciousness to position human dignity as part of human nature, emphasizing a religious rather than moral approach to dignity, and arguing that "the presentation of the deity in analogy to the human consciousness cannot be avoided, because one must take the view of religious self-consciousness as [the] only way possible."[114] Schleiermacher differed from Kant in asserting that "transcendent determination of self-consciousness now is the religious side of it or the religious feeling, and in this, therefore, the transcendent ground or the highest being itself is represented."[115] He felt it was essential to connect this feeling to our consciousness of God because he believed that religious feeling represented an absolute consciousness in human beings.[116]

Frank likewise connected human dignity to human self-consciousness. He knew that Schleiermacher had recognized "the mature human consciousness of the nineteenth century that transcended the rationalism of the eighteenth century, acknowledged its religious elements, and penetrated into the intellectual heritage of European culture."[117] In his work Frank highlighted what he called "the new human self-consciousness" emerging from the good news of the gospel, which he described as providing meaning and security for human existence, and as giving humans their status as spiritual beings.[118] He linked God's "image and likeness" rooted in the Old Testament tradition with a Pauline understanding of God's revelation of the divine spirit (1 Cor. 2:10). Accordingly, he believed that human existence possesses a spiritual dimension in the sense of a secure grounding "in the holy primordial source of being."[119] In his perception of humans, Frank characterized them as supernatural beings whose existence depends on God. He argued that a revelation in Christ offered insights into what constitutes a person, thus helping individuals understand their inner being.

According to Frank, the personhood concept was established in the later stages of the development of Christianity and is not found in the Old Testament or other Old

112. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Predigten: Fünfte bis Siebente Sammlung, 1826–1833*, ed. Günter Meckenstock, KGA III/2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 444.

113. Schleiermacher, *Predigten: Fünfte bis Siebente Sammlung*, 325.

114. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Dialektik*, ed. Andreas Arndt, KGA II/10.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), 573.

115. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Dialektik*, 572.

116. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Dialektik*, 267.

117. Frank, "Persönlichkeit und Weltanschauung Friedrich Schleiermachers," 102.

118. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 65.

119. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 65.

World texts.[120] For Frank, the most profound meaning of the good news idea was based on "ontologically grounded roots of [humans] as persons," denoting "a wholly new consciousness of dignity."[121] This argument shares similarities with Schleiermacher's understanding of human identity, which suggested self-consciousness based on an assumption of a "communion of life with Christ."[122] However, for Schleiermacher, a deep association existed between self-consciousness and "absolute dependence"—an expression that Frank did not embrace.[123] Schleiermacher elaborated on the idea in his *Christian Faith*, indicating continuity with his earlier Romantic views and Pietism. Based on his understanding of religious self-consciousness, Schleiermacher stressed the idea of absolute dependence in his theory of religion, especially as regards the human person. In his words, "If the feeling of absolute dependence, expressing itself as consciousness of God, is the highest grade of immediate self-consciousness, it is also an essential element of human nature."[124] Since for Schleiermacher religious self-consciousness was an innate predisposition of the human soul,[125] one of his central concerns was showing "that piety is of the essence of human nature," based on his view that the human soul is inherently inclined toward both "knowledge of the world ... [and] consciousness of God."[126]

As expressed in his *Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher's anthropology reflected a Romanticist perception of absolute dependence, with all individuals aware of a subjective feeling "first awakened in [them] in the same way, by the communicative and stimulative power of expression or utterance."[127] Although he considered such feelings individual, he also believed they contained a collective element, which explains his argument that this core component of human nature is best understood as a communal experience. His view of dignity included a collective awareness of religious self-consciousness built on a universal "feeling of absolute dependence," rooted in unconditional and universal human nature. Schleiermacher believed this universal nature "contains in itself the potentiality of all those differences by which the particular content of the individual personality is determined."[128] Whereas Schleiermacher described human awareness as a dependent and innately religious concept, Frank portrayed human self-consciousness in terms of a "primordial connection and interwovenness with God"—in other words, the presence of God in the nature of human beings.[129] As Frank saw it, human beings

120. For a study on S. L. Frank and personhood, see Randall A. Poole, "'The Kingdom of Spirits': Semyon Frank and Russian Religious Personalism," *Northwestern University Studies in Russian Philosophy, Literature, and Religious Thought* 1 (2024): 244–65.

121. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 65.

122. Schleiermacher, *Predigten. Fünfte bis Siebente Sammlung*, 165.

123. Peter Ehlen, *Russische Religionsphilosophie im 20. Jahrhundert: Simon L. Frank. Das Gottmenschliche des Menschen* (Munich: Karl Alber, 2009), 53.

124. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Steward (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 26.

125. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 22.

126. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 171.

127. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 26.

128. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 134.

129. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 66–67.

are from the beginning associated with God and "are so organically and inseparably interwoven with Him that *we are in Him and He is in us.*"[130]

Frank's description of religious consciousness in *The Light Shineth in Darkness* is similar to Schleiermacher's image of religious feelings tied to human awareness of God. According to Frank, "the idea of the all-powerfulness of God is given wholly immediately and with utter self-evidence in religious experience"[131]—that is, a profound connection between humanity and God in which "a higher power flows into and acts in the world through the invisible depths of the human heart."[132] Frank recognized the centrality of this idea in Schleiermacher's *On Religion*,[133] especially the way in which that feeling was portrayed as a principal component of religion—in Frank's words, a "primary unity" marked by a "feeling of harmony."[134]

Human Dignity and the Human Soul

There is no universal, pan-religion definition of "soul" regarding dignity, beyond a recognition of the existence of a "nonempirical spiritual substance in human beings."[135] In *On Religion*, Schleiermacher referred to "the condition of the pious excitement of the soul."[136] Arguing that religion originates with the soul,[137] he described "holy souls" as always being "penetrated by the glow of religion" under "the direct influence of the Deity."[138] In the second speech of this collection, he expressed his view that all human feelings are found in the human soul.[139]

Frank's understanding of the soul in his later writings, such as *Reality and Man*, is firmly grounded in theological rather than philosophical principles. The mystical religious sources that Frank applied help to explain his criticism of Nietzsche's rejection of God's transcendence in the human soul.[140] Frank's appreciation of "mystical experience" and "the presence of the deity in the human soul" fit with Schleiermacher's description of the presence of God in the soul.[141] Frank was clearly referring to Christian doctrine and New Testament beliefs regarding the human soul when asserting the living presence of Christ in humans.[142] He believed that the soul, "as a reality revealing itself ... as the inmost depth of being" indicates that "God is immanent and dwells 'in

130. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 64.

131. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 41.

132. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 44.

133. Frank, "Persönlichkeit und Weltanschaung Friedrich Schleiermachers," 111, 102.

134. Boobbyer, *S. L. Frank: The Life and Work of a Russian Philosopher*, 79.

135. Matthew Petrusek and Jonathan Rotchild, *Value and Vulnerability: An Interfaith Dialogue on Human Dignity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020), 11.

136. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 147.

137. Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhauser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 35.

138. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 212, 283.

139. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 143.

140. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 129.

141. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 141.

142. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 140.

me', while remaining distinct from me."[143] Frank's understanding of the relationship between the soul and God took two forms: as God's presence in humans, and as rooted in Him. In other words, Frank believed that "God as a reality" transcended humans as an intrinsic essence of their very existence.[144]

In the context of his discussion of the soul serving as an "eternal homeland," and of suffering as inherent in our human experience, Frank wrote of the importance of the kingdom of God.[145] He believed that humans were aware of their status as "homeless wanderers." His view of human nature entailed a "contemporary metaphysical feeling based on unfaith [existing] in the consciousness of our utter desolation."[146] He perceived this collective sense of desolation as shaping human identity and understood the message of God's kingdom as a longed-for "eternal homeland" as offering a foundation for human transformation. Accordingly, he believed that the kingdom of God was an "already attained (or rather the eternally present) possession of man—namely, the homeland of his soul."[147] In alignment with the Platonist tradition of philosophy, Frank adopted the idea of "the homeland," a notion that Schleiermacher never specifically expressed. Frank also used this image in his work *The Unknowable: An Ontological Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*,[148] and discussed self-consciousness and self-realization in Man's Soul to suggest that the internal soul must be perceived in light of "its return to [a] 'heavenly homeland.'"[149]

This gospel element Frank considers to coincide with Plato's teaching of "the ideal world, of heavenly being as the true homeland of the human soul."[150] However, Frank moved beyond this Platonic explanation when emphasizing the distinction between "the religious spirit of Platonism and the good news of Christ": the first expresses "a closed aristocratic character," while the second is "freely accessible to every human soul."[151] Frank viewed Christ's revelation as offering shared ownership of God's kingdom "to every human soul that seeks it."[152] Frank drew on Matthew 11:25 when stating that all human souls eventually find themselves in "inviolable nearness to the heavenly Father ... in whose image and likeness it is created."[153] He contended that this understanding of the good news of Christ and the kingdom of God was directly related to human dignity as shaped by their affinity with God.[154]

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143. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 144.

144. Frank, *Reality and Man*, 144.

145. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 58.

146. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 59, 60.

147. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 60.

148. S. L. Frank, *The Unknowable: An Ontological Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Boris Jakim (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983), 192.

149. Frank, *Man's Soul*, 223.

150. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 62.

151. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 62.

152. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 62.

153. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 62.

154. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, 66.

When discussing what he felt were the superior characteristics of Christianity, Schleiermacher mentioned activities of the soul in the context of aesthetic religions, offering a unique view involving "a peculiar form of inward beauty" in humans. He added detail to this idea in *Christian Faith*, asserting that in Christianity, God's consciousness —as it exists in the human soul—"is always related to the totality of active states in the idea of a Kingdom of God."[155] He used this premise to critique the notion of the beauty of the soul, which he viewed as formed by natural and worldly influences that were unrelated to Christianity.[156] In this work, he analyzed the human soul in a dogmatic context, describing it as inherently inclined to seek both an understanding of the world and a connection with a consciousness of God.[157] Further, he discussed sensible self-awareness of the soul in relation to an "uninterrupted sequence of religious emotions" connected to a consciousness of God in human beings. He maintained that "a religious soul laments over a moment of his life which is quite empty of the consciousness of God,"[158] associating this consciousness with a "feeling of absolute dependence" that varied in intensity. He acknowledged that "there will naturally be moments in which a man is not directly and definitely conscious of such a feeling at all."[159]

To maintain consistency in his theological methodology, which was centered on Christian self-consciousness, Schleiermacher considered awareness of sin in light of the human soul and recognition of "the personal self-consciousness which attests [to] an inner state as sin."[160] According to Schleiermacher, the absence of this consciousness would constitute an "additional sin." He was convinced that "the consciousness of sin never exists in the soul of the Christian without the consciousness of the power of redemption"[161]—a belief that aligned with his perception of sin and grace as interwoven.[162]

Conclusion

This article makes a contribution to efforts to position Russian ideas within a broader comparative context, specifically by demonstrating how German theological texts contributed to the transfer of ideas to Russian scholars. Frank's work in translating Schleiermacher's *On Religion* and *Monologues* was an important influence on his later ideas. Even though Frank did not directly mention Schleiermacher in his later writings, he did engage with Schleiermacher's views on human consciousness and religious feelings, views that influenced his own interpretations of religious experience and intuition

155. For Schleiermacher, the essential Christian concept of God's kingdom states that fundamental life experiences are only considered religious when associated with piety and God's kingdom. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 43.

156. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 43.

157. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 171.

158. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 24.

159. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 25.

160. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 271.

161. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 272.

162. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 265–66. For a fuller treatment, see Annette G. Aubert, *The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 49.

that underscored human dignity and God-consciousness. Similar to Schleiermacher, Frank synthesized ideas in a post-Enlightenment environment in which he combined his religious philosophical positions with Neo-Platonism when analyzing Schleiermacher's work. Frank synthesized ideas in a post-Enlightenment context, blending his own religious-philosophical views with insights drawn from Schleiermacher's work. His conclusion was that despite the limitations of "Schleiermacher's ideas, his living consciousness, which in the religious and moral sphere connects subjectivism and objectivism, individualism and universalism, offers a greater wisdom of life and is closer to the ideal of an all-encompassing worldview than the doctrines of more consistent thinkers."[163]

Schleiermacher's concept of human dignity arose from his subjective religious and anthropological views, his Romantic-Pietistic understanding of dignity, and his assumptions of humans' aesthetic capacity—a capacity associated with the feeling of absolute dependence (on God). While Frank did not adopt Schleiermacher's notion of absolute dependence, both Frank and Schleiermacher included notions of creation and art into their human dignity analyses. An important idea found in the work of both is that creativity is an essential part of human existence and dignity, with creativity serving a central role in human efforts to imitate God. Both Schleiermacher and Frank emphasized the significance of God's image in relation to humanity, and asserted that this image is ultimately revealed to human beings through Christ, who serves as a fundamental foundation for a new consciousness of human dignity.

Though they did their work during different periods in the modern era, both Schleiermacher and Frank responded to Enlightenment ideals by underscoring the spiritual aspects of human dignity, shifting the focus away from moral values to religious (especially Christian) consciousness, which they felt was essential to the concept of human dignity. Schleiermacher and Frank came from different intellectual and geographic backgrounds, but their shared religious foundation and worldview were essential to their views on human dignity. While Frank's connections with Eastern Orthodoxy[164] and German Idealism are important to understanding his anthropology, his intellectual affinity with Schleiermacher is evident in his views linking religion with human dignity.

163. Frank, "Persönlichkeit und Weltanschauung Friedrich Schleiermachers," 128.

164. Swoboda, "'Spiritual Life,'" 235.

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Sobornost' and Christian Order:
On Dignity, Rights, and Responsibility in Milbank and Frank

by Nathaniel Wood

This paper examines how the Russian Orthodox concept of *sobornost'* (ecclesial communion) functions in the political-theological approaches to human dignity and human rights in the work of John Milbank and S. L. Frank. Both thinkers reject liberal "subjective" rights rooted in individual self-interest, reimagining dignity/rights instead as a "right of service" oriented toward social responsibility and the realization of communion within society. However, they diverge on whether *sobornost'* requires establishing an explicitly Christian political order. Whereas Milbank grounds human dignity within an externally realized "order of charity" that would replace liberal democracy, effectively binding *sobornost'* to establishing a postliberal Christian socialist order organized by the Church, Frank conversely distinguishes between *sobornost'* as an eschatological ideal and *obshchestvennost'* as an empirical social order, grounding rights in the ongoing democratic struggle to transform society while rejecting utopian attempts to realize *sobornost'* directly as a Christian order. Frank's approach thus points to a way of preserving a form of subjective rights grounded in social responsibility without demanding liberalism's replacement, enabling a more constructive Christian engagement with liberal democracy and its rights tradition.

Keywords: sobornost, human dignity, human rights, John Milbank, S. L. Frank, postliberalism, theosis

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Sobornost' and Christian Order

On Dignity, Rights, and Responsibility in Milbank and Frank

Nathaniel Wood

This paper examines how the Russian notion of *sobornost'* informs the Christian political-theological approaches to human dignity, individual rights, and social responsibility in the work of John Milbank and S. L. Frank. The focal question is whether a "sobornal" approach to human dignity and rights necessitates the establishment of a Christian political order. Milbank and Frank, who both make *sobornost'* central to their treatments of dignity and rights, represent two different answers to this question. These differences no doubt reflect the influence of the vastly different contexts in which the two authors' political theologies took shape. Frank, the Russian religious philosopher writing in the first half of the 20th century who experienced the defeat of rights-based liberalism by communism and fascism, advocated an anti-utopian and anti-totalitarian "Christian realism" that eschewed an externally realized Christian order. Milbank, the English Anglo-Catholic who first developed the major themes of his political theology in the late 1980s during the ascendancy of neoliberalism and the aggressive dominance of the market, has become one of the most prominent theological critics of liberalism, situating dignity and rights within a postliberal Christian socialist order organized under the influence of the Church.

Despite their different settings, Milbank and Frank share some political-theological commonalities that make them worth comparing—especially considering that Milbank has frequently drawn on Russian religious philosophy in support of his own positions.[1] Both Milbank and Frank are wary of liberal theories of rights based in individuals' subjective self-interest, and both turn to the *sobornost'* of the Church—which rests on the self-renunciation of private interest in favor of service to the common good—for an alternative. In both cases, the main target is so-called "subjective rights," a term that is somewhat loosely and variously defined by different scholars, but which, at the most basic level, means that rights in some sense "belong" to the individual subject.

1. Milbank has engaged primarily with Vladimir Soloviev and especially Sergei Bulgakov. At the time this article was written, he has never cited Frank. However, considering that Soloviev's concept of "divine-humanity" is central for all three of these Russian thinkers and has influenced Milbank, comparison between Frank and Milbank is fitting. I explore Milbank's indebtedness to this stream of Russian religious philosophy in more detail in my forthcoming *Deifying Democracy: Liberalism and the Politics of Theosis* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2026).

Some Christian thinkers have worried that subjective rights lead inexorably to a *subjectivism* that "exclude[s] a larger, qualifying, objective order of moral *right*" and therefore "function as vehicles for atomistic egos to assert their selfish desires."[2] Milbank, who has long described his project as a response to Thatcherite neoliberalism—the inevitable end stage of liberalism, in his view—thinks that liberal subjective rights lead to neoliberalism's "unleashing of purely selfish individual endeavor" and the economic injustice and environmental destruction that accompany it.[3] Frank, likewise, denounces "liberal-individualist" approaches to economic rights, which he found insufficient to resist Europe's slide toward fascism;[4] more generally, he worries that liberalism can lead to an "unchaining of egoism" that opens the door to the exploitation of the less fortunate.[5] In response, both thinkers reimagine rights primarily in terms of social *service*, and for both, the responsibility of service is inseparably linked to *sobornost'*—specifically, to the "sobornizing" of the social order, which is to say, the reformation of society according to the principles of ecclesial love and communion.

The question, then, is whether *sobornost'* as a political-theological response to egoism depends on the existence of a Christian political order. I argue that Milbank, while offering what is in many ways a compelling vision of social harmony shaped by *sobornost'*, attempts to overcome subjectivism by rooting rights in an objectively realized sobornal social order that in a way ultimately binds *sobornost'*—and therefore human dignity and individual rights—to such a Christian order. Frank, on the other hand, treats *sobornost'* as the objective moral goal of political action, and even, to some extent, the basis of human subjectivity itself, without collapsing *sobornost'* into a Christian order. Frank thus points to the possibility of a sobornal theory of subjective rights that resists egoistic individualism and maintains the link between rights and social responsibility but does not depend on replacing the liberal order with a Christian one.

Ecclesial and Political *Sobornost'*

Developed mainly by Alexei Khomiakov in the 1840s and '50s as an account of the Church's "conciliarity" or "all-togetherness," *sobornost'* is first and foremost a doctrine about the Church. The doctrine quickly established itself within Orthodox ecclesiology and, through the influence of figures like Yves Congar, eventually found its way into the Roman Catholicism of the Second Vatican Council.[6] Yet, as Paul Valliere has observed, contemporary theological receptions of *sobornost'* have shown "a tendency to

2. Nigel Biggar, *What's Wrong with Rights?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 132.

3. John Milbank, "Thatcher's Perverse Victory and the Prospect of an Ethical Economy," *ABC Religion and Ethics*, April 15, 2013, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/04/15/3737062.htm.

4. I have translated from the German edition: Simon L. Frank, "Eigentum und Sozialismus," in *Jenseits von rechts und links: Anmerkungen zur russischen Revolution un zur moralischen Krise in Europa*, ed. Peter Schulz, Peter Ehlen, Nikolaus Lobkowicz, and Leonid Luks (Freiburg/Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2012), 221–250. Compare to Milbank's charge that "Liberalism is always incipient fascism" (John Milbank, "Catholic Social Teaching as Political Theology." *New Polity* 3.2 [2022], 40).

5. S. L. Frank, *The Light Shineth in Darkness: An Essay in Christian Ethics and Social Philosophy*, trans. Boris Jakim (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1989), 176.

6. Fr. Edward Farrugia, "Sobornost': A Russian Orthodox Term at the Heart of Roman Ecclesiology," *The Quarterly Journal of St. Philaret's Institute* 47 (2023): 140–180. DOI: 10.25803/26587599.

value Khomiakov's ecclesiological vision while ignoring his social and political vision."[7] For Khomiakov himself, however, *sobornost'* was a social as well as an ecclesiological concept, and his description of the organic communion of ecclesial *sobornost'* coincided with the Slavophiles' romanticized portrait of the Russian peasant commune as the ideal of social development. Slavophile polemics against the "West" targeted a property- and contract-based order founded on what C. B. Macpherson later called "possessive individualism,"[8] a liberal conception of individuals as independent "owners" of themselves rather than as interdependent members of a social whole; and Khomiakov's *sobornost'* ecclesiology similarly rejects individual self-ownership in favor of personal participation in the Church's communal possession of God's self-revelation.

The overlap between Slavophile descriptions of Church and society is very much in keeping with the Orthodox understanding of salvation as "deification" or *theosis*, humanity's union with God, whereby the human being is perfected *as human* by attaining the "likeness" of God through ontological participation in divine perfection. *Theosis* points to a certain ontological continuity between created nature and divine grace, according to which creation is naturally oriented towards fulfillment in the supernatural; the doctrine thus resists strict divisions between the graced, "divine-human" life of the Church and the "merely human" life of the political community. For this reason, Orthodoxy's "theotic" ethos has tended to encourage the idea, widespread in Orthodox political theology, that "the ecclesial and the political communities will eventually coincide."[9] The natural political community anticipates fulfillment in the communion of the Church, and the work of Christian politics, in some sense, is to introduce ecclesial social principles into the broader social life.

Approached in certain ways, however, this continuity between the social and the ecclesial poses certain dangers, especially when combined with a Christian political theology of dignity and rights. Among these dangers is the fusion of dignity and rights with a specific form of social order that is thought to be most congruent with Christianity. One of Nikolai Berdyaev's criticisms of Khomiakov is that the latter could seem at times to "chain down" *sobornost'* to the Russian commune,[10] as if the commune were a *precondition* for ecclesial communion—a repetition, in a way, of the old Byzantine temptation of making the Church dependent upon the existence of the Christian imperial order.[11] *Sobornost'*, as the supernatural fulfillment of natural sociality, becomes wedded to a specific type of social order—in Khomiakov's case, a decidedly non-liberal one—such that the "sobornizing" of social relations becomes closely identified with the

7. Paul Valliere, "The Modernity of Khomiakov," in *A.S. Khomiakov: Poet, Philosopher, Theologian*, ed. Vladimir Tsurikov (Jordanville: Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2004), 140.

8. C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

9. Alexander Kyrlezhev, "On the Possibility/Impossibility of an Eastern Orthodox Political Theology," in *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity: Common Challenges – Divergent Positions*, ed. Kristina Stoeckl, Ingeborg Gabriel, and Aristotle Papanikolaou (London: T&T Clark, 2017), 182.

10. Nicholas Berdyaev, *Aleksei Stepanovich Khomyakov*, trans. Fr. S. Janos (self-published, 2017), 140–141.

11. E.g., the claim of Patriarch Anthony IV of Constantinople that "It is impossible for Christians to have a church and no empire." Quoted in Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen Through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 143.

establishment of that order. Combined with a sobornal theology of dignity, this error in turn ends up chaining human dignity to the maintenance of said order.

Nevertheless, Khomiakov's *sobornost'* is not identical to the empirical Christian community but is a kind of *performance* of communion.[12] While his ecclesiology contains no notion of individual rights, it does contain a relational and theocentric idea of personal "dignity," based in the person's union with God mediated by this performance. In contrast to possessive individualism, sobornal dignity is not privately "owned" but communally realized. Dignity originates in the *insufficiency* of the separate individual, beginning with the insufficiency of their knowledge of God, which is "given to the mutual love of Christians,"[13] not to the individual rational mind. The person's knowledge of God is a function of their participation in the Holy Spirit, who dwells within the mutual love that circulates throughout the ecclesial community. Within the Church, then, dignity is grounded in the performance of mutual love and service, in a free and reciprocal exchange of the members' unique gifts that reconciles them in a common life. On the other hand, to withdraw from this gift-exchange through the self-assertion of egoism—as, for instance, Khomiakov accuses the Catholic Church of doing by its unilateral alteration of the Nicene Creed—is to separate oneself from *sobornost'* and to "wither" like an organ that has cut itself off from the body's circulation of blood.[14]

If this vision of *sobornost'* were translated into a theory of rights following the common approach of basing rights in dignity, then this would mean that rights, like dignity, would also be oriented towards social cohesion. Rather than protecting private interest and the self-assertion of the individual will, which threatens to weaken social cohesion, sobornal rights instead would incorporate responsibility for the good of the community. Here, the potential dangers start to emerge. A sobornal ethos in politics risks collapsing into a collectivism that subordinates individual freedom to social conformity—a danger on display in the revisionist anti-liberal rights agenda of Patriarch Kirill and the Moscow Patriarchate. Arguing that Western liberal rights encourage the individual to "base his behavior on his own interests as having priority over those of society,"[15] the patriarch's alternative rights framework refigures individual rights in a way that ends up binding them to the church's understanding of Russia's "traditional values." Just as individual self-assertion within *sobornost'* separates the individual from the communal mediation of their participation in God, the political assertion of individual freedom to engage in behavior that offends so-called traditional values can "darken" the dignity of the divine image in the offender.[16] Therefore, if the fundamental purpose of human rights is to safeguard human dignity, then rights do that here by *restricting* individual freedom to

12. Alexis Khomiakov, "The Church Is One," in *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, trans. and ed. Boris Jakim and Robert Bird (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1998), 39.

13. Alexis Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Letter Published by the Archbishop of Paris," in Jakim and Bird, 112.

14. Khomiakov, "The Church Is One," 49–50.

15. Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, "Liberal Ideology: A Threat to Peace and Freedom," in *Freedom and Responsibility: A Search for Harmony—Human Rights and Personal Dignity*, trans. Basil Bush (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2011), 67.

16. Russian Orthodox Church, *The Russian Orthodox Church's Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom, and Rights* (2008), section I.5. https://old.mospat.ru/en/documents/dignity-freedom-rights/i/

deviate from conservative social norms. In this "secularization" of the sobornal ethos, relational dignity becomes chained down to an anti-liberal vision for Russian society, with rights as an instrument of its enforcement.

Patriarch Kirill is a particularly egregious example of the subjugation of the sobornal ethos to maintenance of an anti-liberal order. Milbank and Frank both offer far more compelling, and more theologically sincere, proposals for a sobornal approach to dignity and rights that links rights to moral responsibility to the community—the responsibility especially to foster *sobornost'* within extra-ecclesial social relations. Both of their approaches share certain commonalities regarding *theosis* and the nature-grace continuity, as well as the ontological priority of peace over violence. Both follow Vladimir Soloviev's path of ontologizing *sobornost'* by pushing it back into the primordial heart of creation through the concept of "All-Unity"—Frank with his "universal *sobornost* of being"[17] and Milbank with his "*concordantia* of the whole cosmos."[18] In both cases, the deification of the world is the restoration of a sobornal peace that already is the reality of creation in its depths, though currently submerged beneath the divisions drawn by competition between egoistic individual wills (which finds political expression in Hobbes's state of nature). For both Milbank and Frank, a Christian theory of rights must not reinscribe egoism but must be directed towards *overcoming* it in the harmonization of differences and the realization of the objective truth of the world as *sobornost'*; and in this sense, rights become instruments of the world's deification, justified in relation to the sobornizing of social relations.

However, their approaches have very different consequences for the relationship between *sobornost'* and Christian order.

Milbank builds on a *sobornost'* ecclesiology to advance an "order of charity" as an *alternative* to the liberal order. Rejecting the "ontology of violence" that he sees at the basis of liberalism's founding myths, he argues for the possibility of a politics that surpasses the liberal management of ineliminable conflict—a politics that is "more than an uneasy peace of contract, or agreement to differ"[19]—in the genuine peace of consensus, which he believes defines the redeemed social life of the *ecclesia*. Central to this project is Milbank's critique of subjective rights and of a social order founded on the celebration of subjective willing in the abstract, irrespective of the *object* of that willing. Milbank hopes to shift the focus away from subjective rights to dignity, advancing a relational and vocational approach that situates dignity within an objective "right order" shaped by the educative influence of the Church and oriented towards the common good.

Frank, on the other hand, retains an emphasis on subjective rights but regrounds them in *sobornost'* as the objective content of the obligatory. Frank does not understand *sobornost'* primarily in terms of an external order but moves it into the divine foundation of human consciousness, where it is encountered as both truth and obligation in the human being's experience of ontological kinship with God.

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17. S. L. Frank, *The Spiritual Foundations of Society: An Introduction to Social Philosophy,* trans. Boris Jakim (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1987), 61.

18. John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003), 129.

19. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory,* 2nd edition (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 367.

For both Milbank and Frank, *sobornost'* detaches dignity and rights from possessive individualism and reorients them towards social responsibility or a kind of "right of service." Yet, as I show below, Milbank's service depends on the Church's coordination of specific roles and responsibilities within a Christian order; whereas Frank, with his anti-utopian skepticism towards such an order, points towards the possibility of a revitalized liberalism that justifies an expansive individual freedom in relation to the general moral responsibility to build charitable social relations, a responsibility which grounds the absoluteness of human dignity.

Milbank's Order of Charity

Milbank offers what is perhaps the most extensive attempt to incorporate aspects of *sobornost'* into contemporary Western political theology. He has described his understanding of the Church as "an event of *concordantia*," a description that he notes—citing Sergei Bulgakov—is "almost identical to the Russian *sobornost*."[20] The social life of the Church, which he describes as a kind of "deified democracy,"[21] is characterized above all by "social reciprocity and gift-exchange—in a word, *charity*."[22] Because of nature's orientation to the supernatural, natural human society is to be fulfilled in this deified democracy. For this reason, Milbank allows no strict ontological boundaries between ecclesial *sobornost'* and extra-ecclesial society. Since society is already potentially the Church, Milbank's politics seeks "to incarnate charity also in political structures,"[23] which means transforming society "in the direction of a charitable order."[24]

In effect, Milbank translates ecclesial *sobornost'* into a social and political order that is meant to replace the liberal order. The general aim of his politics is to establish a *postliberal* order of charity, and his approach to dignity and rights is a crucial part of that project. Milbank's order of charity would be based—as the title of one of his articles suggests—on the priority of "dignity rather than right."[25] Within mainstream contemporary human rights discourse, dignity and rights usually belong together, with dignity as the foundation of rights—as we see, for example, in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* Milbank challenges this commonly assumed relationship between the two. The usual linking of dignity and rights, he contends, is actually the fusion of two *opposing* traditions: the Catholic and the liberal-individualist. In practice, he argues, the 20th-century union of these two traditions stripped dignity of its substantive (Christian, personalist) content and has effectively made the concept of dignity subservient to a liberal-individualist right that is "derived from the exercise of subjective freedom or from human autonomy and requires no other foundation"[26]—including no foundation in

20. Milbank, *Being Reconciled,* 128.

21. Ibid., 133.

22. John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* (London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 239.

23. John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*: *The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 256.

24. Ibid., 229.

25. John Milbank, "Dignity Rather than Right." *Open Insight* 5(7): 77–124.

26. Milbank, "Dignity," 80.

social obligation. Basically, Milbank worries that dignity—which admittedly sometimes appears to be an empty, purely functional concept in contemporary rights discourse—is reduced to nothing more than the moral basis for the *amoral* sovereignty of unfettered private choice. For Milbank, however, this distorts the older Catholic sense of dignity, which was not the property of an abstract subject but belonged to specific groups and social roles based on their service to an objective common good. Dignity was attached to specific positions within an objective right order, which worked together to realize the good.

Ultimately, the common good these roles or positions realize just *is* that of charity, or *sobornost'*. This is why the diversity of distinct roles is crucial for Milbank's charitable order, because, like Khomiakov's *sobornost'*, this order is constituted as a "harmonious blending of diverse gifts."[27] The order of charity, like the Church, is gift-exchange. Therefore, in support of this exchange, Milbank moves away from talk of "human dignity" in general and towards specific, differentiated *dignities* attached to the various co-essential social roles. "To value the dignity of the person is not to value an abstract bearer of free-will, equivalent to all other such bearers,"[28] but it is to value them as the occupant of specific positions that make specific contributions to social harmony: e.g., the dignity of the person as "miner, son, father, cricket player, or lover."[29] Properly speaking, none of these roles possesses dignity *by itself* any more than isolated individuals do; rather they have dignity only *together with others*—only situated within the reciprocal gift-exchange. What this means, essentially, is that Milbank "ecclesializes" the political notion of human dignity by grounding it in the charitable performance of *sobornost'*—in a sense, "doing church"—within the people's various social roles and relations: in labor, economic exchange, family, education, and so on.

The performative dimension of *sobornost'* is particularly important, for one, because it preserves an element of subjective freedom in Milbank's theory of dignity, preventing it from collapsing into pure social conformity that suppresses personality. The dignity of social roles is a function of their contribution to building the peace of consensus, or put differently, realizing the *ecclesia* within society. In Khomiakov's ecclesiology, the performance of ecclesial consensus was at least as important as the propositional content of that consensus; we see this, for instance, in his critique of the *filioque*, which he deems heretical not primarily because of its theological content but for the fact that its unilateral insertion into the Creed broke consensus.[30] Consensus follows a similar logic in Milbank. For Milbank, a genuinely *social* unity is not the mere coordination of wills but the unity of consensus about what is good and true; but truth here is the ontological peace of *sobornost'*, which is to say, consensus itself. This places a partial check on the theocratic thrust of Milbank's position, because if truth is a charitable performance and as such is irreducible to a proposition, then consensus about the truth cannot be coercively and externally imposed; it can only be performed as free communion, as

27. Milbank, *Being Reconciled,* ix.

28. John Milbank, "Human Dignity, Not Rights: Breaking up Modernity's Uneasy Marriage," *ABC Religion and Ethics*, March 14, 2014, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2014/03/04/3956588.htm.

29. Milbank and Pabst, *Politics of Virtue,* 210.

30. Khomiakov, "Archbishop of Paris," especially 66–68 and 132–133.

"perfect social harmony."[31] This would preclude the forced profession of state dogma or the exclusion of ideological minorities. The performance of *sobornost'* is "democratic" in the sense that it must include the free participation of all of society's members, for just as Khomiakov "dispersed" divine revelation by locating it within mutual love, Milbank insists that "the entire truth of Christianity exists in harmonious dispersal amongst the body of Christ,"[32] so that this truth is accessible only "democratically" through charitable gift-exchange. Milbank's orientation is more ecumenical than Khomiakov's, though. Significantly, Milbank—once again following from the nature-grace continuity—does not restrict the democratic dispersal of truth to the visible community of believers but extends it to all people, who are potentially the Church.[33] Therefore, even the heterodox Christian or the non-Christian has a place within Milbank's sobornal order. Because of this ecumenical aspect, the logic of *sobornost'* precludes the institutional Church's imposition of Christian truth onto non-Christians, because such an imposition (à la Khomiakov's polemical depiction of Roman Catholicism) would itself violate the mutuality of consensus, and so would be a "heretical" separation from the truth itself. For this reason, Aristotle Papanikolaou's concern that Milbank's focus on consensus "looks very much like the neo-scholastic principle that the rejection of truth should not be allowed in a political order"[34] does not seem to be entirely accurate, since, in Milbank's social *sobornost'*, even minority and dissident groups can be "performing certain roles that contribute to the cohesion of the entire polity."[35]

The democratic dimension of Milbank's system is further reinforced by his insistence on the "personalist" aspect of social performance. In this way, Milbank treats dignity as the *convergence* of freedom and responsibility. Dignity is a function of the distinct social obligations associated with a role or position, but these obligations must be performed "freely, interpretively and creatively."[36] This means that the human *person*, the personal claimant of dignity and rights, is not the abstract subject but a concrete performer of specific obligations. It is the convergence of freedom and obligation that gives the person their distinctive personal character, which "springs up as much spontaneously from herself as from her unique and complex relational situation."[37] All of this is in keeping with Milbank's larger understanding of the human person as a "fabricating animal" whose personality derives from labor directed towards the realization of the good.[38] He goes as far as to identify the creative performance of obligation with the person's (always social, never individual) reflection of the *imago dei*[39]—this reflection typically being, in Christian thought, the theological basis of human dignity. For

31. John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), 154.

32. John Milbank, *The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2009), xiv.

33. Ibid., 245.

34. Aristotle Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political: Democracy and (Non-Radical) Orthodoxy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 141.

35. Milbank and Pabst, *Politics of Virtue,* 82.

36. Ibid., 83.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., 384.

39. Ibid., 84.

Milbank, the divine image in humanity is *productive*; it means "also constantly to shape better images of deity,"[40] which we do, in part, through the collective performance of our social obligations.

All this points to the restricted sense in which Milbank reintroduces a kind of subjective right. To the extent that Milbank preserves rights-language at all, rights do not inhere in the pre-social subject but in social roles as determined by their contribution to charitable order. The persons who perform these roles can make a subjective claim to those rights, but the rights themselves are objectively determined by the location of a role within the order of charity. Milbank's subjective rights, in this way, are short of subjectivism: "It is indeed allowed that one can have a legitimate subjective claim to an objective *ius*, but not that such *ius* is ever derived from self-willing alone."[41] Persons can claim by right whatever is necessary for the performance of their roles, including the freedom to perform them creatively in ways that perpetually generate new modes of cooperation and communion, but legitimate rights-claims are never divorced from one's responsibilities. In principle, this approach would allow rights to safeguard persons in their full personal uniqueness as active social creators rather than in their abstract (and thus interchangeable) individuality.[42]

In sum, Milbank's rights are a kind of "right of service" inseparable from the (always differentiated) obligation to foster mutual love within society. Rights are, again, an instrument of the "sobornizing" of the social order. The general project of linking rights to service is one that Frank also affirms and, in my view, an attractive one. In Milbank's version, this project ends up binding rights too closely to "right order," specifically a Christian order. Strictly speaking, Milbank does not identify *sobornost'* fully with a particular order, since *sobornost'* is the *performance* of charity. Nevertheless, the sobornal performance does appear to be too tightly bound to an externally sobornized order, such that it is unclear the extent to which the performance is possible within some other social and political order—such as a liberal democratic one. In other words, the performance appears to depend on the external organization along ecclesial lines. It rests on a "good and just coordination of diverse talents and needs"[43] and the "distribution of specific liberties, offices and duties to certain individuals and groups in certain circumstances according to the discernment of what is specifically desirable and has a tendency to cement human solidarity."[44] Of course, *someone* must perform this work of discernment and coordination, and Milbank is clear that it would be carried out within the framework of a Christian state—ideally, a constitutional monarchy—in "symphonic" cooperation with an established Church.[45] Milbank's approach appears to rest on the legal codification of Christian charity under the Church's guidance. Therefore, even if

40. John Milbank, "Sophiology and Theurgy: The New Theological Horizon," in *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy: Transfiguring the World Through the Word*, eds. Adrian Pabst and Christoph Schneider (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 66.

41. Milbank, "Dignity Rather Than Right," 90.

42. See, e.g., John Milbank, "Against Human Rights: Liberty in the Western Tradition," *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* 1 (2012), 56.

43. Milbank and Pabst, *Politics of Virtue,* 211.

44. Milbank, *Future of Love,* 246–247.

45. Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 210.

the *ecclesia* is not identical to the *polis,* the performance of ecclesial love within the *polis* seems to be inseparably tied to the transformation of the *polis* into an *ecclesia*-shaped Christian political order.

Even setting aside the obvious objections of those who do not share Milbank's own Christian convictions, the attachment of dignity and rights to positions/roles within the Christian order calls into question the possibility of utilizing those concepts *outside* of that order—an order that, of course, does not currently exist. Milbank appears to have jettisoned the possibility of *universal* human rights to which justice advocates might appeal across different social and religious contexts. This has potentially serious implications for a Christian politics practiced within the existing liberal democratic order. Because the objective moral foundation of human rights is not the human subject itself but the subject's role within the Christian order, any appeal to human rights must be, at least implicitly, an appeal to that order. Without an overlapping concept of human rights, all that is left for Christian politics committed to personal dignity is to *oppose* the liberal order with a Christian order of charity; it is not clear how rights or dignity might be a resource for a Christian politics that works *within* the liberal order to sobornize it from within, rather than to *replace* it.

In the end, then, Milbank falls victim to Berdyaev's critique, and in this case—as it has also been for Khomiakov—the "chaining" of *sobornost'* to an external order accompanies a Christian rejection of liberalism. Frank, I suggest, offers a way past Milbank's opposition between liberalism and the order of charity, while still maintaining an essential link between dignity/rights and social obligation. Rights, once again, are a function of the performance of *sobornost'* within society, but in Frank's case, that performance does not rest on the existence of an "ecclesialized" Christian order.

Frank's *Sobornost'* and *Obshchestvennost'*

Frank provides a more substantial notion of subjective rights than Milbank does, but this is not to say that he endorses *subjectivism* in rights. One place Frank uses the language of "subjective rights" is in his 1927 essay "Property and Socialism," which addresses the right to private property from a Christian perspective. Here Frank defends property rights, but he distances them from what he calls an "individualistic liberalism" that treats these rights as absolute as "an expression of pure egoism and self-interest."[46] Because Frank thinks that no one's self-interest can place moral obligations onto another, it cannot be the moral basis of subjective rights-claims. Provocatively, Frank goes as far as to claim that human beings "cannot have any innate, inalienable or sacred rights" at all, in the subjective sense.[47] This is because Frank, like Milbank, treats all rights as a right of service: "Every subjective right has only a functional meaning, directed towards service."[48] Instead of the inviolability of private choice, Frank argues that

> Every subjective right only finds its moral basis when it is traced back to an obligation. In the final analysis, man has only one right, which is sacred in

46. Frank, "Eigentum und Sozialismus," 224.

47. Ibid., 225.

48. Ibid., 231.

> the true sense (of course every right is sacred, insofar as it is a true right): the right to be given the opportunity to fulfill his duty as well as possible, the right to demand that no one should prevent him from doing so. All human rights, directly or indirectly, boil down to this single right.[49]

It is, in other words, not subjective interest but the sacredness of moral obligation—the responsibility to realize objective justice—that imbues rights with their sacredness.

The question is how Frank's "right of service" relates to *sobornost'*, and here, he differs notably from Milbank. The "right of service" links rights to the task of "Christianizing" society by introducing ecclesial love into social relations and reforming laws and institutions in a more charitable direction. However, rather than focusing on an externally sobornized "right order" within which differentiated rights are determined, Frank locates the link between rights and *sobornost'* in the historical struggle to *transform* society in a sobornal direction, a task that is fully accomplished only eschatologically.

I base this reading on the key distinction between *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'* that Frank develops in his book *The Spiritual Foundations of Society*. Building on the nature-grace continuity, Frank sees the *sobornost'* of cosmic all-unity as the hidden foundation of social relations, even those empirically founded on contract, because sociality as such originates in the movement (even if unconscious) towards eschatological communion: "Not only all people but all that exists in general is destined to participate in the all-embracing 'we,' and is therefore potentially a part of 'we.'"[50] For Frank, if *sobornost'* is the inner foundation of creation, then this foundation is partly obscured by the reality of empirical atomism, division, and managed conflict. In his social theory, *sobornost'* is obscured behind *obshchestvennost'*, the external, "mechanical" layer of society. If *sobornost'* is the ontological peace of all-unity, then in the midst of history, it is submerged within the *obshchestvennost'*, where the superficial peace of contract and coordinated self-interest dominates. Frank's crucial move is that he does not treat *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'* as two distinct, rival *types* of social order, like the Slavophiles' contrast between the Russian commune and Western contract-based society. Instead, they are two aspects that exist in every social order, as *obshchestvennost'* imperfectly mediates *sobornost'* in history: "*Sobornost'* is empirically realized as *obshchestvennost'*, as the interaction of separate, corporeally isolated individuals."[51] Frank's social theory, then, is defined by a certain tension between *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'*. *Obshchestvennost'* both conceals and reveals humanity's ontological unity. There is a sense in which *obshchestvennost'* names society's "fall" from the perfect peace of communion, but at the same time, it is also the arena in which grace overcomes that very fallenness. Although Frank no longer relies explicitly on his *sobornost'*/*obshchestvennost'* scheme in his later, more expressly theological book on politics, *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, the Johannine metaphor that frames the book—"The light shines in darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5)—captures the tension between the two: the

49. Ibid, 225.

50. Frank, *Spiritual Foundations*, 50–51.

51. Ibid., 174.

divine light of sobornal peace "shines" even in the "darkness" of externalized, compulsory social relations between individuals, but nonetheless, it *shines*.

It is especially in *The Light Shineth* that Frank lays out what he describes as a "Christian realist" politics. While the term "Christian realism" is most strongly associated with the politics of Reinhold Niebuhr, scholars such as Philip Boobbyer have identified some commonalities between Niebuhr and Frank, even if there is no evidence that the two were aware of each other's work.[52] In *Light Shineth*, completed in the wake of the Second World War, Frank's outlook on external social order takes a somewhat more pessimistic tone, now framed more forcefully as a kind of sin-burdened "darkness." Yet Frank's message in the book is not one-sidedly pessimistic but, like Niebuhr, attempts to balance hope for social change with recognition of the actual limits of fallen humanity's capacity for perfection. Frank's realism wrestles with the tension between Christians' obligation to struggle for the good in history and the pervasive reality of sin that corrupts every such effort and casts judgment upon all utopian confidence that the Kingdom of God can be realized by political means.[53] The meaning of this realism is most clearly on display in the book's final chapter on the Christian task of perfecting, deifying, or (to use Frank's term) "Christianizing" the world—a genuine Christian obligation, no doubt, and one that is in a sense constitutive of the human person created in God's image (the person's "divine-humanity"), but one that also demands the rejection of "all political and social fanaticism" associated with utopian politics.[54] One on hand, Frank considers the idea that Christianity should not influence political and social change to be "one of the most bizarre errors of Christian thought,"[55] but on the other hand, he cautions that "all attempts to directly conquer the world, to include the world into the church of Christ or to transform it into the church of Christ, into the blessed and righteous church of God ... *lead only to the distortion of Christ's truth*."[56] Christian politics must not attempt "to 'save the world' ... by the establishment of some ideal, compulsorily realized *order*"[57] but instead must act only through "separate attempts to directly influence the world, to let the world feel Christ's truth."[58]

In other words, Frank's Christian realism refuses the ideal of "Christian order" in favor of what he calls "the path from inside outward,"[59] which recognizes the inescapable sinfulness of every social order as long as human personality remains plagued by ignorance and egoism. Returning to the categories that Frank developed in *Spiritual Foundations*, the realism of *Light Shineth* can be understood as the refusal of every attempt to realize *sobornost'* directly in the *obshchestvennost'*. In short, the desire to establish a "Christian order" amounts to the translation of *sobornost'* into the categories of *ob-*

52. Philip Boobbyer, "A Russian Version of Christian Realism: Spiritual Wisdom and Politics in the Thought of S. L. Frank (1877–1950)," *The International History Review* 38.1 (2016), 45–65.

53. For a concise summary of Frank's realism, see especially *Light Shineth*, 179.

54. Frank, *Light Shineth*, 225.

55. Ibid., 145.

56. Ibid., 90.

57. Ibid., 167.

58. Ibid., 91.

59. Ibid., 225.

shchestvennost'—the translation of the free, inner union of mutual love into external, compulsory political unity, an impossibility that contradicts the very nature of *sobornost'*. Such a confusion of *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'*, I suggest, is the basic error to which Milbank ultimately succumbs. His sobornal order of charity risks falling into what Frank calls the "heresy of utopianism," which he defines as a politics that "transfer[s] the function of salvation to the law, to measures of state compulsion."[60] If salvation is the perfect realization of *sobornost'*, wherein the sacred dignity of persons is fully actualized in their loving reciprocity, Milbank's political theology appears too confident about the extent to which this salvation can be accomplished through the legal coordination of dignities within a Christian socialist order. Frank, by contrast, in some places treats socialism as a *moral* and *religious* obligation for Christians but challenges the political translation of that imperative directly into a socialist order that seeks the "forced realization of social justice," since "any attempt to force a Christian virtue," as by a "legal norm," betrays the inner spiritual freedom of love.[61]

How, then, do *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'* inform Frank's theory of dignity and rights, given the realist orientation of his thought? He does not, and cannot, join Milbank in situating his "right of service" within a Christianized *obshchestvennost'*. Instead, Frank's right of service originates within the tension or the "gap" between *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'*. Rights emerge from within the moral intuition that empirical society, with its constant conflict between individualist atomization and compulsory unification, points to something higher and deeper; that it is, in some sense, *unreal*, a deviation from the reality of cosmic *sobornost'* that is creation's divine ground and goal. The right of service is thus rooted in the perception of one's obligation to realize, in a piecemeal and *ad hoc* manner, more transparent expressions of the reality of sobornal peace within the *obshchestvennost'*, but without thereby attempting to realize *sobornost'* directly *as* an external order. This right derives, in other words, from sobornization as the ongoing work of social reform that strives to incarnate traces of love in law and society, but rights do not derive from one's position within an already-realized charitable order.

Taking this approach moves dignity back into the willing subject, but not the empty self-asserting subject. *Sobornost'* is still, for Frank, the *objective* end of subjective freedom. This is facilitated by Frank's spin on Soloviev's notion of divine-humanity or Godmanhood (*bogochelovechestvo*) as humanity's uncreated divine ground, which for Frank situates the morally obligatory force of *sobornost'* within the constitution of subjective consciousness itself. God is the transcendent principle who is immanent within human personality.[62] The human subject encounters God as a transcendent "Thou" dwelling

60. Frank, *Light Shineth*, 167.

61. Simon L. Frank, "Das Problem des »christlichen Sozializmus«," in *Jenseits von rechts und links: Anmerkungen zur russischen Revolution un zur moralischen Krise in Europa*, ed. Peter Schulz, Peter Ehlen, Nikolaus Lobkowicz, and Leonid Luks (Freiburg/Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2012), 321–335. The quoted text is translated from the German.

62. Frank develops this aspect of divine-humanity in several places. See, for example, S. L. Frank, *The Unknowable: An Ontological Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Boris Jakim (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1983), Chapter IX "God and I," 224–260; and S. L. Frank, *Reality and Man: An Essay in the Metaphysics of Human Nature*, trans. Natalie Duddington (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), Chapter IV "Man and God," 110–161.

within the self, an "Other" who is the innermost ground of the self. Thus, the nature of the human subject is not that of egoistic self-assertion but divine-human communion: I am *myself* only in relation to *God-in-me.* At the same time, my discovery of ontological kinship with God is also the discovery of kinship with all things in God—Frank's cosmic *sobornost'*. Moreover, the experience of God is also an intuitive grasping of the *obligatory*. "God-in-me" is none other than God the Creator, and humanity's kinship with God is necessarily that of co-creativity. God "*creates creators*,"[63] insists Frank, and God creates through human creativity, which is to be "participation in God's activity," in service to the realization of God's will.[64] For Frank, the obligatory is experienced as a "free wanting without the element of self-willfulness, the merging of 'I should' and 'I want'"[65]—or, in other words, not as external *law* but as a *vocation* originating from within one's own depths, a drive to take up the realization of the truth freely as *my own* work. Here, as in Milbank, we find a fusion of freedom and obligation, which is the image and likeness of God and the basis of human dignity.

Sobornost', therefore, exists within Frank's thought not only as the ontological basis of society but also as a creative task that human beings carry out as God's co-creators, joining God in the still-ongoing completion—or deification—of creation by realizing sobornal truth within it.[66] As a task, *sobornost'* grounds subjective rights that remain linked to service, to the responsibility of building a more just and peaceful community. These subjective rights are not based on the egoistic divisions of private interest but on the interior call to *overcome* those divisions through a divine-human co-laboring. Yet it is precisely this moral grounding of subjective rights in obligation that requires the *obshchestvennost'* to be founded on individual freedom, not as the protection of egoism, but as the human being's "primordial *obligation*," since freedom is "the general and highest condition for the fulfillment of all his other obligations."[67] Thus, returning to the topic of property rights Frank addresses in "Property and Socialism," he offers a Christian justification for private property on the basis of freedom as an "indispensable prerequisite" for "the realization of morality"[68] and for "productive service" that fosters social solidarity.[69] This is an adoption and subversion of possessive individualism: a society founded on property rights, but those with rights themselves based not in atomism but in the recognition of human unity.

Individual freedom, as the precondition of service, is therefore also the precondition for the realization of *sobornost'*. Thus, we arrive back at Frank's "realist" duality of *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'*: while *sobornost'* enacts a peace and a communion be-

63. Frank, *Reality and Man,* 157.

64. S. L. Frank, *God with Us: Three Meditations*, trans. Natalie Duddington (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946), 159.

65. S. L. Frank, *Man's Soul: An Introductory Essay in Philosophical Psychology*, trans. Boris Jakim (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1993), 167.

66. For Frank, creation and deification are "two aspects of one general creative act" (*Reality and Man*, 221). Therefore, the human being as co-creator also participates in the deification of creation, or a victory over sin that is already won "in the metaphysical depths of being" (*Reality and Man,* 223)

67. Frank, *Spiritual Foundations*, 136.

68. Frank, "Eigentum und Sozialismus," 231.

69. Ibid., 248.

yond the liberal rights-based order, the conditions of its realization demand the recognition of individual rights that are, by themselves, something less than *sobornost'* and cannot ever guarantee its realization. For although Frank allows that subjective rights such as the right to property are non-absolute and can be "chastened" by the responsibilities of charity, the nature of *sobornost'* as a *free* communion of mutual love precludes its exact convertibility into a fully realized Christian alternative. Politics is the "one domain of human creativeness which stands by its very nature in dangerous proximity to demonism," including the sin of "unrestrainedly ordering people's destinies (even if it does so with the good intention of improving them)."[70] Christian politics, therefore, must inhabit the tension between *sobornost'* as the ideal norm of social action and the impossibility of its accomplishment as a Christian social order; and yet, it is precisely this persistent gap between *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'* that preserves the space for the free, creative work of charitable social engagement through which *sobornost'* is performed and human dignity is expressed.

Conclusion

Both Milbank and Frank draw on *sobornost'* to challenge the separation of rights from social responsibility, yet the differences between their approaches have important implications for subjective rights and their relationship to "Christian order," and so also for the relationship between Christian politics and liberal democracy. As I have argued, Milbank errs by tying *sobornost'*—and thus dignity and rights—too closely to a postliberal Christian order of charity, while Frank offers a corrective to Milbank's error with his distinction (but not separation) between *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'*. The upshot of Milbank's treatment is that a Christian conception of human dignity (as well as what he retains of subjective rights) is ultimately incompatible with liberalism. Frank, on the other hand, is critical of liberal individualism, which is at odds with *sobornost'*; but his detachment of subjective rights from an externally realized sobornal order provides greater opportunity for (critical) Christian support of liberalism. Frank shows that one of the foundational concepts of liberalism, subjective individual rights, can be established on sobornal terms, shorn of possessive individualist justifications. In that case, a political *sobornost'* can offer an opportunity for fruitful Christian engagement with the liberal tradition—a chance to imagine better, more charitable liberalisms—and not simply to oppose it with a Christian alternative.

70. Frank, *Reality and Man,* 188.

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Freedom and Rights in the Thought of Ivan Ilyin

by Paul Robinson

This article examines the writings of Russian philosopher Ivan Ilyin (1883–1954) on the topic of freedom and rights. It demonstrates that Ilyin wrote what may be some of the most impassioned defences of freedom ever written by a Russian political thinker. In accordance with idealist modes of thought, Ilyin considered human beings to be primarily spiritual beings. Natural law, he believed, determined that humans need to be spiritually autonomous. This spiritual emphasis shaped Ilyin's understanding of freedom, which he divided into three types: inner freedom; outer freedom; and political freedom. Of these, inner freedom was the most important, followed by outer freedom, and lastly political freedom. The latter two were impossible without the existence of the first, and in any case were of value only insofar as they enabled inner freedom. Ilyin thus believed that political rights and freedoms could be restricted as long as these restrictions did not impinge on inner freedom. In this way, like many Russian philosophers of his era, he envisioned a middle way between liberal democracy on the one hand and communist and fascist totalitarianism on the other, seeking to combine personal autonomy with strong executive authority.

Keywords: Ivan Ilyin, Russia, philosophy, rights, freedom, inner freedom, outer freedom, political freedom, legal consciousness, idealism

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Freedom and Rights in the Thought of Ivan Ilyin

Paul Robinson

"A man who lives in freedom doesn't spend much time thinking about it, he lives *in it*, he enjoys it; he simply floats in its easy stream. It's like air; when you breathe air, you don't think about it. … You think about air when you don't have any. … It's the same with freedom; a person cannot live without it, he needs it as much as he needs air. Why?"[1] So asked the philosopher Ivan Ilyin (1883–1954) in a 1939 article titled "Freedom." He then provided an answer. Freedom was necessary, he wrote:

> Because one can only *love* freely. Because love … arises either freely, or not at all. Because one can only *believe* and *pray* freely. For either faith penetrates to the deepest depth of the soul where the commands and prohibitions of other people cannot reach, where you *yourself* contemplate and believe—or it doesn't arise at all. … A person *thinks* only freely, for free thought is independent thought. … A person can only *comprehend* freely; only a freely-held conviction is worth anything. … A person can only be *creative* freely—without hindrance, without order, without prohibitions—according to his own, secret motive. … Without freedom, a person is dead and empty, broken into pieces, insincere, powerless and helpless. … Only free labour enables life and is productive; only uncoerced, voluntary and joyful effort has a truly beneficial influence. Coercion cannot replace freedom in anything. Any attempts to do so are hopeless, wherever they are undertaken and regardless of the objectives they try to serve.[2]

In this and other works, Ilyin made what may be some of the most impassioned defences of freedom ever written by a Russian political thinker. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to investigate Ilyin's writings on the topic of freedom and the foundations on which they rested.

To this end, the article will first place Ilyin in his historical context and will then focus on four of his works which discuss the issue of freedom in some detail: *On the Essence of Legal Consciousness*, *The Path of Spiritual Renewal*, and *Our Tasks*, together with a draft constitution for a future Russian state drawn up by Ilyin towards the end of

1. Ivan Il'in, "Svoboda," in Ivan Aleksandrovich Il'in, *Novaia natsional'naia Rossiia: Publitsistika 1924–1952 godov* (Moscow: Institut naslediia, 2019), 577 (emphasis in the original).

2. Il'in, "Svoboda," 577–79 (emphasis in the original).

his life and published under the title, *Foundations of the State System: A Draft of Russia's Fundamental Law*. Various newspaper articles published by Ilyin in the 1930s on the topic of freedom will also be mentioned.

Ilyin's passionate endorsement of freedom may come as a surprise to those used to seeing him described as a "fascist" or at least as belonging to "a right-wing communitarian tradition ... [that] could be identified as a close relative of classic fascism."[3] Yet, Ilyin was a complex figure who defied such easy labels. Analyses of his work often contain words such as "contradictory" and "paradoxical." His biographer Igor Evlampiev, for instance, comments that "Ilyin was undoubtedly a particularly paradoxical figure ... [who] provides an example of radical oscillations and contradictions."[4] There is undoubtedly an authoritarian element in Ilyin's work, but there are also many other elements, including some that might be called "liberal." Thus, Paul Valliere concludes that "Ilyin was a statist and a monarchist, but to deny that liberal values occupied a central place in his political thought is a mistake. ... A rule-of-law state in Russia was always his goal."[5] Others agree, describing Ilyin variously as a "liberal conservative," "a proponent of modern conservative liberalism," or as "belonging to the school of classical liberalism."[6] Evlampiev goes so far as to call Ilyin's book *On the Essence of Legal Consciousness* "the culmination of the development of Russian liberalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."[7]

Evlampiev admits, however, that what he calls Ilyin's liberalism was very different from that generally understood in the West, creating doubts as to whether the liberal label is any more valid than the fascist one. In this vein, Mikhail Suslov contends that "Ilyin's ideas about freedom, lawfulness, and limited power of the state could not be understood in the context of classical liberalism, because they have absolutely different philosophical foundations."[8] Indeed, Ilyin can be seen as a distinctly Russian writer who rejected political philosophies such as liberalism and fascism as Western constructs that were not relevant to Russian conditions. Iury Lisitsa, who has edited over 30 volumes of Ilyin's work, thus rejects the "liberal conservative" label given to Ilyin by Evlampiev

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3. Timothy Snyder, "God is a Russian," *The New York Review of Books*, April 5, 2018, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2018/04/05/god-is-a-russian/; Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* (New York: Tim Duggan, 2018); Anton Barbashin and Hanna Thorburn, "Putin's Philosopher," *Foreign Affairs*, September 20, 2015, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2015–09–20/putins-philosopher; Mikhail Suslov, *Putinism—Post-Soviet Russian Regime Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2024), 56. For a detailed discussion of whether Ilyin deserves the fascist label, see: Hanus Nykl, "Ivan Ilyin: Fascist or Ideologue of the White Movement Utopia?" *Studies in East European Thought* (2024): https://doi-org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/10.1007/s11212–024–09631–8.

4. I. I. Evlampiev, "Ot religioznogo ekzistentsializma k filosofii pravoslaviia: dostizheniia i neudachi Ivana Il'ina," in *I. A. Il'in: Pro et contra. Lichnost' i tvorchestvo Ivana Il'ina v vospominaniiakh, dokumentakh i otsenkakh russkikh myslitelei i issledovatelei*, ed. I. I. Evlampiev (St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Russkogo Khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta, 2004), 8.

5. Paul Valliere, "Ivan Ilyin: Philosopher of Law, Force, and Faith," in *Law and the Christian Tradition in Modern Russia*, eds. Paul Valliere and Randall A. Poole (London: Routledge, 2021), 321, 325.

6. N. P. Poltoratskii, *Ivan Aleksandrovich Il'in* (Tenafly: Ermitazh, 1989), 153. Egor Kholmogorov, "Pravyi gegel'ianets v okopakh Stalingrada," *Samopoznanie* 2 (2015): 24. Liubov' Ul'ianova, "Skrytoe slavianofil'stvo v tvorchestve Il'ina," *Samopoznanie* 2 (2015): 38.

7. I. I. Evlampiev, *I. A. Il'in* (St Petersburg: Nauka, 2016), 180.

8. Suslov, *Putinism*, 64.

and others, and instead calls him a "conservative innovator," that is to say somebody who regarded existing institutions and ideas as outmoded and sought to create new ones, but who at the same time sought to ensure that those institutions and ideas were rooted in Russia's particular circumstances. To this end, Lisitsa quotes Ilyin as saying, "We must reject the very method of posing political questions ... We must think not of an 'ideal,' or a 'dream,' or a 'doctrine,' but of the vital task of restoring Russia. And we must understand Russia as a living, organically historical and unique state whose heritage is Russian, and which has its own special faith, and its own special traditions and needs."[9]

Another way to look at Ilyin is as heir to a strand of Russian idealist philosophy that combined elements of Western natural law with ideas taken from Russian Orthodoxy. This strand of philosophy is associated with names such as Boris Chicherin, Vladimir Solovyov, Pyotr Struve, and Pavel Novgorodtsev, the last of whom served as Ilyin's academic supervisor while Ilyin was studying at Moscow State University. In 1903, Novgorodtsev edited a volume titled *Problems of Idealism* in which he, Struve, and other contributors attacked the prevailing positivism of the era and sought instead to ground liberalism in morality, specifically a morality founded on natural law. Novgorodtsev, for instance, wrote of a "crisis of legal consciousness" that was the product of a legal positivism that "reduced [law] to positive law, that is, order of the State authority." Consequently, Russians had no respect for the law, regarding it as "the product of force." The solution, he claimed, was a "revival of natural law."[10]

Both Struve and Novgorodtsev played an active role in the Union of Liberation that sought to pressure Tsar Nicholas II into making democratic constitutional reforms, and subsequently both joined the leading liberal organization of the late Imperial period, the Constitutional Democratic Party. Following the 1917 revolutions, they swung politically to the right and became strong supporters of military dictatorship. As Novgorodtsev said in May 1919, "If nothing is left our democratism, then that is an excellent thing, what is needed now is dictatorship, a force for creating authority."[11] Ilyin's political and intellectual path, therefore, fitted a pattern of Russian political and legal thinkers who were committed to the concepts of freedom and law but became disenchanted with liberalism and democracy in an era where liberal democratic states had a depressing tendency to collapse into left or right-wing totalitarianism, and who sought therefore to find an alternative model of social and political development that would expand peoples' freedoms and rights while at the same time preserving the order without which the question of freedoms and rights becomes moot.

Comparisons have been drawn, for instance, between Ilyin and Soviet mathematician and theologian Pavel Florensky, whose posthumously published tract *A Proposed Future State System* combined proposals for a civil society and an authoritarian state in

9. Liubov Ul'ianova, "Il'in pokazal sushchnost' svobody kak podobiia Bozhiia v cheloveke: interv'iu s Iuriem Lisitsei," *Samopoznanie* 2 (2015): 11.

10. P. I. Novgorodtsev, "Ethical Idealism in the Philosophy of Law (On the Question of the Revival of Natural Law)," in *Problems of Idealism: Essays in Russian Social Philosophy*, ed., trans., and intro. Randall A. Poole (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 275–76.

11. William Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution: The Constitutional Democratic Party, 1917–1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 416.

a manner that has been said to be not dissimilar to Ilyin's proposals in his book *Our Tasks*.[12] That said, the concept of freedom receives little attention from Florensky compared with Ilyin. A closer comparison might be with fellow émigrés such as those who wrote for the religious journal *Put'*, including Nikolai Berdyaev, Georgii Fedotov, and Fyodor Stepun. Despite their many serious differences with Ilyin, they shared his concern for freedom and his scepticism regarding liberal democracy. Fedotov, for instance, declared that "democracy is too good for our cruel times."[13] He predicted "the inevitability of dictatorship" after the collapse of communism, commenting that "democracy is possible now in Russia only through the methods of dictatorship," due to the lack of "intellectual growth of the popular consciousness."[14]

Fedotov's mention of the "popular consciousness" reflects the manner in which he and other idealist émigré philosophers attributed the negative consequences of the Russian revolution to the spiritual failings of the Russian people, including their undeveloped legal consciousness, lack of patriotism, and loss of religious faith. Ilyin shared this understanding of events. For him, as for them, the spiritual side of human life took priority over the material. Consequently, he saw the roots of Russia's troubles as lying not in economic or other material factors but in the corrupted spirituality of the country prior to the revolution. As he put it: "The crisis that has brought Russia to enslavement, humiliation, martyrdom, and extinction was at root not simply political and not simply economic, but spiritual."[15] It followed that Russia's salvation lay in spiritual renewal, or rather in the development of what Ilyin called an appropriate legal consciousness (*pravosoznanie*), a concept that might perhaps be better translated as political and legal culture, as it went beyond attitudes to law and incorporated such ideas as patriotism, honor, loyalty, and religious faith.

Perhaps the clearest exposition of Ilyin's thinking on the matter is his book *On the Essence of Legal Consciousness*. This was originally written in 1918, but Ilyin returned to it and amended it on various occasions throughout his life, and it was eventually published in 1956, two years after his death.[16] The final version was very similar to the original, suggesting that Ilyin did not substantially change his views in the 35 years following 1918.

Ilyin's key argument was that a legal order depends not on positive law, that is to say on the state enacting laws and forcing people to obey them, but on the presence within the people of an appropriate legal consciousness, of a sort that encourages them to obey the law of their own free will because they recognize the validity and purpose of the law and so want to obey it. This requires the state to bring positive law in line as much as possible with natural law so that the law is seen to respect citizens' natural freedoms and rights. At the same time, though, it does not imply the existence of any

12. I. V. Florenskii, "Politicheskii platonizm sviashchennika P. A. Florenskogo: 'Predpolagaemoe gosudarstvennoe ustroistvo v budushchem,'" *Vestnik RKhGA* 24, no. 2 (2023): 146.

13. Georgii P. Fedotov, "Nasha demokratiia," *Novyi grad* 9 (1934): 12.

14. Georgii P. Fedotov, "Problemy budushchei Rossii (part 2)," *Sovremennye zapiski* 45 (1931): 476–77.

15. I. A. Il'in, "Chto nam delat'?" in Evlampiev, *I. A. Il'in: Pro et contra*, 156.

16. William Butler, "The Origins of Il'in's Treatise on the Essence of Legal Consciousness," in Ivan Aleksandrovich Il'in, *On the Essence of Legal Consciousness*, ed. and trans. William Butler, Philip T. Grier, and Paul Robinson, second revised ed. (Clark, NJ: Talbot, 2023), 55–57.

particular form of government, be it a republic, a monarchy, a democracy, a dictatorship, or anything else. The legal consciousness of different peoples will differ, and their form of government must differ too, so as to fit the national legal consciousness.

To build this argument, Ilyin began with the claim that, "However great the significance of the material factor in history ... the human spirit is never reduced, and never will be reduced, to a passive, non-acting medium subordinated to material influences. ... It is impossible to organize the world of matter not having organized the world of the soul."[17] This put Ilyin firmly in the idealist camp. He then continued by noting that, "obedience to an external authority as a motive determining the activity of a person is not commensurate with his spiritual dignity, and, moreover, in *all* spheres of spiritual life, in knowledge and in morality, in art, in religion, and in law. The most fundamental and profound essence of what humanity always fought for in the name of *freedom* consists in the possibility of *autonomous and voluntary self-determination* in spiritual life."[18]

Ilyin based this claim on natural law, stating that humans are by nature all isolated from one another, as nobody can know what is inside the mind of another. Nor can anybody dictate what is in the mind of another. Spiritually, all humans are unique and individual, and thus, Ilyin wrote, "every person is *distinctive and singular in his own way*."[19] "Every human being," he continued, "has an intrinsic attraction toward a vital *self-sufficiency and self-activity*, toward an autonomous self-determination."[20] From this natural law, it followed that "*freedom of will is essential*. ... The fundamental dignity of the human consists in living a spiritual life *independently* of any heterogeneous encroachment and pressure. ... *Free self-determination* in spirit is the deepest law of this life."[21] Likewise, it followed that "the value lying at the foundation of natural law is the *worthy, internally self-sufficient and externally free* life *of the entire multiplicity of individual spirits* composing humanity." Having an "inspirated life," Ilyin argued, is an "inalienable right," the loss of which "destroys the dignity of the human."[22]

Ilyin's focus here was on what one might call "inner freedom," which Ilyin referred to as "*free self-determination* in spirit." At the same time Ilyin recognized that inner freedom is dependent on a degree of outer, or external, freedom. People, he wrote, have "the right to lead a spiritually dignified life." This requires not merely the means of life, but also "that *leisure* which Aristotle required for a person 'free from nature,'" and "presupposes *a right to education*," and various other rights which follow naturally.[23] These other rights include a right to "legal guarantees of personhood and the legal organization of a worthy life," which in turn requires a "common and just legal order."[24]

17. Il'in, *On the Essence of Legal Consciousness*, 129.

18. Ibid., 156 (emphasis in the original).

19. Ibid., 163 (emphasis in the original).

20. Ibid., 197 (emphasis in the original).

21. Ibid., 165 (emphasis in the original).

22. Ibid., 167 (emphasis in the original).

23. Ibid., 167–68 (emphasis in the original).

24. Ibid., 200.

Having established this principle, Ilyin then used it to create a theory of the state. In a true state, he wrote, "Political membership must be *consciously accepted* by each separate citizen and recognized by him in an *unfettered, free decision*. ... One cannot be a member of a political union *despite* one's own feelings. ... A state possessing such members ... prepares its own disintegration."[25] A stable state could not be founded on coercion, he argued, because "the State ... must live in the *souls* of people."[26] To this he added that the mission of the state "consists in the *protection and organization of the spiritual life of the people belonging to a given political union*. The protection of spirit consists in guaranteeing to *the entire population and to each individual* their natural right to a distinctive self-determination in life, that is, the right to *life* and, moreover, to *a worthy* life, outwardly free and inwardly self-sufficient."[27] "The interest of the State consists in maintaining and realizing all *the natural rights* of all its citizens," he concluded.[28]

Ilyin did not believe, however, that these natural rights extended to politics. Democracy did not guarantee that those elected to office would be people inclined to protect others' natural freedoms and rights. Indeed, if the national legal consciousness was insufficiently developed, it was unlikely that they would be, and democracy could well have catastrophic consequences. Ilyin wrote:

> On the one hand, the State lives through *the legal consciousness* of the nation; whereas the essential characteristic of legal consciousness is *the capacity for self-governance*; *from this, in theory, the State reduces to the self-governance of the nation*. However, on the other hand, the sole and objective *end* of the State is so elevated and requires from the citizenry such a *mature legal consciousness*, that historically speaking, nations turn out to be *incapable* of self-governance, of the realization of that end. And thus is revealed the great discrepancy between the ideal form of the State and its historical manifestation.[29]

Overcoming this discrepancy, according to Ilyin, required that control of the state be in the hands of the "best" people, in other words, people with the most advanced legal consciousness, but on condition that they used their power to develop the legal consciousness of the masses and gradually brought them towards self-government. The emphasis here was on gradualness. "A political union not observing this gradualness," wrote Ilyin, "risks its existence; it places its fate in the hands of political infants or political imbeciles, and its days are numbered. In this safe gradualness there is nothing politically reprehensible; on the contrary, there is profound sense and political wisdom in it. On the other hand, the behavior of ruling groups and classes is ruinous and criminal if they use the incompetence of the people in order to replace state interest with class interest, and keep the people's legal consciousness as a low level."[30]

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25. Ibid., 221–22 (emphasis in the original).
26. Ibid., 223.
27. Ibid., 227 (emphasis in the original).
28. Ibid., 232 (emphasis in the original).
29. Ibid., 235 (emphasis in the original).
30. Ibid., 242.

There was, therefore, no single form of the state that was suitable for all nations—the appropriate form would depend on the condition of the national legal consciousness, with fewer or more political freedoms and rights depending on whether the people were ready for them. In the case of Russia, Ilyin believed that the national legal consciousness was so corrupted that self-governance would be impossible should communism collapse. Consequently, post-communist Russia would need dictatorship, not democracy, albeit a dictatorship that protected people's natural rights and gradually elevated the legal consciousness of the people until they became capable of self-government.

Ilyin elaborated further on these themes in his book *The Path of Spiritual Renewal*, first published in 1937. In *On the Essence of Legal Consciousness*, Ilyin had written continuously of the "spirit." In *The Path of Spiritual Renewal*, he continued to do so, declaring that "Freedom is something *for* the spirit and *thanks to* the spirit, freedom is something that matures *in the spirit* and comes *from the spirit*. Outside the spirit, and contrary to the spirit, it loses its meaning and its sacred significance."[31] At the same time, though, he allied spirit more closely to religious faith than he previously had, describing faith as "not simply some 'sensation' or 'feeling,'" but something that "comes from the depths of the human essence and consequently inevitably takes over the entire person."[32] "For faith to arise and take flame and acquire such strength," he stated, "the person must be *free* in his faith," which raised the questions: "What does it mean to be free? What sort of freedom do I have in mind? Freedom *from what and for what?*"[33] Answering these questions, Ilyin identified three types of freedom. These can be translated as inner freedom, outer freedom, and political freedom. Of these, inner freedom was the most important, followed by outer freedom, and finally by political freedom.

Regarding inner freedom, Ilyin wrote, "Internally freeing oneself ... means *instilling spiritual character in oneself*."[34] According to Ilyin, "Freedom is *accessible* to the human spirit, and *befits* it. *For spirit is the strength of self-definition towards betterment*. ... Spirit is a force that allows one *to strengthen oneself and overcome* in oneself what one rejects. ... Freeing oneself above all means becomes stronger than any inclination, any whim, any desire, any temptation, any sin. ... This is the *negative* stage of self-definition. The *positive* stage follows: it consists of voluntarily and lovingly filling oneself with *the best*."[35]

Ilyin described this inner freedom as "being *master of one's passions*."[36] This was not the same as suppressing negative passions. Rather, just as a positive legal consciousness implied voluntary recognition and obedience of the law, so inner freedom consisted "of the person's passions voluntarily serving the spirit ... inner freedom is the spirit's ability to independently see the eternal law, independently recognize its authoritative

31. Ivan Il'in, *Put' dukhovnogo obnovleniia* (Moscow: Institut russkoi tsivilizatsii, 2011), 93 (emphasis in the original).

32. Ibid., 70.

33. Ibid., 71 (emphasis in the original).

34. Ibid., 79 (emphasis in the original).

35. Ibid., 78 (emphasis in the original).

36. Ibid., 79 (emphasis in the original).

strength, and independently put it into life."[37] Or as Ilyin also put it, "freedom consists in ... having the inner strength and capacity to independently and responsibly stand before God and serve the cause of God on earth."[38]

Ilyin defined outer freedom differently. It was, he wrote, "Not the freedom to do anything one wants, so that other people cannot hinder one in any way, but *freedom of faith, of opinion, and conviction*, in which *other people do not have the right to intrude using forcible directives or prohibitions*; in other words, freedom from unspiritual and counter-spiritual *pressure*, from *coercion and prohibition*, from *brute force, threats and persecution*."[39] As such, outer freedom is secondary to inner freedom because it exists to serve inner freedom, but at the same time, it is extremely important, as inner freedom is difficult to maintain in the absence of outer freedom. As Ilyin put it, "outer freedom is given to humans specifically for *inner self-liberation*. ... Outer freedom serves inner freedom, is necessary for it and is given for it. *Outer freedom is the natural and necessary condition for the establishment and strengthening of inner freedom*."[40]

According to Ilyin, this outer freedom was necessary because, "Without this freedom, human life has no meaning or worth, and this is the most important thing. The meaning of life consists of loving, creating, and praying. And without freedom, one cannot pray, or create, or love. ... One cannot pray by order or not pray due to prohibition. ... One cannot love God, motherland, and people by order, or stop loving them because of a prohibition. ... One can create only according to inspiration, from the depths, freely. One cannot create by order, or not create due to a prohibition."[41] He continued, "Non-recognition of freedom [of spiritual creation] as the *basis of life* and as *a spiritual necessity* brings humans down to the level of animals, diminishes human dignity. It makes people *lie* – to God, to themselves, to others. ... Freedom is the air which faith and prayer breathe."[42]

Inner and outer freedom did not, according to Ilyin, make state power redundant. But the purpose of the latter, he considered, was "to attend to the inner freedom of the individual, to appeal to it, nurture it, and strengthen it."[43] Similarly, political freedom also existed to nurture and strengthen inner freedom, but it came with limitations. Ilyin wrote:

> Political freedom is something valuable and responsible, but only in so far as spiritual, inner freedom lies behind it. ... Political freedom is a variety of outer freedom: the individual is allowed to independently speak, write, vote, decide, and express his voice in public affairs. ... Political freedom is something bigger—in scope and responsibility—from outer negative freedom, for the latter gives the individual rights in his own internal affairs, rights concerning *himself* and his soul, but political freedom gives him rights over the

37. Ibid., 79.

38. Ibid., 86–87.

39. Ibid., 71 (emphasis in the original).

40. Ibid., 77, 80 (emphasis in the original).

41. Ibid., 75.

42. Ibid., 76 (emphasis in the original).

43. Ibid., 89.

> affairs *of others*, *rights over others*. This means that political freedom presupposes a greater maturity in the person to whom it is given. ... *Outer freedom is given to people so that they can internally nurture and liberate themselves. Political freedom presupposes that people have already nurtured and liberated themselves, and so is given to them so that they can nurture others towards freedom*.[44]

From this, Ilyin concluded: "It follows that here there cannot be limitless freedom. ... There is a minimum of inner freedom below which political freedom loses its sense and becomes an entirely destructive principle. ... 'To gift' a people political freedom sometimes means bringing it to temptation and putting it on the path towards death."[45]

To summarize, freedom to Ilyin was fundamentally spiritual in nature, meaning that he considered inner freedom to be the most important of all freedoms. In Ilyin's logic, however, inner freedom depends on some degree of outer freedom, for which reason the latter is also required. It may also benefit from some degree of political freedom, but this is less important and is only relevant to the extent that it supports inner freedom. Furthermore, because political freedom inherently involves making decisions about other people, which may potentially restrict their freedom, it requires a mature legal consciousness and may properly be restricted where such legal consciousness is absent.

Ilyin put forward similar arguments in articles he wrote for popular audiences. These included articles written in the 1930s for German and Swiss newspapers, and articles written in the late 1940s and early 1950s for the White Russian military veterans organization ROVS, the latter of which were collected after his death and published as a book titled *Our Tasks*. In these articles, Ilyin demonstrated a passionate concern for freedom. For instance, in an article entitled "The Free Person," Ilyin wrote that:

> [C]oerced life and coerced labour are obsolete, and cannot be brought back. All history shows that the labour of the enslaved is economically unproductive and inferior; that the politically repressed lack character and lose their honor; that literature when compelled seems vulgar and pitiful, lacking in spirit, and dead; that one cannot prohibit religious convictions, nor can one command them. Life without creative initiative, without independence and freedom becomes complete *slavery* and the *galleys*. God save us from this![46]

He then continued: "the greatest good on earth is not at all embodied in the state, and is not accomplished by the state. The state exists to regulate and encourage the free creation of man, and not to take it away. ... Man is not a machine, but a living spiritual organism; and the laws of this organism must be respected and preserved."[47]

Similarly, in an article titled "Freedom," Ilyin wrote, "without freedom life has *no meaning, no dignity*. ... Every legal order rests on the recognition of the person as *a subject of law*, that is as a self-directing, free center, possessing its own volition. ... The

44. Ibid., 90 (emphasis in the original).

45. Ibid., 92.

46. Ivan Il'in, "Svobodnyi chelovek," in Il'in, *Novaia natsional'naia Rossiia*, 635 (emphasis in the original).

47. Ibid., 635.

law can threaten unpleasant consequences, but that is all. *In fact, an enormous* dose of freedom, i.e. spiritual self-determination and self-direction, lie at the foundation of any legal order."[48] And in an article titled, "About the Eradication of Liberals," he wrote:

> Life ... cannot grow and flourish other than *from itself*, according to the secret laws of its inner expediency. ... The same is true of social life. ... Politics that tries to *abolish* or *replace the free*, yes *free growth and flourishing* of economic and spiritual forces will be absurd, ruinous, and detestable.
>
> Prescribe forms of art and music and only talentless slaves will come forward to sell their hackneyed rubbish. Prescribe the method and deductions of science, and in the emptied universities all you will have will be dark adventurers hired as 'red (or black) professors.' ... Understand this: life is like a garden: it grows *itself*; and government is like a gardener: it can only and should only direct this *free process*.[49]

Our Tasks contains similar messages. Some passages in the book bear a striking resemblance to parts of *On the Essence of Legal Consciousness*, suggesting that he referred to the latter when writing the articles that make up the former.[50] There are some differences between the two works in that *Our Tasks* is somewhat more strident in its negative views of Western-style liberal democracy as well as in its denunciations of Western hostility towards Russia. But in general, Ilyin's position at the end of his life (when he wrote *Our Tasks*) was not substantially different from that at the beginning of his career (when he wrote *On the Essence of Legal Consciousness*).

In *Our Tasks*, Ilyin laid out an organicist rationale for the existence of freedoms and rights. He wrote:

> Freedom befits people for two reasons: 1) on account of the fact that they are living organisms; 2) on account of the fact that they are living souls. ... Every living organism (from a plant to a human) is *an independent being*. ... The organism lives according to its own internal laws. By studying these laws ... one can to some extent direct the organism's life, but one cannot extinguish its independence without killing it. The natural freedom of the human being consists in this, that he is *independent* by nature, he creates his own life—in sickness and in health, in his needs and dislikes, in filling his belly, in love and reproduction. ... This independence cannot be replaced: this cannot be achieved by hypnosis, by diktat, or by fear. All such attempts are doomed to fail. ... The communists tried to do this. ... In the future Russia ... the individual creative instincts of the person must be recognized, encouraged, spiritually disciplined, and built on freedom. ... But the human

48. Ibid., 153–54 (emphasis in the original).

49. Ivan Il'in, "Ob iskorenenii liberalov," in Il'in, *Novaia natsional'naia Rossiia*, 197–98 (emphasis in the original).

50. For an example see Paul Robinson, "Introduction," in Il'in, *On the Essence of Legal Consciousness*, 6–7.

> is not only a living organism: he is also a living spirit. The spirit needs freedom of faith and love, contemplation, conviction.[51]

Ilyin's focus here was primarily on inner freedom.

As he put it in *Our Tasks*: "The politics of the future must look at people soberly and take them as they are. They will think of freedom primarily as inner freedom. ... People need freedom and it is sacred to them. But this freedom is found through God, in the soul, conscience, feelings of spiritual worth, and in the service of the people whose blood one shares."[52] When it came to outer and especially political freedom, Ilyin retained the view that he had expressed continually over the previous decades, namely, that "freedom will always have its lawful limits; the measure of freedom among different peoples will be different and will depend on the legal consciousness implanted in the people."[53] Peoples with mature legal consciousness would be able to enjoy considerable political freedom, but those without it would not. He wrote: "Political freedom by itself does not ennoble people, but only unties their hands, frees them to be what they are, with all their inclinations, interests, passions, and vices. ... People are complicated. ... Freedom doesn't change them for the better but only reveals (in the photographic sense) all their features, inclinations, and passions."[54] In Ilyin's eyes, the Russian people's legal consciousness was far from being mature enough to enjoy full self-government. Giving them political freedom would simply allow their basest passions to come to the fore. Following the collapse of communism, he argued, Russia would face chaos. This would be no time for elections. Rather, a strong government would be needed. Democracy would not be possible until the moral decay of communism had been overcome, a process that would likely take many years.[55] As he wrote: "After its [communism's] fall, the long-standing moral debauchery will be overcome slowly. ... And until such time as the spiritual renewal is completed, we must foresee that any attempt to introduce a democratic order will lead either to mob rule ... or to a new right-wing totalitarian tyranny. Democrats who don't think about this and can't foresee it, don't understand the essence of either democracy or totalitarianism."[56]

This did not mean, however, that Ilyin supported unlimited government. On the contrary, he considered this very harmful. His envisaged dictatorship was to be a limited one that guaranteed considerable civil liberties to its citizens, even while not necessarily granting all of them political ones. Thus, he wrote in *Our Tasks*: "The strong power of the future Russia must not be outside the law and above the law, but formed according to law and serving the law. ... Russia needs a power that is not arbitrary, not tyrannical, not limitless. It must have legal limits, authority, obligations, and prohibitions."[57]

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51. I.A. Il'in, *Nashi Zadachi: stat'i 1948–1954 gg.* (Paris: Izdanie Russkogo Obshche-Voinskogo Soiuza, 1956), vol. 1: 147 (emphasis in the original).

52. Ibid., 68, 125.

53. Ibid., 130.

54. Ibid., 67.

55. Ibid., 20–25.

56. Ibid., 25.

57. Ibid., 309.

Ilyin said little about what this would mean in practice. One exception was a passage in *Our Tasks* which states: "The right to freedom of belief is a sacred and inviolable right. It belongs to all Russian citizens. ... All Russian citizens ... are equal before the law. ... Nobody can be prosecuted or punished by a court except on the basis of law. ... Nobody can be arrested, taken into custody, or otherwise deprived of freedom other than according to law. ... The homes of every Russian citizen are untouchable. ... Property is untouchable." Citizens, according to Ilyin, were to have the right to form associations for the pursuit of goals not contrary to the fundamental laws of the state, and the right to form political parties.[58]

Ilyin laid out these principles in more detail in a draft constitution for a future Russia drawn up near the end of his life. In this, he provided specifics of the freedoms and rights that he envisioned Russians enjoying. In a section of the constitution on "rights and obligations," the first right to be mentioned was that "The right to freedom of belief is a sacred and inviolable right."[59] The fact that this right came first and was said to be "inviolable" was no accident. It reflected the primacy that Ilyin gave to matters of the spirit.

Nevertheless, the draft constitution did list some outer and political freedoms and rights, though in many cases they were somewhat circumscribed in that exceptions were permitted in some circumstances. For instance, Ilyin wrote: "All Russian citizens whose rights have not been limited by law or the courts are equal before the law. ... Nobody can be subjected to prosecution, judgment, or punishment other than on the basis of a law published prior to the deed in question. ... The home of every Russian citizen is inviolable. Searches or seizures in their homes are permitted only in situations defined by law."[60] On the one hand, this gave citizens some clear rights, but on the other hand, had the constitution ever been enacted, much would have depended on the exact "situations defined by law." The same is true of other rights listed by Ilyin, as below:

> Property is inviolable. Forcible alienation of movable and immovable property is permitted only when it is necessary for some state benefit. It must be carried out in a legal manner and with just compensation, taking into consideration the interests of the person in question. ... Russian citizens have the right to hold meetings for goals that are not hostile to religion, morality, the fatherland, and the laws. ... Within the boundaries laid down by the Fundamental Laws (Part 1) and by special laws, everyone can express his opinions in words or writing, and distribute them in written or published form. ... Russian citizens have the right to form nonpolitical organizations and unions for goals that do not contradict the Fundamental or other laws of the state.[61]

58. Il'in, *Nashi Zadachi*, vol. 2. 415–16.

59. I. A. Il'in, *Osnovy gosudarstvennogo ustroistva: proekt osnovnogo zakona Rossii* (Moscow: Rarog, 1996), 70.

60. Ibid., 71–72.

61. Ibid., 73–74.

Ilyin thus envisioned a limited, law-based state in which citizens enjoyed clear rights and freedoms. He did not, however, imagine this to be a Western-style liberal democratic state. Rather, he had in mind a system in which executive power would be concentrated in the hands of a hereditary monarch who would be supported by an elected legislature. Citizens would have the right to form political parties, but members of those parties would not be permitted to hold public office. Instead, members of the legislature would be selected from those citizens whose record of public service indicated their suitability for politics.[62] This theoretically would guarantee that the government served the national interest as a whole, not the interest of any individual class or party. In this way, the system Ilyin imagined was a monarchical system with civil liberties for its citizens and some democratic trappings, not too far removed from what had existed in Russia between 1905 and 1917.

To conclude, Ilyin founded freedoms and rights on two claims that he considered to be natural law. The first was that humans are not machines subject to the whims of others but organisms that develop according to their own inner logic, and whose inner nature must therefore be respected if they are to survive and flourish. The second was that humans are autonomous spirits. Consequently, respect for their spiritual autonomy is essential for their dignity. To these, Ilyin added some consequentialist arguments for freedoms and rights. The first was that human creativity derives from free spirit, and that consequently suppression of freedom would destroy that creativity. The second was that the legal consciousness that was a necessary foundation for a stable political and legal order was impossible if the state abused people's natural rights and so led them to regard the state and the law as arbitrary rather than as something to be freely obeyed. The purpose of the state, in Ilyin's eyes, was precisely to nurture and protect inner freedom. A state that failed to do so was doomed.

This logic led Ilyin to conclude that freedom was necessary for human flourishing. His spiritual focus meant, however, that his focus was primarily on inner freedom, and only secondarily on outer freedom, with political freedom coming a distant third. This does not mean, however, that Ilyin considered outer and political freedom unimportant. As noted, Ilyin considered a large amount of outer freedom to be necessary for the preservation of inner freedom. Similarly, although Ilyin believed that political freedom could rightly be limited, this did not imply that the state had a right to do anything it wished. Thus, he wrote: "strong government is not at all the same as totalitarian government. ... For a strong state depends not on the bayonet, not on terror, but on the government's authority; not on threats and punishments, but on the free loyalty of the people."[63] "Totalitarianism is godless," he remarked.[64]

Where this places Ilyin on the political spectrum is not clear. On the one hand, his belief in individual freedom, the rule of law, and limited government is hardly fascist and might seem more obviously liberal. On the other hand, his sceptical view of political freedom and his call for a dictatorship in post-communist Russia appear to place himself somewhere else. Traditional political labels do not fit Ilyin well. Perhaps this is

62. Ibid., 74.

63. Il'in, *Nashi Zadachi*, vol. 1, 307–308.

64. Il'in, *Osnovy gosudarstvennogo ustroistva*, 143.

because labels such as liberal, conservative, socialist, and fascist tend to refer to a set of political, social, and economic institutions, whereas Ilyin's primary concern was less with these than with questions of the spirit. It is clear, though, that focusing entirely on the authoritarian strands of Ilyin's thought, as so many commentators do, provides a distorted picture of someone who repeatedly stressed the vital importance of freedom for the flourishing of the human person.

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Dissenting Views:

Secular Liberals, Soviet Christians, and Socialist Humanism in the Brezhnev Era

by Alexander J. McConnell

Soviet dissidents and human rights defenders are often characterized as "humanists" who stood firm against political repression in the name of universal human values. Indeed, "humanism" is sometimes used as a shorthand for ideological overlap between figures who shared little else besides their opposition to the Soviet government. Yet such characterizations gloss over the complex relationship of various dissident "humanisms" to one another, as well as to the official "socialist humanism" of the Communist Party during the post-Stalin decades. By the 1970s, many secular dissidents had disengaged from Thaw-era debates centering on the concept of humanism, opting for legalistic and personal appeals over theoretical polemics. Remarkably, the USSR's most famous dissident during this period, Andrei Sakharov, almost never used the term itself (*gumanizm*) in his writings, deploying instead the closely related but distinct word "humaneness" (*gumannost'*). By contrast, Christian dissidents continued to engage directly with the concept of humanism and to debate the challenge that both Soviet socialist and Western humanisms posed to their own philosophical projects. Such deep engagement with twentieth-century humanism in its disparate configurations was unique to the Christian variant of Soviet dissidence, distinguishing it from (rather than aligning it with) its more celebrated secular liberal cousin.

Keywords: Soviet dissidents, humanism, socialism, secularism, liberalism, humaneness, Christianity, Andrei Sakharov, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, samizdat, human rights

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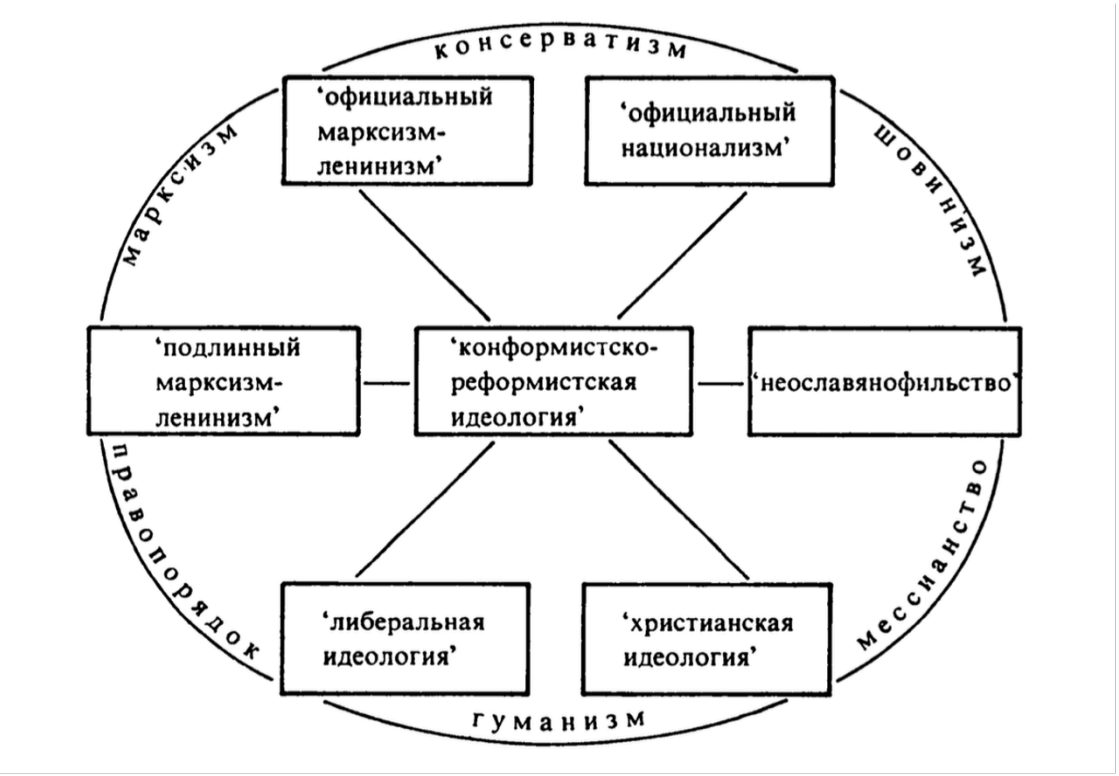

Figure 1. Diagram of late Soviet ideological tendencies. Source: Andrei Amal'rik, *Prosushchestvuet li Sovetskii Soiuz do 1984 goda?* (Alexander Herzen Foundation, 1970), 37.

In his influential 1969 essay *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?*, the dissident writer Andrei Amal'rik includes a diagram of the relationships between various ideological tendencies in the post-Stalin USSR (Figure 1). At the center of this diagram, Amal'rik locates what he terms the reigning "conformist-reformist ideology" of the Communist Party bureaucracy and the Soviet middle classes, which he suggests is nebulous enough to share features with every other ideological tendency. The diagram's outer ring, meanwhile, illustrates how each of the country's narrower or more marginal ways of thinking relates to one another. Thus, for example, "official Marxism-Leninism" is linked to "offi-

cial nationalism" through the common feature of "conservatism," as well as to "genuine Marxism-Leninism" (rather tautologically) through the philosophy of "Marxism" itself.

This article centers on the ideological relationship that Amal'rik locates at the bottom of his diagram: that between "liberal ideology" and "Christian ideology." Specifically, it concerns the concept that he uses to relate these two post-Stalin dissident tendencies, namely "humanism" (*gumanizm*).[1] For Amal'rik, this term seems to have connoted a broadly shared commitment to human dignity and individual autonomy on the part of both Soviet liberals and Christians, one without precedent in Russian history.[2] Yet, as with the case of "official" versus "genuine" Marxism, the "humanisms" of various figures within the dissident community were not always compatible, let alone identical. This became increasingly evident over the course of the 1960s as secular liberals abandoned their Thaw-era hopes for a more humane Soviet system in favor of a legalistic, rights-based strategy of dissent.[3] In particular, the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, which crushed the Prague Spring movement and its program of "socialism with a human face," was a watershed moment that disillusioned many liberal reformers across the USSR and Eastern Bloc.[4]

Amal'rik's 1969 diagram likewise overlooks the significance and function of humanism as a concept within Soviet official ideology itself. As a fundamental socialist value, albeit one whose scope and meaning were always contested, humanism's ideological significance in the USSR was well-established by the 1960s.[5] Over the next decade, however, the concept's ideological function expanded further as Party theorists deployed it to help articulate a new discourse of socialist human rights in response to domestic and international pressures.[6] Humanism even played a supporting role in Leonid Brezhnev's push for Western recognition of the USSR as a coequal partner during the so-called Helsinki Process of the early 1970s.[7] For example, a December 1973 *Izvestiia* column marking the anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights included

1. On the Stalin-era origins of this concept in Soviet ideology and public culture, see Alexander McConnell, "'Tragic Presentiments': Maksim Gor'kii and the Invention of Soviet Humanism," *Slavic Review* 83, no. 2 (2024): 300–317.

2. "As a people, we have not benefited from Europe's humanist tradition. In Russian history man has always been a means and never in any sense an end. It is paradoxical that the term 'period of the cult of the personality'—by which the Stalin era is euphemistically designated—came to mean for us a period of such humiliation and repression of the human personality as even our people had never previously experienced." Andrei Amal'rik, *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?*, rev. ed. (Harper & Row, 1971), 34.

3. Benjamin Nathans, *To the Success of Our Hopeless Cause: The Many Lives of the Soviet Dissident Movement* (Princeton University Press, 2024), esp. chapters 5–7.

4. Nathans, *To the Success of Our Hopeless Cause*, 238–267. See also Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Cornell University Press, 2010).

5. Aleksandr Bikbov, *Grammatika poriadka. Istoricheskaia sotsiologiia poniatii, kotorye meniaiut nashu real'nost'* (Izd. dom Vysshei shkoly ekonomiki, 2014), 173–194.

6. Examples of this trend in the specialist literature on human rights include V.D. Popkov, *Gumanizm sovetskogo prava* (MGU, 1972); G.V. Mal'tsev, "Sotsialisticheskii gumanizm i prava cheloveka," *Pravovedenie*, no. 5 (1977): 24–34; V.M. Chkhikvadze, *Sotsialisticheskii gumanizm i prava cheloveka. Leninskie idei i sovremennost'* (Nauka, 1978). For a detailed overview of this literature, see Richard Greenfield, "The Human Rights Literature of the Soviet Union," *Human Rights Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (1982): 124–136.

7. On the Helsinki Process, see Michael Cotey Morgan, *The Final Act: The Helsinki Accords and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

this emphatic assertion of the Soviet Union's humanizing influence on the postwar legal order:

> The humanism of the Great October Socialist Revolution, accomplished by the workers of Russia for humanity, in humanity's name, and the humanism of the Soviet social order have exercised a great influence on the formation in contemporary international law of principles and norms serving the interests of peace, democracy, and the broad masses.[8]

Brezhnev himself underlined this connection in his keynote speech at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the venue for the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, on July 31, 1975:

> Before this exceptionally competent audience, we would like to stress most emphatically one of the inherent features of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, of the Leninist policy of peace and friendship among nations—its humanism. The decisions of the 24th Congress of our Party are imbued with ideas of humanism as is the Peace Program, a plank of which called for the convocation of an all-European conference.[9]

Humanism was thus not only (or even primarily) an oppositional term in the post-Stalin USSR, a fact that further complicates its use as a neutral descriptor for overlapping dissident "ideologies."

Both liberal and Christian dissidents, I argue, broadly rejected the socialist humanism of Soviet official discourse, but for different reasons and with a variety of alternatives in mind. During the Brezhnev era, liberal dissidents tended to treat official invocations of humanism as little more than rhetorical window dressing for state repression and human rights violations. From the liberal perspective, Soviet ideology had perverted humanism's historical meanings and grounding in the European philosophical tradition to a degree that risked compromising the concept itself.[10] Indeed, by 1969, many rights defenders (*pravozashchitniki*) and other prominent exponents of Amal'rik's "liberal ideology" had disengaged from the previous decade's debates about humanism, opting for legalistic and personal appeals over theoretical polemics.[11] Remarkably, the Soviet Union's most famous liberal dissident during this period, the physicist Andrei Sakharov, almost never used the term "humanism" in his own writings, despite being lauded as a great humanist by contemporaries and retrospective observers alike.[12] Instead, as I show, Sakharov consistently deployed the closely related but distinct word "humaneness" (*gumannost'*) as a strategic appeal to the personal emotions and moral consciences of his powerful interlocutors. While this strategy succeeded in avoiding the

8. I. Blishchenko, "Vo imia demokratii i progressa," *Izvestiia*, no. 288, December 8, 1973, 2.

9. Leonid I. Brezhnev, *Peace, Detente, Cooperation* (Consultants Bureau, 1981), 24.

10. For a recent survey of the humanist tradition in the West, see Sarah Bakewell, *Humanly Possible: Seven Hundred Years of Humanist Freethinking, Inquiry, and Hope* (Penguin Press, 2023).

11. For a characteristic example of these early 1960s debates, see I.I. Anisimov, N.K. Gei, and L.N. Novichenko, eds., *Gumanizm i sovremennaia literatura* (Izd. Akademii nauk SSSR, 1963).

12. See, e.g., Petr Abovin-Egides, *Andrei Sakharov. Tragediia velikogo gumanista* (Poiski, 1985); Andrei Loshak, "Andreiu Sakharovu—100 let. Kak gumanist pobedil uchenogo?" *Meduza*, May 21, 2021, https://meduza.io/feature/2021/05/21/andreyu-saharovu-100-let-kak-gumanist-pobedil-uchenogo.

thorny issue of humanism's status as a Soviet ideological concept, it ultimately failed to prevent (and perhaps even invited) the public use of the term as a political corrective by Sakharov's critics.

In contrast to their liberal counterparts, Christian dissidents during the 1970s continued to engage directly with the concept of humanism and to debate the challenge that both Soviet socialist and Western secular humanisms posed to their own philosophical projects.[13] Far from being united by a single "Christian ideology," however, these thinkers expressed a broad range of views on the compatibility of religious faith, human freedom, and political rights. Figures as intellectually distant from one another as the self-described Christian socialist Anatolii Krasnov-Levitin and the Russian nationalist writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrestled with what humanism could and should mean for a religious opposition to Soviet authority. Such deep engagement with twentieth-century humanism in its socialist and secular configurations, I suggest, was unique to the Christian variant of Soviet dissidence and distinguishes it from (rather than aligns it with) its more celebrated secular cousin. Yet this preoccupation with humanism also led many Christian thinkers astray in assessing Soviet human rights activists like Sakharov, whom they either tended to dismiss as atheist wolves in secular sheep's clothing or tried to claim as spiritual brethren who had strayed from the flock. Whether positive or negative, these assessments rested on a misattribution of religious meaning to nonreligious dissent based on a contested concept—humanism—that few secular liberal dissidents of the era actually employed.

"On the Basis of Humaneness": Sakharov's Human Rights Appeals and Soviet Humanism

Broadly speaking, secular liberal dissidents and human rights activists in the Brezhnev era fell into one of two categories: those who were dismissive of Soviet official humanism, and those who were disengaged from this discourse entirely.[14] The former camp held that official invocations of humanism were nothing more than a cynical ruse to justify state repression. For instance, Mal'va Landa, a founding member of the Moscow Helsinki Group, wrote in 1979 that when compared to fascism, "communist ideology and regimes, and the Soviet regime in particular, are characterized by greater hypocrisy (more skillfully disguised as 'humanism'), greater deceit, and a limitless capacity for falsification."[15] Eduard Kuznetsov, a Jewish refusenik who in 1970 received a death sentence (later commuted) for attempting to hijack an airplane to flee the USSR,

13. On "secular humanism" as an organized twentieth-century social movement and its relation to atheism, see Richard Cimino and Christopher Smith, *Atheist Awakening: Secular Activism and Community in America* (Oxford University Press, 2014); Stephen LeDrew, *The Evolution of Atheism: The Politics of a Modern Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2015); Callum G. Brown, David Nash, and Charlie Lynch, *The Humanist Movement in Modern Britain: A History of Ethicists, Rationalists, and Humanists* (Bloomsbury, 2022).

14. By "secular," I have in mind dissidents whose political activism was not primarily religious in nature, regardless of their personal beliefs. This group includes many secular Jews, who were overrepresented in the dissident movement relative to the overall Soviet population. Nathans, *To the Success of Our Hopeless Cause*, 517.

15. Houghton Library, Harvard University, Human Rights Collection (henceforth HRC), Box 74 (Label 55), File 3, Page 10.

described from prison his own experience of this ideological dissonance: "For too long, you've been stuffed full with declarations of humanism, democracy, and justice, so you can't believe that you've really been deemed an enemy of the state and are going to be punished by death."[16] Other liberal figures, however, refused to even engage with what they saw as a tired recapitulation of Thaw-era debates. When the children's poet Kornei Chukovskii warned his daughter, the writer Lidiia Chukovskaia, against "giving into provocation" over a 1968 speech by the Party-aligned writer Sergei Mikhalkov that used humanism to attack cultural soft-liners, she replied curtly: "This is all very boring since it's already been done a thousand times. The same words, the same people, the same syntax."[17]

Andrei Sakharov, the country's most renowned and respected dissident voice on human rights, also provides a striking example of this latter tendency towards disengagement from the official discourse of Soviet humanism. While Sakharov's political views evolved over time, his letters to domestic and foreign leaders reveal a consistent preference for appeals to "humaneness" (*gumannost'*) rather than the more ideologically charged humanism.[18] Indeed, as mentioned above, Sakharov almost never used the term "humanism" in his own writings. When he did so, it was exclusively to honor the work of fellow dissidents, never to debate the finer points of humanism or invoke it as a fundamental Soviet value.[19] By comparison, "humaneness" appears regularly in Sakharov's copious human rights appeals of the 1970s-1980s. This was the case for letters to Soviet officials as well as to world leaders like Pope John Paul II.[20] "We are convinced," Sakharov wrote in a draft press release in 1972, "that the cause of defending human rights and humaneness in the USSR is not a purely internal matter of our country."[21]

This subtle semantic difference, I argue, in fact represents a strategic move by Sakharov to shift his struggle with the regime onto more favorable rhetorical ground. Though the two terms are closely related, only humanism ever attained something like official status within the increasingly "fixed and normalized discursive system" of late Soviet ideology.[22] Moreover, despite sharing a Latin root, *gumanizm* and *gummanost'*

16. Eduard Kuznetsov, *Dnevniki* (Les Editeurs Réunis, 1973), 145. I have slightly modified the unattributed English translation found in Eduard Kuznetsov, *Prison Diaries* (Liberty Publishing House, 2017), 68.

17. Lidiia Chukovskaia and Kornei Chukovskii, "'Nasha biografiia ne v nashei vlasti': Perepiska (1912–1969)," *Druzhba narodov*, no. 11 (2001): 182–183. Mikhalkov's speech, delivered at the Moscow city CPSU headquarters in April 1968, spoke of the need to "remind these literati about what humanism is in Maxim Gorky's understanding ... a militant humanism of implacable struggle against the hypocrisy and falsehoods of those concerned with saving the old world." S. Mikhalkov, "Vsem serdtsem s partiei!" *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 14, April 3, 1968, 2.

18. On Sakharov's political evolution, see Jay Bergman, *Meeting the Demands of Reason: The Life and Thought of Andrei Sakharov* (Cornell University Press, 2009).

19. For instance, a letter that Sakharov wrote circa 1987 refers to the late dissident Anatolii Marchenko's "enormous contribution to the cause of democracy, humanism, and justice." Houghton Library, Harvard University, Andrei Sakharov Papers (henceforth MS Russ 79), Box 30, File 1887.

20. MS Russ 79, Box 31, File 1941.

21. MS Russ 79, Box 81, File 6095, Page 2.

22. Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton University Press, 2005), 14.

have distinct connotations in Russian due to their endings. The suffix *-izm* suggests a system or a school of thought (e.g. *kommunizm*, *Marksizm*), while *-ost'* more commonly refers to personal traits or feelings (e.g. *zhalost'* [pity], *vneshnost'* [appearance]).[23] This lexical distinction was even observed in Brezhnev-era legal theory, which characterized humaneness as a more psychologically specific and emotionally laden manifestation of the social principle of humanism. As the aptly titled 1972 book *The Humanism of Soviet Law* explains:

> In the proper (narrow) sense of the word, humanism refers to relations between society and man, between the collective and the individual, individuals imbued with love for humanity and respect for human dignity. In ethical-psychological terms, one expression of humanism is generosity, kindness, tolerance, i.e. that which is typically understood as humaneness.[24]

For Sakharov, therefore, invoking "humaneness" was no mere stylistic preference; it was a way of targeting the emotions and moral consciences of individual leaders without opening up a broader theoretical dispute.

Appeals on behalf of individual political prisoners were a constant feature of Sakharov's dissidence from the late 1960s onwards.[25] Initially, at least, he crafted these appeals to persuade rather than antagonize, adopting a deferential tone towards Brezhnev and other Party leaders. This strategy reflected what Sakharov's biographer Jay Bergman dubs the dissident's "humane elitism," the view that it was the Soviet state's duty—in consultation with and guided by the educated elite—to move towards a more open, rational, and ethical system.[26] Nor did Sakharov yet consider it necessary to abandon socialism, the moral values and "universal, international approach" of which he continued to see as the basis for future convergence with the capitalist world.[27]

This attitude can be seen across Sakharov's extensive correspondence with Soviet state and Party officials during the Brezhnev era. In a collective letter to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1970, for example, Sakharov and several other human rights defenders praised the government's decision to drop charges against Irina Kaplan and Viacheslav Bakhmin, two students arrested for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda. While legal harassment for ideological reasons "remains an important problem," the dissidents wrote, "this humane act by the Presidium gives us hope that we can appeal not only to the law, but also to the humaneness of the authorities." Many others who had been wrongly convicted on similar charges, the letter continued, "proudly endure suffering and are not inclined to appeal to the sympathies of

23. N.Iu. Shvedova et al., eds., *Russkaia grammatika. Tom 1* (Nauka, 1980), 170, 176. See also R.A. Budagov, *Istoriia slov v istorii obshestva* (Prosveshchenie, 1971), 134–155.

24. Popkov, *Gumanizm sovetskogo prava*, 66.

25. Andrei Sakharov, *Memoirs*, trans. Richard Lourie (Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 267–280.

26. Bergman, *Meeting the Demands of Reason*, 147.

27. A.D. Sakharov, "Razmyshleniia o progresse, mirnom sosushchestvovanii i intellekual'noi svobode," in *Trevoga i nadezhda*, ed. Elena Bonner, 2nd ed. (Inter-Verso, 1991), 42. Compare the uncredited English translation in Andrei Sakharov, *Progress, Coexistence, & Intellectual Freedom* (W.W. Norton, 1968), 78, which misleadingly renders *obshchechelovecheskii* ("universal," "common-to-all-humanity") as "humanistic."

the authorities" despite hardships due to health or old age. In such cases, "an act of humaneness would be especially appropriate."[28]

Both halves of Sakharov's "humane elitism" are on display in this letter. Despite its legal subject, the letter's primary category is not "truth" (*pravda*) or "law" (*pravo*), but humaneness—compassion or sympathy for the well-being of others, expressed in actions that need not be legally motivated. Both the KGB's recommendation to drop the charges (partly, it seems, based on a lack of evidence) and the Presidium's decision to do so are described independently as "humane," as if to emphasize the unusual but welcome nature of this outcome. At the same time, Sakharov and the other signatories cast this decision as a potential precedent for defendants in similar circumstances. Importantly, this is not a legal standard, but rather a model of humane action for scenarios in which such action on the part of the authorities would be "especially appropriate." Rather than imploring Soviet leaders to observe their own laws, a fundamental demand of the Soviet dissident movement, Sakharov and his allies are content here with appealing to their personal compassion and humane wisdom.[29]

Sakharov took a similar approach in a letter he sent jointly to the Supreme Soviet Presidium Chairman Nikolai Podgornyi and U.S. President Richard M. Nixon three months later. Sakharov's message to Nixon concerned the radical feminist and Communist Party member Angela Davis, whom the President had called a "dangerous terrorist" upon her arrest in October 1970.[30] Whether or not Sakharov was aware of this, he directed his appeal to the judicial system rather than Nixon: "I hope that the American court will consider the Davis case with total impartiality. I also hope for humaneness from the American court." Conversely, Sakharov framed his message to Podgornyi, a plea for leniency in the Leningrad hijacking case mentioned above, in terms of the Soviet leader's personal authority: "Comrade Chairman! Do not allow [Mark] Dymshits and [Eduard] Kuznetsov to be executed. That would be unjustifiably cruel. Reduce their sentences in line with the other defendants." Sakharov closed with a direct appeal: "I hope for your personal humaneness (*lichnaia gumannost'*) and consideration of the higher interests of humanity."[31]

By linking the Angela Davis and Dymshits-Kuznetsov cases, Bergman contends, Sakharov "suggested their moral equivalence and, more subtly, the moral equivalence of the Soviet and American legal systems."[32] However, the rhetorical contrast between Sakharov's appeals to Nixon and Podgornyi arguably suggests as much, if not more, about the differences the dissident assumed between the two systems. The American court's "humaneness" in the Davis trial was desirable but subordinate to the legal standard of "total impartiality" that Sakharov hoped would be upheld. And while Sakharov undoubtedly felt more entitled to issue directives to Podgornyi, his countryman, than

28. MS Russ 79, Box 29, File 1834.

29. On this dissident demand, see Nathans, *To the Success of Our Hopeless Cause*, 24–25 and *passim*.

30. Bettina Aptheker, *The Morning Breaks: The Trial of Angela Davis*, 2nd ed. (Cornell University Press, 2014), 24.

31. A.D. Sakharov, "Otkrytoe obrashchenie k Prezidentu SShA R. Niksonu i Predsedateliu Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR N.V. Podgornomu, 28 dekabria 1970," in *Sobranie dokumentov samizdata*, vol. 7 (RFE/RL, 1972), no. AS512.

32. Bergman, *Meeting the Demands of Reason*, 178.

to the President of the United States, he also understood which of the two was more likely to make a difference through personal intervention. Sakharov acknowledged as much in a subsequent letter to Podgornyi on behalf of the Christian socialist Anatolii Krasnov-Levitin, arrested in 1971. "If you cannot accept the arguments above as proof of the legality of [Krasnov-Levitin's] actions," Sakharov wrote, "I ask that you use your constitutional power and sway to ease his plight on the basis of humaneness."[33]

Sakharov's close attention to the precise wording of his appeals is perhaps most evident in a letter to the Chilean junta led by General Augusto Pinochet in 1973. Below is the full draft text of the letter, with Sakharov's own original handwritten edits reproduced:

> ~~As an opponent of the death penalty in principle,~~ I write to you with a request to spare the life of Luis Corvalán, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Chile. ~~This appeal is strictly humanistic in nature.~~ Lacking complete and accurate information, I refrain from political evaluations. But I am certain that tolerance and humaneness always contribute to the prestige of ~~any regime~~ any government.
>
> ~~With hope,~~
> ~~With a plea for humaneness,~~
> With deep respect,
> Andrei Sakharov[34]

Here, one sees Sakharov struggling with the proper language and tone to employ in petitioning an unfamiliar foreign power. His choice to emphasize state prestige in calling for humaneness from Chile's military dictatorship conveys uncertainty (and likely skepticism) about the new regime's ethics and respect for the rule of law. This stands in sharp contrast to the deft maneuvering between Soviet paternalism and American legalism in the letter to Nixon and Podgornyi. Sakharov's refusal to make "political evaluations" of the Pinochet government also restricts him to the self-interested case for mercy. His decision to close the letter "With deep respect," rather than the more optimistic "With hope" or the earnest "With a plea for humaneness," is an unusually stark example of tactical deference to authority taking precedence over ethical or emotional appeals in Sakharov's writings.

Sakharov did take up politics directly in the so-called "Memorandum" he sent to Brezhnev in March 1971. The purpose of this document, in Sakharov's own words, was to present the Soviet leadership with "a comprehensive, internally consistent alternative to the Party program."[35] Going beyond pleas on behalf of individual dissidents or pragmatic appeals, the Memorandum described the defense of citizens' rights as "the state's fundamental purpose" and the defense of human rights in general as "the loftiest of all aims."[36] Though many of its policies, such as abolishing the death penalty, were

33. MS Russ 79, Box 30, File 1870.

34. MS Russ 79, Box 31, File 1978.

35. Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 326.

36. MS Russ 79, Box 45, File 2783, Page 24. I have slightly modified the translation in Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 644.

ideas that Sakharov had advocated elsewhere, they now appeared in a single political manifesto that registered both his creeping pessimism about the potential of in-system reform and stubborn commitment to pursuing it regardless.[37]

This underlying tension imbues the Memorandum with a duality absent from Sakharov's earlier, more optimistic writings as well as later works of cynical realism like *My Country and the World*.[38] Notably, for instance, Sakharov proposes eliminating the harshest Soviet corrective labor regimens, "strict" (*strogii*) and "special" (*osobyi*), for being "contrary to socialist humaneness"—one of the rare instances in which he appended a modifier of any kind to the term.[39] That Sakharov felt it was necessary to do so here, in a document he kept private for over a year in anticipation of a reply from Brezhnev that never came, indicates the importance he still attached to the appearance of deferring to the Soviet authorities. And yet, having made the strategic choice to underscore his loyalty, Sakharov nevertheless resisted the preferred terminology of "socialist humanism" in favor of an alternative form that hewed closer to his own moral stance. Tellingly, the English-language edition of Sakharov's memoirs, published in 1990, renders the sentence quoted above as simply "Special-regimen imprisonment should be abolished as inhumane," suggesting the author's chagrin late in life at having invoked socialism in this context at all.[40]

Sakharov's steadfast appeals to "humaneness" rather than "humanism" did not prevent and, in fact, may have provoked the latter term's use against him in a series of public smear campaigns, the first of which commenced in late summer of 1973.[41] On September 1, *Sovetskaia Rossiia* printed several denunciations of Sakharov, supposedly from ordinary workers. "Learning from the papers about statements made to foreign correspondents by the 'humanist' Sakharov, I was simply stunned," wrote one I. Animov. "Only someone hostile to the Soviet Union and to the ideals of socialism could slander the truly humanistic policies of our government."[42] A letter from members of the Soviet Pedagogical Academy, published by *Izvestiia* on September 4, charged Sakharov with "claiming to be some kind of 'humanist' or 'defender of civil liberties' while at the same time opposing détente."[43] The next day, *Literaturnaia gazeta* printed a collective letter from a group of Soviet writers praising the "most humane" policies of the Communist Party but lamenting that "the true humanism and bright ideals of our Soviet society are not to everyone's liking. ... Let Sakharov remember that he who wants to reverse the wheel of history always ends up taking a back seat."[44]

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37. Bergman, *Meeting the Demands of Reason*, 180.

38. Andrei D. Sakharov, *My Country and the World* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1975).

39. MS Russ 79, Box 45, File 2783, Page 27.

40. Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 647. A more accurate English translation of the original Russian text is "Eliminate strict and special-regimen imprisonment as contradictory to socialist humaneness" (*Otmenit' osobyi* [sic] *i strogii* [sic] *rezhimy lisheniia svobody, kak protivorechashchie sotsialisticheskoi gumannosti*).

41. Bergman, *Meeting the Demands of Reason*, 199–210.

42. MS Russ 79, Box 75, File 5664.

43. MS Russ 79, Box 75, File 5667.

44. MS Russ 79, Box 75, File 5668.

The use of humanism to disparage Sakharov only intensified after the physicist became the first Russian to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975. A statement in *Izvestiia*, signed by members of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, labeled the award "blasphemy against the ideas of humanism, peace, justice, and friendship of the peoples." While "declaring himself a defender of humanism and human rights," the scientists alleged, "Sakharov has expressed his hope that the Pinochet regime will usher in an 'era of rebirth and consolidation' in Chile."[45] These allegations were part of a KGB operation to discredit prominent liberal dissidents by misrepresenting their humanitarian appeals to Pinochet as support for his rule.[46] They also played on the image of the Chilean dictator in the Soviet press as a kind of arch-villain whose "humanism" was expressed through his bloody repression of left-wing politicians and activists. (Figure 2) Like Pinochet, it was implied, Sakharov was an American puppet who disguised his reactionary views with humanistic language. An article in the newspaper *Trud*, for example, singled out Sakharov's support for the 1974 Jackson-Vanik amendment, which limited U.S. trade with non-market economies such as the USSR based on the latter's restrictive emigration laws. "By classifying those in the United States who disrupt normal trade relations between our countries as 'humanists,'" the article stated, "Sakharov reveals straight away what he means by 'humanism.'"[47]

Of course, what Sakharov "meant by humanism" was nothing at all, in the sense that he effectively avoided the word altogether. His disengagement from the Soviet discourse of socialist humanism and appeals to personal humaneness only encouraged critics who saw him as deceitful and treacherous. A lengthy screed in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* on February 15, 1980, for instance, delivered this paradoxical verdict on Sakharov's worldview: "His 'humanism' is not simply false. It is pathologically inhuman."[48] By that time, Sakharov had already been arrested and sentenced to internal exile alongside his wife and fellow dissident, Elena Bonner. This concession, Sakharov and other human rights defenders alleged, was meant to preserve "the appearance of humaneness" while the couple suffered beyond the gaze of the Moscow-based foreign press corps.[49] Sakharov and Bonner would remain exiled in the closed city of Gor'kii until their amnesty and release by Mikhail Gorbachev in December 1986.

"Truth" or "Consequences": Christian Dissidents on Secular Humanism

The concerns of Soviet religious dissidents overlapped with but were not identical to those of secular figures like Sakharov in the movement for civil and human rights.[50] Indeed, some within the Russian Orthodox intelligentsia held human rights activism

45. MS Russ 79, Box 75, File 5682.

46. Tobias Rupprecht, "Formula Pinochet: Chilean Lessons for Russian Liberal Reformers during the Soviet Collapse, 1970–2000," *Journal of Contemporary History* 51, no. 1 (2016): 172–173.

47. MS Russ 79, Box 75, File 5683.

48. MS Russ 79, Box 75, File 5695.

49. MS Russ 79, Box 59, File 3890, Page 5; HRC, Box 13 (Label 9), File 39.

50. Partly for this reason, some scholars use "dissident" narrowly to mean only those like Sakharov who campaigned for civil and human rights, rather than any oppositional or non-conformist figure. See, e.g., Nathans, *To the Success of Our Hopeless Cause*, 15.

in contempt, deriding it as "secular heroism" or worse.[51] When it came to the matter of humanism, however, it was religious dissidents such as Anatolii Krasnov-Levitin—the Orthodox Christian socialist on whose behalf Sakharov had petitioned in 1971—who engaged more readily with the categories of Soviet official discourse.[52]

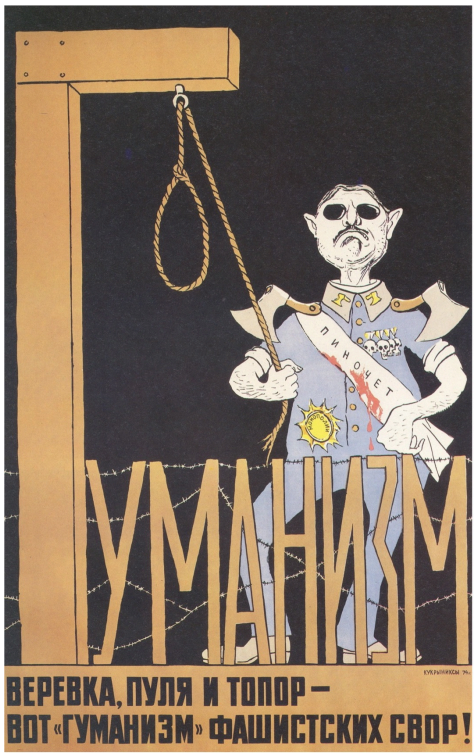

Figure 2. Anti-Pinochet Poster, 1974. The Cyrillic letter Г at the beginning of Гуманизм (Humanism) serves as the beams of a gallows. The text reads: "Rope, bullet, and axe—here is the 'humanism' of the fascist packs!" Source: "'Gumanizm' Pinocheta," Arthive, accessed May 3, 2025, [Link].

In *Stromata* (1972), a collection of essays published abroad while he was still imprisoned, Krasnov-Levitin advocates what he calls "neo-humanism" in an attempt to unite "many religious believers, many honest communists, many supporters of socialism and other societal forms" under one philosophical umbrella.[53] His account of how neo-humanism diverges from traditional ("old") humanistic ideas is quite reminiscent of Com-

51. Ludmilla Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights*, trans. Carol Pearce and John Glad (Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 264.

52. On Krasnov-Levitin, see Mikhail Epstein, *Ideas Against Ideocracy: Non-Marxist Thought of the Late Soviet Period (1953–1991)* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 78–81.

53. A. Krasnov, *Stromaty* (Possev-Verlag, 1972), 150. The exact origins of the term "neo-humanism" (*neogumanizm*) in Krasnov-Levitin's thinking are unclear, but it is possible he was inspired by the Russian émigré philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev, whose name appears in several of Krasnov-Levitin's works. In his 1936 essay "Neo-Humanism, Marxism, and Spiritual Values," Berdiaev questions the compatibility of Christianity and Marxism as exemplified by the "neo-humanism" that was becoming fashionable with the Catholic Left in interwar France. Krasnov-Levitin employs the term in a similar manner to Berdiaev but endorses (rather than rejects) the potential unity of socialism with religion. Nikolai Berdiaev, "Neogumanizm, marksizm i dukhovnye tsennosti," *Sovremennye zapiski*, no. 60 (1936): 319–324.

munist Party ideological texts about the gulf between revolutionary socialist humanism and its moribund bourgeois foil:

> Neo-humanism, like old humanism, means humanity [*chelovechnost'*] and preaches love for people. However, whereas old humanism foregrounded the concept of humankind [*chelovechestvo*], neo-humanism foregrounds the human [*chelovek*], the individual person [*chelovecheskaia lichnost'*]. Old humanism is thus something abstract, disconnected from life, inert, and intellectual. Neo-humanism is concrete, active, dynamic—it is an artistic worldview, inspirational and encouraging, carrying a romantic impulse, and appealing to the broadest masses.[54]

Like the Soviet variant of humanism, Krasnov-Levitin's neo-humanism is also internationalist: he includes Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Bertrand Russell, and Albert Einstein alongside compatriots like Konstantin Paustovskii and Sakharov among its unspoken practitioners.[55] Thus, if Sakharov tacitly exploited the Soviet distinction between "humaneness" and "humanism," using the former to engage the personal sympathies of individual leaders, Krasnov-Levitin instead sought to fashion an alternative concept out of the official discourse of socialist humanism itself, one that could unify the Soviet opposition and perhaps garner mass appeal.

Religious dissidents of a Russian nationalist or Slavophile persuasion, however, had reason to be dubious of an idea recalling the "concrete," "active," and internationalist humanism of Soviet official ideology. Even more moderate nationalists such as Vladimir Osipov, founder and editor of the Orthodox samizdat journal *Veche*, expressed reservations.[56] Krasnov-Levitin, Osipov wrote in 1974, "is true to the ideals of his youth: socialism, internationalism, Renaissance humanism. He defends these views, inculcates and cultivates them, but his own spiritual experience kills them at the root." By this, Osipov appears to have had in mind a perceived contradiction between Krasnov-Levitin's socialist politics and his Christianity: "The only convincing pages of [Krasnov-Levitin's] most recent work, 'Earth Rampant,' were those in which spiritual insight about man in general and Russian man in particular supersedes all pre-determined enlightenment slogans."[57] For Osipov, the issue with humanism was not simply its Marxist overtones, but also its adoption and promulgation by foreign secular groups such as the American Humanist Association with its *Humanist Manifesto II* (1973).[58] The *Manifesto*, he wrote, represented "an open challenge to the Christian conscience" and, for all its "affected humanism," revealed its authors' "total ignorance of the human soul."[59] As an overar-

54. Krasnov, *Stromaty*, 149.

55. Krasnov, *Stromaty*, 150.

56. Mikhail Epstein deems Osipov the "most outspoken proponent" of a "moderate, even liberal, nationalism." See Epstein, *Ideas Against Ideocracy*, 19.

57. Vladimir Osipov, *Tri otnosheniia k rodine* (Possev-Verlag, 1978), 187.

58. Paul Kurtz and Edwin H. Wilson, *Humanist Manifesto II* (1973), American Humanist Association, accessed May 5, 2025, https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto2/. Andrei Sakharov was among the original 120 signatories of the *Humanist Manifesto II*.

59. Osipov, *Tri otnosheniia k rodine*, 185–186.

ching ethos for the dissident movement, Osipov concluded, humanism was promising in theory but untenable in practice.

A similar concern with the fate of humanism in a secular age motivated Evgenii Barabanov, an Orthodox theologian and art historian, to call in 1974 for "a Christian initiative to counter the godless humanism that is destroying man and to stop [religious] humanism from degenerating into a non-religious form."[60] Barabanov revisited this dilemma in 1976 with "The Truth of Humanism," an essay that can be read as a response to Osipov's dismissal of humanism as a unifying creed for Soviet dissidents. Why, Barabanov wondered, do Christians so often repudiate those whose good deeds are driven by a this-worldly love for their fellow man, dismissing such acts of "secularized humanism" as misguided or naïve?[61] In the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, for the first time in history, ordinary people were asserting their rights not in defiance of religion or absolute monarchy, but against "an all-encompassing ideology that calls itself and demands to be accepted as nothing less than genuine humanism." It was thus imperative for believers to avoid "outdated ideological standards" when appraising secular dissidents, lest they mistake the "religious-historical meaning of the new humanism" for "all those godless 'do-gooders' and 'philanthropes' who have given their lives to the creation of totalitarian regimes."[62]

Barabanov's distinction between the benevolent "new humanism" of secular dissidents like Sakharov and the "godless humanism" of the Soviet state reflected a desire to harness the potential overlap between "liberal" and "Christian" ideologies that Amal'rik identified in his 1969 diagram. By insisting on the "religious-historical meaning" of secular dissent, Barabanov hoped to convince his fellow Christians that this overlap was spiritual rather than superficial. What mattered most, he argued, were humanism's origins in and basic affinity with Church doctrine regarding humanity's divinely ordained liberty, individuality, and creativity. Renaissance humanists such as Erasmus and Thomas More were religious thinkers whose Christian beliefs had informed their renewed interest in classical ideas about human nature. If this movement had later drifted towards secularism, this was the fault of Christians themselves, whose religious wars and resistance to change precluded a deep engagement with humanist philosophical insights. "Christians have been more likely to speak of humanism's lies," Barabanov lamented, "and have not always wanted to understand its truth."[63]

The perceived need for dialogue between secular and religious dissidents led the editors of the Moscow-based samizdat journal *Poiski* to establish a new rubric called "Faith and Humanism" in 1979. The rubric's introduction, most likely written by the historian Mikhail Gefter, announced its purpose as facilitating "a dialogue between the two main worldview systems in our country: Christianity and atheism (not state, but

60. Evgenii Barabanov, "Raskol Tserkvi i mira," in *Iz-pod glyb. Sbornik statei* (YMCA Press, 1974), 197.

61. "In this way, humanism, especially when combined with the epithet 'secularized,' becomes synonymous with a kind of unquestionable untruth, a delusion, or in the best case, a spiritual limitation, kindly blindness, foolish optimism." Evgenii Barabanov, "Pravda gumanizma," in *Samosoznanie. Sbornik statei* (Khronika, 1976), 17.

62. Barabanov, "Pravda gumanizma," 18–20.

63. Barabanov, "Pravda gumanizma," 14–15.

personal)."[64] It was this personal unbelief, rather than what Viktoria Smolkin describes as the "alternative cosmology and way of life" of Soviet state atheism, that liberal Christians like Barabanov had in mind when they spoke of making common cause with the "new humanism."[65] The confluence of liberal (or "open") Christianity and secular (dissident) humanism, Mikhail Epstein writes, made sense from a political as well as spiritual standpoint: "In its appeal to humanistic values, open Christianity proves to be a dissident movement vis-à-vis the Church's conservatism. By the same token, secular humanism's belief in the freedom of conscience makes it unacceptable to the hardline policy of official 'class-based humanism' maintained by the Soviet authorities."[66] Indeed, as we have seen, Christian dissidents were more inclined to engage and identify positively with the notion of humanism than the very "secular humanists" with whom they sought dialogue.

Barabanov's open-mindedness, however, was by no means the mainstream view among his co-religionists. In fact, the starkest Christian expression of the anti-humanist position came from the only dissident figure of comparable stature to Sakharov during the late Soviet period: the writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.[67] In his commencement address at Harvard University in 1978, after four years of exile from the USSR and two years living in the United States, Solzhenitsyn delivered a scathing indictment of Western legalism, individualism, and materialism that stunned his audience and provoked a heated debate in the American press.[68] The speech's conclusion, beginning with a section entitled "Humanism and Its Consequences," places the blame for the West's "decline" and "debility" squarely on the Renaissance-era turn towards what Solzhenitsyn calls "rationalistic humanism or humanistic autonomy."[69] If such a historical turn was inevitable after the ideological exhaustion of medieval religious despotism, the Western embrace of "boundless materialism" and "freedom from religion and religious responsibility" had now resulted in a "harsh spiritual crisis and political impasse."[70]

For Solzhenitsyn, the central problem with humanism is that it renders Western societies incapable of resisting socialist influence and, ultimately, communist dictatorship. By denying the "existence of intrinsic evil in man," non-religious humanism tends naturally towards the worship of humanity and its material needs. Marxism-Leninism, with its promise to satisfy these needs and scientific-atheistic worldview, is only the most radical iteration of this secular humanist tendency. Thus, in Solzhenitsyn's telling, an "unexpected kinship" reveals itself between the capitalist West and communist East;

64. Quoted in V. Sokirko, "Prodolzhenie razgovora s sobesednikom Kronida Liubarskogo Sergeem Alekseevichem Zheludkovym," website of Viktor Sokirko and Lidiia Tkachenko, accessed May 5, 2025, https://sokirko.com/victor/ideology/kronid/continue.html.

65. Victoria Smolkin, *A Sacred Space is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton University Press, 2018), 8.

66. Epstein, *Ideas Against Ideocracy*, 89.

67. On Solzhenitsyn's political and philosophical differences with Sakharov, see Bergman, *Meeting the Demands of Reason*, 211–219.

68. See the responses collected in Ronald Berman, ed., *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: The Address, Twelve Early Responses, and Six Later Reflections*, (Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980).

69. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, "A World Split Apart" in *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, 16.

70. Solzhenitsyn, "A World Split Apart," 16–17.

both sides of the Cold War divide stake their political legitimacy on humanity's material rather than spiritual well-being. Furthermore, as the more ideologically consistent of the two materialisms, communism will eventually prove stronger and more attractive to Western populations. "Humanism which has lost its Christian heritage," Solzhenitsyn cautioned his Harvard audience, "cannot prevail in this competition."[71]

This remark helps to clarify the difference between Solzhenitsyn's views and those of more liberal Christian thinkers like Evgenii Barabanov. While both men agreed broadly on Renaissance humanism's historical basis in Christianity and later degeneration, they diverged over the question of whether its "Christian heritage" was lost (Solzhenitsyn) or recoverable (Barabanov). Moreover, Solzhenitsyn reaffirmed humanism's fundamental affinity with Marxism—placing him in striking agreement with the official Soviet position.[72] Barabanov, as we have seen, rejected the Communist Party's claim to a monopoly on "genuine humanism" and distinguished between secular dissidents, such as Andrei Sakharov, and the atheistic Soviet state these dissidents opposed. Put another way, what Solzhenitsyn understood as an *ideology of secular repression* in the USSR was for Barabanov a *secular ideology of repression* that could be opposed by secular as well as spiritual means. The "truth of humanism," to quote the title of Barabanov's 1976 essay, was that it was flexible enough to accommodate diverse and even conflicting political projects, from the "godless humanism" of state socialism to the "new humanism" of liberal dissidents.

Conclusion

As this article has argued, it was this very flexibility that drove Sakharov and other liberal dissidents to dispense with humanism during the 1970s in favor of less ideologically compromised alternatives like "humaneness." Such an approach recalls what Alexei Yurchak dubs "being *vnye*," the prevalent late Soviet practice of operating simultaneously inside and outside the categories of official discourse. Yurchak, however, limits the application of "being *vnye*" to apolitical contexts made up of people "neither simply in support [of] nor simply in opposition" to the Soviet system.[73] While Sakharov's opposition was never simple, his dissidence cannot be classified as *vnye* in the sense that Yurchak uses the term.[74] Rather, his recourse to humaneness over humanism is better understood as a form of what Sergei Oushakine calls "mimetic resistance." Soviet dissidents, Oushakine argues, failed to establish a "subject position outside the existing discursive field" and hence were "able only to intensify its reproduction." At the same time, their ability to "reproduce the discourse of the dominant without merging with it" proved threatening enough that the Soviet authorities could not simply ignore the

71. Solzhenitsyn, "A World Split Apart," 18.

72. "As humanism in its development was becoming more and more materialistic, it also increasingly allowed its concepts to be used first by socialism and then by communism. So that Karl Marx was able to say, in 1844, that 'communism is naturalized humanism.' This statement has proved to be not entirely unreasonable." Ibid.

73. Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 127–128, 288.

74. For a sympathetic critique that seeks to expand Yurchak's arguments in a more political direction, see Kevin M.F. Platt and Benjamin Nathans, "Socialist in Form, Indeterminate in Content: The Ins and Outs of Late Soviet Culture," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2011): 301–324.

movement altogether.[75] In Sakharov's case, this manifested as a sustained campaign of public vitriol beginning in 1973, in which the discourse of socialist humanism was reasserted to discipline and, eventually, punish the dissident physicist and his wife.

Within Christian dissident circles, meanwhile, the 1970s were a decade of intense debates across the political spectrum about humanism's unifying potential and compatibility with religion. Some liberal Christian dissidents made explicit overtures to their secular counterparts, advocating "neo-" or "new humanism" as a shared ideology for the entire anti-Soviet opposition. These efforts could be taken as confirmation of Andrei Amal'rik's prescience in his 1969 diagram linking "liberal ideology" and "Christian ideology" through the concept of humanism. On the other hand, moderate to liberal Russian nationalists joined conservative Christian thinkers in rejecting humanism as too secular, too socialist, or both, suggesting the limits of this ideological overlap. Nor is it clear that the "new humanism" some liberal Christians attributed to secular dissidents actually corresponded with the latter's political or philosophical views. Like Soviet journalists who distorted Sakharov's human rights activism into a "false" and "pathologically inhuman" worldview, albeit without their malicious intent, liberal Christians also ascribed a spiritual significance to secular dissent based on a concept (humanism) that many dissidents had long abandoned or never consistently employed.

The liberal Christian effort to claim Sakharov as a fellow traveler outlived these 1970s debates and, indeed, Sakharov himself. In the wake of the dissident physicist's untimely death on December 14, 1989, the Paris-based Russian Orthodox journal *Vestnik Russkogo khristianskogo dvizheniia* opened with an editorial by Nikita Struve (grandson of Petr Struve) that acknowledged Sakharov's professed agnosticism while also asserting the religious significance of his dissidence:

> In his ascetic ministration, remaining until the end a humanist-agnostic, A. Sakharov revealed to all, and to Christians above all, the truth of humanism, too often discarded or unjustly despised in the name of falsely understood and one-sidedly perceived verities.

Sakharov, the editorial allowed, "had never touched on philosophical, much less religious subjects" in his public appearances. Yet, by virtue of his familial background (his great-grandfather was an Orthodox priest) and early childhood in a "religious atmosphere," he had imbibed scriptural values that shaped the "Christian image and elemental Russianness of this 'Soviet' truth-loving scientist." Though Sakharov had ceased to consider himself a believer in adulthood, Struve concluded, "his humanism has direct Christian roots."[76]

It is hard to imagine a more fitting coda to the Brezhnev-era heyday of Soviet religious and secular dissent, or a better encapsulation of the complex relationship between the two with regard to the concept of humanism. In Struve's telling, it had taken Sakharov, a self-declared agnostic, to reveal the "truth of humanism" to Soviet Christians—a revelation made possible by Sakharov's own Orthodox upbringing and allegedly

75. Sergei Alex. Oushakine, "The Terrifying Mimicry of Samizdat," *Public Culture* 13, no. 2 (2001): 192, 204, 208–209, 213.

76. Nikita Struve, "Pamiati A.D. Sakharova," *Vestnik Russkogo khristianskogo dvizheniia*, no. 158 (1990), 3–4.

religious moral outlook. Whether or not the "truth" of this "humanism" would have been recognizable to Sakharov himself was beside the point; it made him a potent symbol for Christians willing to look past his personal unbelief and endorsement of the atheistic *Humanist Manifesto II*.[77] As a unifying concept for the entire Soviet dissident movement, however, humanism never quite became the bridge across the secular-spiritual divide that Amal'rik had envisioned in his 1969 diagram. Ironically, it was not until after his predicted "expiration date" for the Soviet Union in 1984 and the coming to power of the reformist Mikhail Gorbachev that the broad alignment of humanistic forces Amal'rik had foreseen would finally come to pass.

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77. Sakharov also received the American Humanist Association's "Humanist of the Year" award in 1980.

Whose Right?

The Law of Nature and the Law of Nations in Grotian Legal Genealogy

by Megan Brand

Are there enduring natural rights that all leaders in international affairs are bound to uphold? If so, from where do they arise, and how are international actors held accountable to them? This article responds with Grotius' legal philosophy, which holds that the universal law of nature binds all together, that leaders should abide by agreements, and that all should pursue right action vis-à-vis other people because human sociability is intrinsic, universal, and enduring. For Grotius, state action should do right, not merely align with power, and doing right derives from humans' unique knowledge of good and evil. This article explains the difference between the law of nature and the law of nations through Grotius' analysis of state practice on poison, killing, and unequal alliances. As scholars question the durability of the international order, especially since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the relationship between the law of nations and law of nature provides both practical and normative frameworks for ordered action in international affairs.

Keywords: law of nations, Grotius, natural law, international relations, human rights, constitutionalism, international order, Russia, legal philosophy, international society

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Whose Right?

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Megan Brand

Russia's military invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, initiated a land war in Europe that shocked much of the world. It was shocking not only because it violated a treaty and an independent state's international legal sovereignty, but also because it was an affront to the law of nations, to what was understood as acceptable action in the day-to-day affairs among countries, and in this case, specifically among great powers in Europe. A land war by a great power in Europe had come to be almost unthinkable after the fall of the Soviet Union and in the following decades, when new territorial boundaries were agreed upon by newly formed states as well as by Russia itself.[1] Russia's 2022 military aggression, bolstered by revisionist arguments that attempted to historically legitimize the redrawing of Russian borders,[2] challenges the order of the international state system in fundamental ways.[3] Treaty-based agreements recognized by states and institutionalized through observance by international organizations, civil society groups, and states themselves have become the mode of state recognition and provide a degree of stability to contentious issues of territorial borders. Yet when he launched the invasion, Vladimir Putin declared, "the old treaties and agreements are no longer effective."[4]

Russia's aggression and the international response raise, in dramatic form, the perennial question of might versus right in international affairs. The law of nations, which this article explicates in terms of Grotian legal philosophy, can be summarized simply as the way states conduct their affairs in the international sphere. But the law of nations is also linked to norms, which form broader ideas of constitutionalism, of acceptable

1. Treaty between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the Ukrainian-Russian State Border, Concluded in Kiev, January 28, 2003, United Nations Treaty Series Vol. 3161, Registration No. 54132; Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, Concluded in Kiev May 31, 1997, United Nations Treaty Series Vol. 3007, Registration No 52240.

2. Vladimir Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," July 12, 2021, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181.

3. Hathaway calls Russia's aggression "the most fundamental challenge to the modern international legal order since World War II." Oona Hathaway, "International Law Goes to War in Ukraine," *Emory International Law Review* 38, no. 3 (2024): 576.

4. Vladimir Putin, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation," February 24, 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843.

practice of what makes the rules of the day operate and stick, beyond what is strictly and technically written in the words of a document. Documents leave room for interpretation, which is not limited to legal interpretation but moves beyond to construction, how actors in a constitutional system view their obligations, duties, and limits and how different institutions within a constitutional system resolve conflicts over these obligations, duties, and limits. In terms of constitutional theory, Keith Whittington argues for the importance of norms in shaping meaning, defining constitutional construction as "the method of elaborating constitutional meaning in this political realm" and where constructions "make normative appeals about what the Constitution should be."[5] What becomes constitutionally acceptable is what evolves out of practice. Extending the idea of constitutionalism to the society of states is not seamless, but scholars have long argued that different "international orders ... can indeed exhibit constitutional characteristics."[6] John Ikenberry further defines order as the "'governing' arrangements among a group of states, including its fundamental rules, principles, and institutions," which are not far off from Grotian conceptions of the law of nations.[7]

Russia's war in Ukraine forces us to think anew about what is and ought to be (im)permissible in international affairs between states. A Grotian legal philosophy would argue that the laws of nature apply to human action at war, and that these laws are unchanging. Because Hugo Grotius grounds his legal philosophy in what he sees as unwavering reality and truth, the law of nature continues to apply to contemporary international relations, including the war in Ukraine. The law of nature is not a social contract-based theory, requiring buy-in from parties on all sides of the issue at hand to apply. Rather, the law of nature is anthropological, embedded into humankind's very nature, and to which humans are bound by the author of nature and can observe this truth through facts of human sociability that necessitates relations with other humans. At the same time, Grotius is no idealist when it comes to law's application in the international sphere. For his legal theory, obligation arises from mutual consent, and his law of nations takes into account the actual day-to-day dealings and actions by states. He distinguishes the law of nations from the law of nature, which blends normative and descriptive approaches to analyzing human action. It could be that a commander orders an attack, say on children, that is against the law of nature. The fact that people act against the law of nature does not negate its existence. Or it could be that the positive law permits an action against the law of nature. Even if permitted by the positive law, the law of nature condemns said action. Perhaps the most relevant application of Grotius to contemporary conflict and war is his broad understanding of the law of nations. For Grotius, the law of nations ought to be the positive law working out of the law of nature. However, because humans err in this application, the law of nations is not always what it ought to be. The law of nations may turn into what states take to be

5. Keith E. Whittington, *Constitutional Construction: Divided Powers and Constitutional Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 1, 121.

6. G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 6.

7. Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 23.

acceptable modes of interaction with each other, which, as this article discusses later, are often at odds with the law of nature.

Russia's war on Ukraine has potentially altered the law of nations. As Grotius argued, "a single people can change its determination without consulting others; and even this happens, that in different times and places a far different common custom, and, therefore, a different law of nations (improperly so called), might be introduced."[8] A land war in Europe, in direct violation of treaties agreed to by Russia, shook the foundations of a liberal order in Europe and the West. It has called into question the extent to which these territorial agreements apply. Each violation of previously understood limits on war alters the law of nations for today, especially when other states take the side of Russia. Relations between states is an iterative process, based in part on expectations and limits about each other's behavior. While the idea of sovereignty has limited when states will intervene in the domestic affairs of other states, there are exceptions to this—most notably genocide—that states worldwide have recognized. State practice has formed an expectation in the law of nations: if you annihilate a people group within your state, other countries might intervene to stop it. Russia's aggression undermines the previously understood international legal sovereignty wherein states agree to a set of borders and to the recognition of a state as pertaining to those borders.[9] Russia has violated territorial sovereignty by its military action. Even further, it has violated the idea of international legal sovereignty by historical revisionism, claiming Ukraine as its own and calling its aggression a "special military operation."[10]

Grotius in Russian Legal Thought

In light of recent events, it may seem paradoxical that Grotius exercised influence on the development of Russian legal thought, from philosophers of natural law like Pavel Novgorodtsev to the Soviet understanding of the law of the sea.[11] At the same time, important distinctions exist between Grotius' philosophy of international law, which emphasizes the universal, social nature of man, and historic Russian perspectives on international law. An enduring debate is the universality of the law of nature applied in international relations. Related to this question is how Eurocentric was and is the law

8. *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (DJBP) 2.8.1.2. References to Hugo Grotius, *The Law of War and Peace*, unless otherwise noted, use the Francis W. Kelsey translation (1925), reprinted in James Brown Scott, ed., *The Classics of International Law* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1984). It will be abbreviated as DJBP.

9. Stephen Krasner defines international legal sovereignty as, "the practices associated with mutual recognition, usually between territorial entities, that have formal, juridical independence." Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 3.

10. On the term "special military operation," see Vladimir Putin, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation," February 24, 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843. Putin described Ukraine's sovereignty as possible "only in partnership with Russia." See Vladimir Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," July 12, 2021, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181.

11. Randall A. Poole, "Pavel Novgorodtsev and the Concept of Legal Consciousness in Russian Philosophy of Law," *Istoriko-filosofskii ezhegodnik* (*History of Philosophy Yearbook*) (Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow) 37 (2022): 84–123, esp. 92; W. E. Butler, "Grotius' Influence in Russia," in *Hugo Grotius and International Relations*, ed. Hedley Bull, Benedict Kingsbury, and Adam Roberts (Oxford University Press, 1992), 266, https://doi.org/10.1093/0198277717.003.0009.

of nations. Building on that question is the debate about Russia's place in the law of nations: to what extent is Russia European? If the law of nations is seen as an exclusive marker of "civilized nations," as the Russian legal theorists Peter Shafirov and Friedrich Martens maintained, rather than a universal idea applicable to all, where does Russia fit?[12] Was the law of nations applicable only in Europe, and if so, has Russia ever counted as European in legal tradition? Beyond geography is the religious dimension of different theories of the law of nations. Was the law of nations as put forward by theorists like Grotius merely applicable to Christian rulers, and if so, did that apply across Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox traditions, or was it siloed into one of them? While this article restricts itself to the Grotian legal genealogy that explains the emergence of the law of nations, the significance of this Grotian approach and universality matters for the historic and continuing debates about the place of Russia in the society of states.

Grotius' *On the Law of War and Peace* did not appear in full in Russian until 1956, which might seem to preclude centuries of influence, but Russian intellectuals had access to his writings in Latin and French.[13] The study of natural law had early support in the late 17th and early 18th centuries under Peter the Great, but for political, religious, economic, and social reasons, it did not become embedded in practice during that period in Russia as it had in other parts of Europe, although it took root at a theoretical level by the late 19th century.[14] Russian international law held varying perspectives on the universality of natural law, a question that played into debates about Russia's in-group or out-group belonging to Europe. The question of the universality of natural law also had religious variation that separated Russia from Europe. While just war positions are not monolithic, it is fair to say that just war theories generally argue that just war requires justice in going to war and just actions in war. A consequence of the idea of justice within war is limited atrocities; even when hostilities are entered into for just causes, in theory, actions must abide by certain principles, such as proportional responses. By contrast, Russian theorists like Mikhail Taube, chair of international law at Imperial St. Petersburg University before his 1917 exile, characterized Russian approaches to war as Caesaropapist, where "all wars by Byzantium were legitimate," with a consequence that such wars "were among the cruelest and there

12. Peter Shafirov wrote on just war theory in relation to Russia's early 18th century war with Sweden: Peter Shafirov, *A discourse concerning the just causes of the war between Sweden and Russia: 1700–1721*, intro. William E. Butler (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1973). Friedrich Martens was a legal theorist, professor, and diplomat to the Hague, for which the 1899 Martens Clause is named. L. Malksoo summarizes Shafirov and Martens' views in "The History of International Legal Theory in Russia: A Civilizational Dialogue with Europe," *European Journal of International Law* 19, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 216–219, 220–222. Grotius' universal claims about human nature also diverge from claims by theorists like Fyodor Ivanovich Kozhevnikov (1893–1998), a Moscow State University Law Dean and International Court of Justice judge. See L. Malksoo, "The History of International Legal Theory in Russia," 226– 228.

13. Butler, "Grotius' Influence in Russia," 258–61.

14. Randall A. Poole, "Introduction: A Russian Conception of Legal Consciousness," in *Law and the Christian Tradition in Modern Russia*, ed. Paul Valliere and Randall A. Poole (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 1–20. For summary of natural law reception in Russia in the 17th–18th centuries see Dmitry Poldnikov, "The Legacy of Classical Natural Law in Russian Dogmatic Jurisprudence in the Late 19th Century," *Journal on European History of Law* 4 (2013): 73.

were no constraints of law with respect to the enemy."[15] Grotius enters into this conversation in an interesting way; his law of nature is normative, arguing for limits on war. However, his description of actual practice across nations acknowledges many situations under which cruelty and atrocities occur. Grotius' claimed objectivity of human moral knowledge, combined with his analysis of actual state practice, carves out its own space in theories of war. Understanding Grotian legal genealogy is therefore productive for teasing out similarities and differences with Russian approaches to the law of nations and for setting the stakes for when the law of nations changes.

By the early 20th century, natural law's objectivism proved a generative response to legal positivism, leading to renewed interest by Russian scholars like Pavel Novgorodtsev and Evgeny Trubetskoi.[16] Around this time, a Russian publication summarized *On the Law of War and Peace*, critiquing Grotius' theological perspective.[17] Grotian legal thought flows from his human anthropology grounded in theological perspectives, which the present article examines in the area of the meaning of the law of nature and the law of nations. Russian critiques of Grotian theology carry over to legal thought because theological presuppositions ground Grotius' legal philosophy. Analysis of Grotian legal thought that neglects to factor in Grotius' presuppositions about human nature, right reason, and the sociability of man arising from the author of nature will fail to accurately apply his philosophy of law. This article explains how these distinctions across levels of law (laws of nature and positive law) interact in Grotian legal philosophy and demonstrates how these frameworks apply to Grotian thought on poison, killing, and unequal alliances.

The early 20th century Russian interest in natural law dwindled when the state persecuted intellectuals whose views diverged too far from Marxism.[18] Yet decades later, the Soviet Union took up arguments on the world stage that were reminiscent of Grotian arguments. Specifically, during negotiations on the Law of the Sea Convention, the Soviet Union's position on free navigation through straits rested on the idea of "international navigation as immutable, almost natural, laws regulating international relations and trade at sea."[19] In some ways, the ebbs and flows of Russian interest in natural law generally and in Grotius specifically speak to the enduring relevance of Grotian thought in international relations. At times of negotiation across the shared global resources, like the sea, and in considering questions of enduring moral import, like killing in war, Grotius' writings continue to offer arguments that states find useful and compelling. When and why states take up Grotian arguments may indicate a deep interest in cooperation in a certain issue area, which is one reason why articulating the difference between the law of nature and the law of nations in Grotian thought is foundational to understanding the application of his many arguments.

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15. Malksoo, "The History of International Legal Theory in Russia," 214, 223.

16. Poldnikov, "The Legacy of Classical Natural Law in Russian Dogmatic Jurisprudence in the Late 19th Century," 74.

17. Butler, "Grotius' Influence in Russia," 260.

18. Poldnikov, "The Legacy of Classical Natural Law in Russian Dogmatic Jurisprudence in the Late 19th Century," 74.

19. Pierre Thevenin, "A Liberal Maritime Power as Any Other? The Soviet Union during the Negotiations of the Law of the Sea Convention," *Ocean Development and International Law* 52, no. 2 (2021): 215.

This article distinguishes between the law of nature and the law of nations in Grotius' legal genealogy, which is necessary to be able to interpret his arguments on actions in international affairs. For Grotius, an act may be in accord with the law of nature but not the law of nations, in accord with the law of nations but not the law of nature, or in accord with both or neither. Grotius' discussions of war, killing by poison, and alliances all require understanding which form of right he is referencing. The Grotian law of nature is rooted in the social nature of man, stemming from a divine creator. The law of nations is the practice of states and the positive law working out of the law of nature between states, several steps removed, and like other areas of positive law, may or may not accord with a view of the law of nature. Grotian law of nations should be understood as state practice, which will look different today from his own international relations context, yet to remain true to his legal philosophy, it should remain grounded in a law of nature that is underlaid with principles of right, justice, and mutual sociability. This article references the rights turn that Grotius' legal theory facilitated, analyzes Grotius' legal genealogy in the Prolegomena of his *On the Law of War and Peace*, and demonstrates the distinction Grotius maintains between the law of nature and law of nations by reviving Grotius' commentary on poison, killing, and unequal alliances.

The Grotian Rights Turn in International Legal Thought

Grotius, known as the "father of modern international law" or the "Miracle of Holland," was a Dutch lawyer who wrote about a hundred years after Martin Luther's posting of the Ninety-five Theses. He wrote extensively on laws between nations, his most well-known work being the massive, *On the Law of War and Peace*.[20] A learned person with gifts and interests in many areas, he also wrote on theology and was embroiled in theological controversies that even landed him in prison and in exile.

Grotius was born in 1583 and lived until 1645. Early in his career, he wrote on the law of the sea and trade.[21] He became a public prosecutor in 1607, giving him a foray into the civil and criminal legal system in Holland at the time. He transitioned from the judicial branch to the executive branch in 1613 when he became a legal advisor.[22] He worked at conferences between the English and the Dutch on issues related to the East Indies.[23] In fact, his boss, Oldenbarnevelt, was instrumental in founding the Dutch East

20. See note 8 above. See also Randall Lesaffer and Janne E. Nijman, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Hugo Grotius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), xix.

21. These include *De jure praedae commentarius*, available today as Hugo Grotius, *De Jure Praedae Commentarius: Ex Auctoris Codice Descripsit Et Vulgavit Hendrik Gerard Hamaker With an Unpublished Work of Hugo Grotius's* (Lawbook Exchange Ltd, 2015), and *Mare liberum* (1609), English edition Hugo Grotius, *The Free Sea*, trans. Richard Hakluyt (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004). See historical background in Edward Gordon, "Grotius and the Freedom of the Seas in the Seventeenth Century," *Willamette Journal of International Law and Dispute Resolution* 16, no. 2 (2008): 252–69.

22. Henk Nellen, "Life and Intellectual Development: An Introductory Biographical Sketch," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hugo Grotius*, ed. Randall Lesaffer and Janne E. Nijman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 23.

23. Nellen, "Life and Intellectual Development: An Introductory Biographical Sketch," 23. Also see Peter Borschberg, "Grotius and the East Indies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hugo Grotius,* ed. Randall Lesaffer and Janne E. Nijman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 65–87.

India Company. Through unfortunate theological differences over predestination related to larger church-state issues, Oldenbarnevelt and Grotius found themselves imprisoned in The Hague. Oldenbarnevelt was beheaded in 1619; Grotius received a sentence of "life imprisonment and confiscation of his property."[24] He, like other famous prisoners throughout history such as Samuel Pufendorf, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, developed ideas while incarcerated that would become part of later masterpieces. In prison, Grotius drafted what may have been an early version of his *On the Law of War and Peace*, as well as poetry and commentary on private law.[25] After several years in prison, in 1621, he escaped in a chest meant for books. Now in exile, he eventually made his way through parts of Europe and became Sweden's ambassador to France, where he spent most of his life. He continually tried to cultivate the unity of the church, an important background concept that informs his legal scholarship.[26]

Grotius is a foundational theorist in the history of modern political thought.[27] He is frequently remembered for his assertion that natural law exists "even if we should concede that which cannot be conceded without the utmost wickedness, that there is no God, or that the affairs of men are of no concern to him."[28] This one phrase, out of a large treatise on law and war, has been taken to be a turning point in the history of political thought, moving human rights and law into the area of human rather than divine origin, although even this assertion is debated. This emphasis is misplaced, as this article argues, given Grotius' presuppositions about where human beings originate from and how their created beings are bound by nature and sociability.[29] Some schol-

24. Nellen, "Life and Intellectual Development: An Introductory Biographical Sketch," 27.

25. Nellen, "Life and Intellectual Development: An Introductory Biographical Sketch," 27–28.

26. Nellen, "Life and Intellectual Development: An Introductory Biographical Sketch," 20. Also see Harm-Jan van Dam, "Church and State," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hugo Grotius*, ed. Randall Lesaffer and Janne E. Nijman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 203.

27. Space does not allow a full accounting of the influence of Grotius on political thought, which would span several volumes. Nevertheless, a few examples or recent scholars who have engaged him in similar areas as this article follow: Hedley Bull, "The Importance of Grotius in the Study of International Relations," in *Hugo Grotius and the Study of International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 23; Charles Edwards, "The Law of Nature in the Thought of Hugo Grotius," *The Journal of Politics* 32, no. 4 (1970): 784–807, https://doi.org/10.2307/2128383; William P. George, "Grotius, Theology, and International Law: Overcoming Textbook Bias," *Journal of Law and Religion* 14, no. 2 (1999): 605–31, https://doi.org/10.2307/3556583; Janne E. Nijman, "Grotius' Imago Dei Anthropology: Grounding Ius Naturae et Gentium," in *International Law and Religion: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Martti Koskenniemi, Monica Garcia-Salmones Rovira, and Paolo Amorosa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Christoph A. Stumpf, *The Grotian Theology of International Law: Hugo Grotius and the Moral Foundations of International Relations* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2006); Oliver O'Donovan, "Theological Writings," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hugo Grotius*, ed. Randall Lesaffer and Janne E. Nijman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 339–63; Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, eds., *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought 100–1625* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Richard Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Ursula Vollerthun and James L. Richardson, *The Idea of International Society: Erasmus, Vitoria, Gentili and Grotius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); H. J. M. Boukema, "Grotius' Concept of Law," *ARSP: Archiv Für Rechts-Und Sozialphilosophie / Archives for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy* 69, no. 1 (1983): 68–73.

28. DJBP Prolegomena, 11.

29. See, for example, John D. Haskell, "Hugo Grotius in the Contemporary Memory of International Law: Secularism, Liberalism, and the Politics of Restatement and Denial," *Emory International Law Review* 25,

ars use this passage from Grotius in the voluntarist and rationalist debates.[30] Other scholarship focuses on the meaning of the law of nations and the development of the law of nations in political and legal thought.[31]

As this article articulates through analysis of the Prolegomena, Grotius' legal philosophy rests on the idea of a creator and enduring natural order, the truth of which he references over and over throughout DJBP. Rather than being seen as a secular turn in rights, this phrase can be understood in several ways. First, for Grotius, human existence is bound in a moral order that is evident; the social relations that follow from this morally ordered existence are true, full stop. While Grotius himself believes in a creator of this order, the existence of the order is demonstrable from human experience, without appealing to religious texts. Secondly, Grotius is putting forward an argument for universality that transcends the Catholic, Calvinist, and Arminian controversies of his day. For his part, Grotius explains that he wrote his treatise on law, war, and peace in part as a response to two extremes: war mongering with little or no cause and, once in war, to act without restraint toward law, whether eternal or human.[32] The other extreme manifests itself as the tendency, of "above everything else ... the duty of loving all men."[33] Grotius suggests that a middle legal road exists such that "men may not believe either that nothing is allowable, or that everything is."[34] He is particularly concerned that "men rush to arms for slight causes or no cause at all, and that when arms have once been taken up there is no longer any respect for law, divine or human."[35] He hopes to articulate how war might be "carried on only within the bounds of law and good faith."[36]

Hathaway and Shapiro, in their historical overview of war, right, and legality, attribute to Grotius the principle of "Might is Right," citing a passage from Grotius' DJBP 3.9.4.2 on postliminy.[37] However, they fail to mention that a few pages later, Grotius comments in DJBP 3.9.10.1, "From the preceding discussion the nature of postliminy may be understood according to the law of nations," meaning his discussion was not a normative claim from the law of nature about might making right.[38] In fact, he denies a might principle without limits when he argues, "that nation is not foolish which does

no. 269 (2011); George, "Grotius, Theology, and International Law"; O'Donovan and O'Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 787–92.

30. Edwards, "The Law of Nature in the Thought of Hugo Grotius," 785–96.

31. A few examples include Edward Dumbauld, "John Marshall and the Law of Nations," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 104, no. 1 (1955): 38–56; Paul W. Kahn, "The Law of Nations at the Origin of American Law," in *International Law and Religion: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Martti Koskenniemi, Monica Garcia-Salmones Rovira, and Paolo Amorosa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Brian Richardson, "The Use of Vattel in the American Law of Nations," *The American Journal of International Law* 106, no. 3 (2012): 547–71.

32. DJBP Prolegomena, 28.

33. DJBP Prolegomena, 29.

34. DJBP Prolegomena, 29.

35. DJBP Prolegomena, 28.

36. DJBP Prolegomena, 25.

37. Oona Hathaway and Scott Shapiro, *The Internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Made the World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 41–42, citing DJBP 3.9.4.2.

38. DJBP 3.9.10.1.

not press its own advantage to the point of disregarding the laws common to nations," and "so the state which transgresses the laws of nature and of nations cuts away also the bulwarks which safeguard its own future peace."[39] These texts show, first, that the law of nations and the law of nature are not the same. More to the point about the "Might is Right" principle is that Grotius, here and in other passages, maintains that because the law of nature is unchanging and universal, its limits apply to all, even to the strong. He argues that just as a person could violate a domestic law in a way that would benefit himself does not mean that he should, so nations should abide by the unchanging law of nature.[40] Reviving Grotius' distinction between the law of nature and the law of nations, as this article does, corrects scholarship that uses Grotian legal philosophy as the foundation for the position that might makes right in the international sphere. Grotius' commentary is extensive and long; not attending to the full meaning and implications of various passages and to his theological presuppositions result in misinterpretation and misapplication of his legal philosophy.[41]

Today, economic trade, specialization of labor, globalism, technology, and inexpensive travel have all contributed to a world that in many ways is integrated across nation states, making Grotian international legal thought relevant now more than ever. However, to understand his commentary on law and war, one must first understand the difference between his law of nature and law of nations, which affects whether his commentary in specific areas should be read as normative, descriptive, or a combination of the two. To summarize the position of this article, Grotius should be read normatively when discussing what is required by the law of nature and be read more descriptively, according to his own political and temporal context, when discussing what is permitted by the law of nations, although even here, the positive law grounding in the law of nature means the law of nations is never too far from normative analysis, especially when it finds a more practice-based norm.[42]

Legal Genealogy

Grotius wrote extensively on the law and war and offers guidance for navigating how to think about right action in international affairs. The very first book of his major treatise offers a philosophy of law, going extensively through the question of what is law? Grotius offers three meanings of law: 1) rule of action toward what is just which he divides into rectorial and equatorial law; 2) body of rights with reference to the person, also expressed as a moral quality toward justice such as powers, property rights, and contracts; 3) law as a rule of moral action that implies obligation, which he further divides into natural law and statutory law (also called established law).[43]

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39. DJBP 3.9.10.1; DJBP Prolegomena 18.

40. DJBP Prolegomena, 18.

41. O'Donovan and O'Donovan warn of this issue with scholarship on Grotius, noting he is "a dangerous person to quote." Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, eds., *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 788.

42. For scholarship on Grotius' distinction between the law of nature and the law of nations, see Nijman, "Grotius' Imago Dei Anthropology: Grounding Ius Naturae et Gentium."

43. DJBP 1.1.3, 1.1.4, 1.1.9.

Legal genealogy, according to Grotius, relates human nature and law to a family tree analogy.[44] First, there is the nature of man, which enters into the mutual relations of society and which he calls the great grandmother. This nature of man is very social, where, for Grotius, humans would choose to interact with each other even if they did not need to. The sociability aspect underlies his philosophy of law. After the social nature of man is the grandmother in the legal genealogy, the law of nature, which is unique to humankind, rooted in a true reality, and created by God, the author of nature. From the law of nature comes an obligation that arises from mutual consent, the mother in the genealogy. And finally, the positive law, or municipal law, the child, results from this obligation based in consent. The figure below visually represents these relationships.

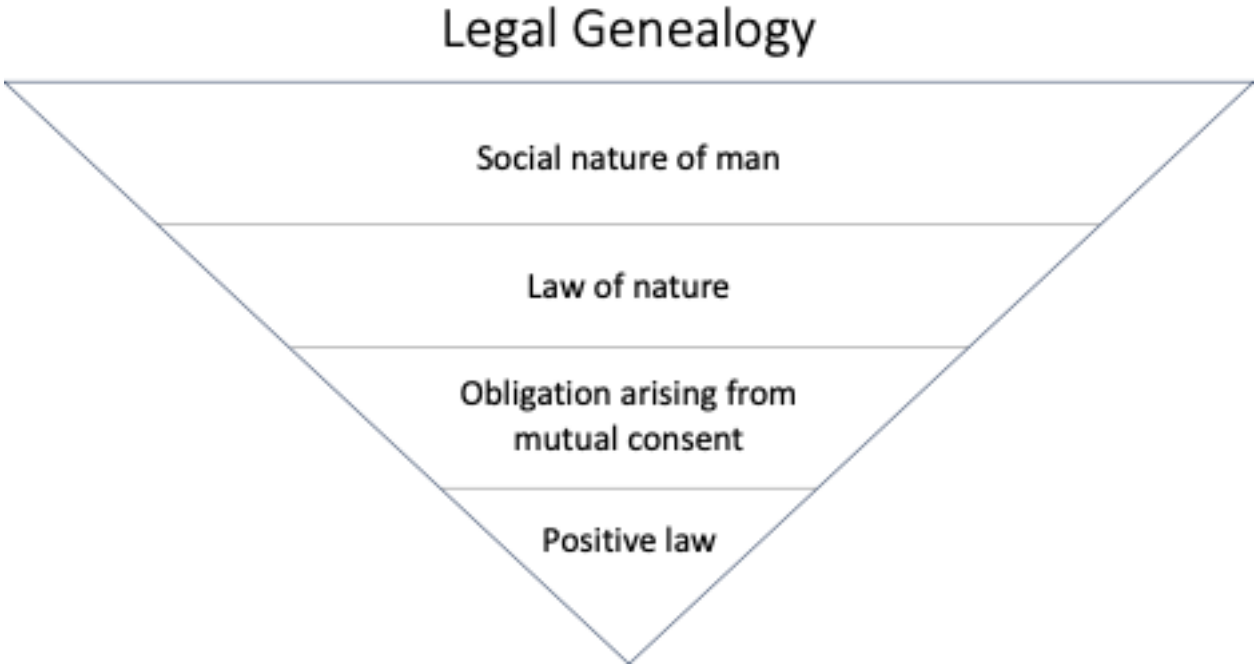

Figure 1.

Grotius takes great care to articulate the existence of the law of nature. He begins by stating, "the law of nature is a dictate of right reason ... and ... inconsequence, such an act is either forbidden or enjoined by the author of nature, God."[45] He goes on to assert that the law of nature is unchangeable, even by God, making an analogy to the truth of mathematical calculations.[46] That said, he suggests that while the law of nature is unchangeable, circumstances may change which alter the way the law of nature applies, similar to the difference between concept and conceptions of rights. He offers the example of common ownership, which could be in accordance with the law of nature, but once a law of ownership is promulgated, one cannot claim a neighbor's

44. DJBP Prolegomena, 16.

45. DJBP 1.1.10.1.

46. DJBP 1.1.10.5.

property.[47] For Grotius, what separates the law of nature for man from more general laws of nature such as those that apply to beasts is doing right, even when it brings harm to oneself; this direction to do right derives from mankind's unique "knowledge of good and evil."[48] This assertion has striking implications in all aspects of life. Grotius does not let people off the hook for knowing good and evil by looking within a domestic legal system. Humankind's knowledge of good and evil even extends to how states, which are made up of people with reason and sociability, interact with other states. From a Grotian perspective, international affairs, because they fall within the social nature that God gives to man, are also subject to right and wrong.

If one is bound by doing what is right, and one knows the difference between good and evil, to will anything other than good is to deviate from the law of nature and descend to the level of the beasts of the earth. In fact, Grotius quotes Plutarch's *Life of Pompey*, "but man becomes brutelike when, contrary to nature, he cultivates the habit of doing wrong."[49] To extend this notion of doing right according to the law of nature, when states act against the law of nature, they lose an aspect of their own humanity. This Grotian idea that when a state's leaders cultivate wrong by habit, they become brutelike, is in conflict with the might makes right idea of the Melian dialogue.

Rewritten, Grotius' legal genealogy applies to international relations. It starts with human nature, the great grandmother, which enters into mutual relations of international society. The law of nature, the grandmother, puts forward knowledge of right action. From this law of nature arises an obligation from the mutual consent of states, what Grotius terms the mother. And from this mutual obligation comes the law of nations, the child.

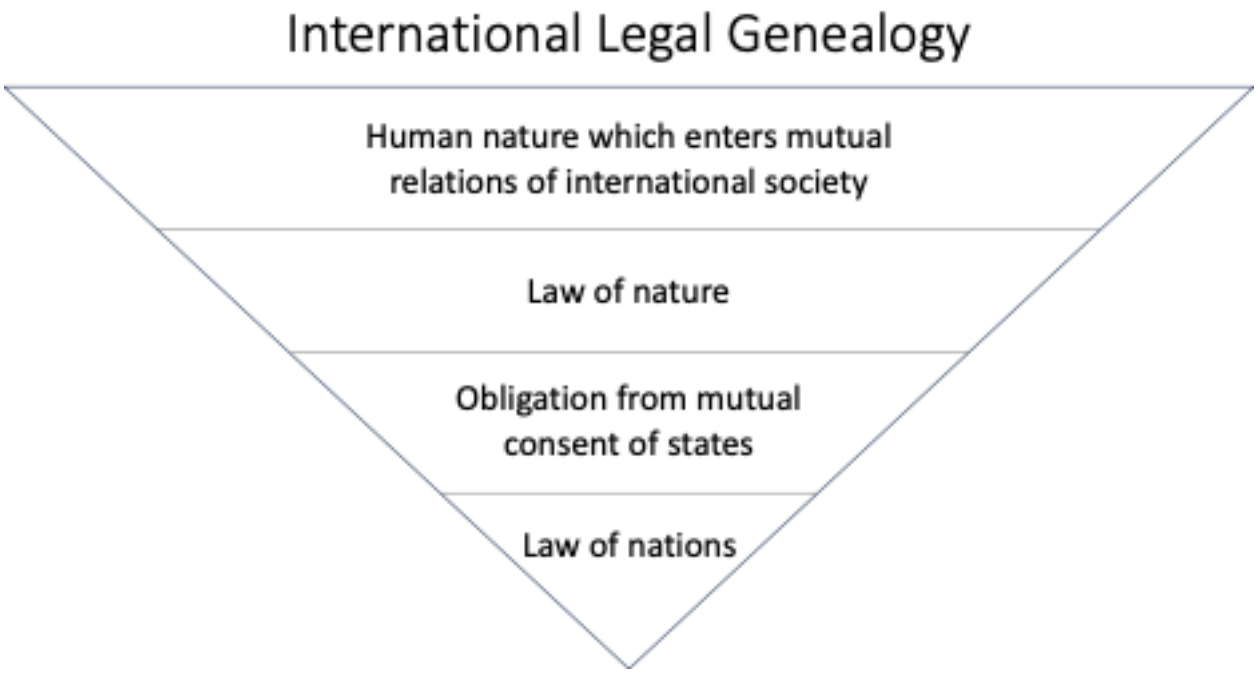

Figure 2.

47. DJBP 1.1.10.7.

48. DJBP 1.1.11.1.

49. DJBP 1.1.12.2.

For Grotius, the law of nations "is the law which has received its obligatory force from the will of all nations, or of many nations ... found in unbroken custom and the testimony of those who are skilled in it."[50] Just as municipal law arises out of obligation from consent because humans by nature need society, in the society of states, laws arise not for the singular interest of one state but for the benefit of the "great society of states."[51] For Grotius, the law of nations is similar to the positive law that seeks to approximate the law of nature that arises out of mutual consent. This theoretical move opens up the possibility of applying the analytical tools used for domestic legal systems to interactions with other states. In other words, because the social nature of man that precedes the law of nature is applicable, for Grotius, to all humankind, similar legal analysis can be used for theorizing and applying law between states (the law of nations) as can be used to apply and theorize law within states (the positive law). Interactions between states are not a mere power calculation because, regardless of one's view of the existence or absence of God, the reality of human existence necessitates mutual interactions with others that are bounded by the law of nature and give rise to obligations. In other words, the human nature of man has, within it, knowledge of right and wrong, and this knowledge pervades human interactions with others, from the local society to the area of international society where states interact with other states. A central power is not necessary for enforcing right, for it is within human nature to know and act on right. Grotius critiques the assertion that man's nature is incapable of distinguishing right from wrong, stating that humans, as distinct from animals, exercise judgment and desire a peaceful, organized, rational society with other humans, and part of this society is international.[52] Grotius critiques a view of law as merely coming from fear of the unjust, in essence containing only a punitive aspect. Grotius suggests that right and justice produce clear consciences that point beyond the mere order of criminal restraint to the flourishing that occurs when humans, in relation to each other, are acting according to laws of nature. Grotius believes justice has the protection of God.[53] As much as Grotius is known as the father of international law, he holds an explicitly Christian view of law and its origins. This religious commitment might make some commentators uncomfortable, but it is weaved obviously throughout his writings, with citations from church fathers and the Bible.[54] But again, even if one left God to the side for the purposes of justice, for Grotius, the law of nature is part of the reality of a human.

Power enters into the equation of right, for without it, enforcing right is difficult. For Grotian legal philosophy, the material capability to enact and enforce right action normatively obligates powerful states. In other words, states that are more materially capable of right action ought to act according to the law of nature rather than taking advantage of weaker states that "suffer what they must" when the "strong do what they

50. DJBP 1.1.14.2.

51. DJBP Prolegomena, 17.

52. DJBP Prolegomena, 8–10.

53. DJBP Prolegomena, 20.

54. The text is replete with references, but see, for example, DJBP 1.1.11.1 citing Romans and Chrysostom; also 1.1.10.5–6.

can."[55] The Grotian obligation to act in accordance with the moral order flips the Melian dialogue on its head. Rather than material power enabling capriciousness and tyranny, in Grotian thought, power ought to enable right action. The much-repeated quote from Thucydides ignores the fact that strong states *can* act rightly; they can act for mutual flourishing. Strength does not necessitate abuse. We would not give a free moral pass to a strong kid on the playground, bloodying his classmates, or a company that was so rich and clever that it could keep slaves for workers without detection by authorities. Likewise, strong states are bound by the law of nature and have more responsibility for acting for the flourishing of human society at the international level precisely because they are more capable of doing so. From this Grotian perspective, might makes right only in the sense of entailing a greater responsibility to do what is right according to the law of nature.

Observing agreements is a principle of the law of nature, which is necessary for a society to have order.[56] Grotius puts this necessity of society first in his genealogy, preceding the law of nature. This sequencing points to the importance that Grotius places on mutual social relations. Individual humans, as well as states, exist in a world where interaction with others is part of reality. This is a social view of the law, with the sociability aspect being foundational to what becomes the positive law. The positive law, whether domestic or international, derives its meaning from its "great grandmother," the social nature of humankind. To have an agreement that is broken adds confusion and undermines trust. This emphasis on knowability and trust arguably finds later expression in Fuller's inner morality of law, which considers morality as coming from the consistency and predictability that all legal systems have.[57]

Grotius extends the importance of agreement beyond private contracts and national governments to agreements between states. To violate the rights of nations erodes future peace.[58] But even if this instrumental reason for not violating the rights of nations does not exist, Grotius still cautions that wisdom would guide us to a policy that is aligned with nature, since nature in the ideal form is ordered toward the supreme good of God.[59] He finds divine law, which he takes to be given to humankind three times (at creation, after the Flood, and through Christ), binding on all as long as it is known to them.[60] This aspect of divine law for those who know it, adds an even higher standard for action.

This discussion of the origins of the law of nature demonstrates that Grotius finds both useful and principled reasons for adhering to natural rights even in international relations. At first glance, justice between nations may not appear a priority, especially for large, prosperous states that seem self-sufficient. According to an interest-based idea of international relations, states will only act virtuously toward other states when it is

55. Thucydides, "The Melian Dialogue," in *Complete Writings: The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley (New York: Modern Library, 1951), Book 5, Chapter 17.

56. DJBP Prolegomena, 15.

57. Lon Fuller, *The Morality of Law*, revised ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

58. DJBP Prolegomena, 18.

59. DJBP Prolegomena, 11–12.

60. DJBP 1.1.15.2.

useful for them to do so. But Grotius reminds his readers that no state is entirely independent, even large, strong states. Following this observation, he argues that powerful states enter into treaties because they will almost certainly need the help of others at some point.[61]

Grotius offers two proofs for the idea of the law of nature among nations. The first is that man's rational and social nature is an antecedent cause that demands this. Grotius' genealogy of law starts with the nature of man, entering into mutual relations of society. According to Grotius, humans are not solitary but are born into society. Similarly, states interact with other states in international society. We cannot escape the idea of borders, which necessitate interactions with those on the other side. These interactions generate mutual relations, which lead to a society of states. In today's world, even more than in Grotius' world, where our economic systems are deeply ingrained with international trade, travel across borders is relatively cheap and easy, and we can obtain information from all over the world, the idea of man's rational and social nature in the international realm seems all too obvious.

The second proof of the law of nature existing within nations is that the law of nature is accepted by most nations.[62] Especially since the postwar era, when states have signed numerous international agreements governing areas as diverse as patents to war, the ubiquitous existence of international law is a fact, even if its effect is not. We can gather that these agreements across states do compose an accepted law of nations rooted in some idea of a law of nature, of the social relations that occur between states. The table below summarizes the legal genealogy for domestic and international law according to Grotius' maternal legal lines.

Legal Genealogy	**Domestic Law**	**International Law**
Great Grandmother	Social Nature of Man	Human nature which enters mutual relations of international society
Grandmother	Law of nature	Law of nature
Mother	Obligation arising from mutual consent	Obligation from mutual consent of states
Child	Positive law	Law of nations

Figure 3.

61. DJBP Prolegomena, 22.

62. DJBP 1.1.12.

Law of Nature and Law of Nations in Practice

As argued above, in Grotian thought, the law of nature and law of nations are not synonymous. Returning to his legal genealogy, the obligation that arises from mutual consent is the bridge between the law of nature and the law of nations. The law of nature puts forward normative and obligatory bounds on human action in international affairs, whereas the law of nations is more descriptive, grounded in what state practice permits or forbids at particular times, which may or may not be in accord with the law of nature. In other words, how states act is not the same as how they ought to act. Grotius explains:

> law of nations is not international law, strictly speaking, for it does not affect the mutual society of nations in relation to one another; it affects only each particular people in a state of peace. For this reason, a single people can change its determination without consulting others; and even this happens, that in different times and places a far different common custom, and therefore a different law of nations (improperly so called), might be introduced.[63]

Grotius' point in this passage is that custom can vary across states and across time periods. What is interesting, however, is the use of "improperly," which reminds the reader of his view that the law of nations, properly understood, should derive from the law of nature, given by the author of nature, which means not all custom is right.[64] Taken to the next step, not all "law of nations" is right law, if unmoored from an idea of human nature grounded in sociability given by God and from the obligation that arises from mutual consent. To explain further, this section will show how Grotius differentiates the law of nature and the law of nations in the areas of poison, killing, and unequal alliances.

Poison

In Book 3, Grotius gives a clear difference between the law of nature and the law of nations by discussing the use of killing by poison. In this case, poison is permitted by the law of nature but not by the law of nations. He explains, "just as the law of nations ... permits many things which are forbidden by the law of nature, so it forbids certain things which are permissible by the law of nature."[65] This passage claims that the law of nature and the law of nations are not the same. Recalling Grotius' legal genealogy, the law of nature is the grandmother of the positive law. From the law of nature arises an obligation that becomes expressed in the form of positive law.

International positive law approximates the practice of the law of nations. However, just as a domestic legal system may end up with provisions that do not exactly accord with the law of nature, so too can international state practice result in customs that diverge from the law of nature. It is not that the law of nations, however, cannot be normative. In fact, Grotius argues that by the law of nature, if a person deserves death,

63. DJBP 2.8.1.2.

64. He cites God as "the author of nature" at DJBP 1.1.10.1.

65. DJBP 3.4.15.1.

it makes no difference if this is by the sword or by poison.[66] The result is the same. If you deserve to die by the law of nature, you have no claim to choose how to die. To reiterate, there is no law of nature against poisoning, according to Grotius. By contrast, he argues that killing an enemy by poison is not permissible under the law of nations.[67] The question then becomes, permissible by whose standard? And for the law of nations, the standard is what is acceptable among other nations. The standard for the law of nature, by contrast, is what is acceptable from the social nature of man. Where the law of nations comes out of obligation from consent to others in society, the law of nature comes out of the social nature of man, which enters into mutual relations of society.

The argument is not that there is nothing normative in the law of nations, rather the normative is what is commonly accepted among nations, a practice-based norm rather than a philosophically based norm of what we derive from the law of nature. For the proof of poisoning being against the law of nations, Grotius lists historical examples from Livy to Cicero. He speculates that the agreement to avoid poison in war arose from kings who were uniquely situated to be victims of poisoning. He does not reveal where this comes from, but he does note that avoiding poison is a commonly accepted practice and is part of the law of nations. This law of nations norm may continue today. We have seen this with international condemnation of Russia's poisoning of people abroad. For example, in 2006, Alexander Litvinenko, a Russian defector, drank tea in London that unbeknownst to him had been poisoned by polonium-210, which caused his death.[68] There have been several other alleged cases of Russian poisoning in recent years that have been condemned by the international community.[69] Taboo against chemical weapons today represents a more widespread use of harmful substances that could be seen as an extension of Grotius' argument that poisoning goes against the law of nations. Chemical weapons have been widely condemned when used. For example, world leaders widely condemned the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime in Syria.[70] Even when state leaders have chemical weapons in their possession, they frequently choose not to use them, leading some scholars to call the chemical weapons taboo "a genuine moral rejection of a means of modern warfare that arose at a particular historical juncture."[71] A generally agreed-upon idea across states that chemical weapons should not be used may constitute a part of today's law of nations.

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66. DJBP 3.4.15.1.

67. DJBP 3.4.15.1–2.

68. Scott Neuman, "Russia Fatally Poisoned A Prominent Defector In London, A Court Concludes," *National Public Radio*, September 22, 2021, https://www.npr.org/2021/09/21/1039224996/russia-alexander-litvinenko-european-court-human-rights-putin.

69. Patrick Reevel, "Before Navalny, A Long History of Russian Poisonings," August 26, 2020, https://abcnews.go.com/International/navalny-long-history-russian-poisonings/story?id=72579648.

70. For Syria's chemical weapons, including a summary of Asad's use, see Gregory D. Koblentz and Natasha Hall, "Syria Still Has Chemical Weapons," *Foreign Affairs*, December 19, 2024, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/syria/syria-still-has-chemical-weapons; Christophe Wasinski, "Politique Internationale de La Souffrance in/Acceptable et Usage d'armes Chimiques En Syrie," *Cultures et Conflits*, no. 93 (2014): 151–55.

71. See especially Richard Price, "A Genealogy of the Chemical Weapons Taboo," *International Organization* 49, no. 1 (1995): 102. For more on the chemical weapons taboo see Richard M. Price, *The Chemical Weapons Taboo*, 1st edition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

Killing

This section turns to Grotius' discussion of killing in war to elucidate how his legal philosophy differentiates the law of nature and the law of nations. In Book 3, Grotius discusses lawful killing. He points out that what is permitted is not the same as what is right, meaning that someone may do something and not get punished, which in a sense makes an action permissible, even if not moral.[72] He is very careful to contextualize the difficult idea of taking a human life. Although "killing is called a right of war," he recognizes that even in a lawful war, knowing the "just limit of self-defence, of recovering what is one's own, or of inflicting punishments" is difficult.[73] In what we think of as "the fog of war" he cites Tacitus, who says, "when war breaks out, innocent and guilty fall together."[74] Grotius then goes through the vast "law of war" that gives a wide permission to belligerents to kill an enemy in any territory, even veering into discussion of the slaughter of infants and women as a commonly accepted practice among nations, citing the Psalms, Homer, Thucydides, and others.[75]

But Grotius then distinguishes who can be killed according to moral justice, indicating that killing must only be as "a just penalty or in case we are able in no other way to protect our life and property."[76] Even when killing is just, he cautions that killing may not be "in harmony with the law of love."[77] Grotius goes through a list of people who ought not be killed, even in a public war. These include children, old men and women (unless guilty of a serious offense); priests and academics whose "literary pursuits ... are honorable and useful to the human race;"[78] also farmers, merchants, prisoners of war, and hostages. He later admonishes that even those who deserve death may receive a pardon, and that this is an act of high-mindedness "in conformity with goodness."[79] While he recognizes killing as part of war and that killing can be justified to protect life and property if there is no alternative, he is reticent to call it right.

Rights in Unequal Alliances: Is Power All That Matters?

To return to the idea of might making right, this section looks at what Grotius says about unequal alliances. First, what does Grotius mean by an unequal alliance? He means a treaty in which one contracting party gains a permanent advantage over the other.[80] Four controversies arise for him from unequal alliances, for which he gives his responses.[81]

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72. DJBP 3.4.2.3.
73. DJBP 3.4.4.
74. DJBP 3.4.5.2.
75. DJBP 3.4.5-14.
76. DJBP 3.11.2.
77. DJBP 3.11.2.
78. DJBP 3.11.10.
79. DJBP 3.11. 7.
80. DJBP 1.3.21.1
81. DJBP 1.3.21.4–7.

First, subjects violate the treaty of alliance. For this example, think of an individual, rogue citizen who aids the other side. What should be done? Grotius says that the state should punish him or turn him over to those he wronged.[82]

Second, states themselves are accused of violating a treaty. What should be done? One ally has the right to compel adherence to the treaty and to punish violators.[83] We do see power entering into the equation here, but it is power to enforce right, not usurp it. This is an important distinction about using power within the bounds of and for the purposes of law, rather than using law as an instrument of power.

Third, allies under the protection of one state have differences amongst themselves. What should be done? Grotius suggests that a conference of allies should be held, or that the disputing allies should refer the case to arbitrators.[84] This approach is consistent with Grotius' idea of mutuality, where the positive law comes out of obligation from mutual consent. If there is a discrepancy about what this obligation is or what it requires by whom, Grotius unsurprisingly points to a sociable means of resolution, whether amongst allies conferencing together or with the help of arbitration. An alternative theory based in power determinants like economic and military statistics might instead say that the state offering protection to disputing allies should make the decision. However, Grotius' view of the social nature of humans and the mutual nature of obligation points instead to a collegial resolution rather than a unilateral determination.[85]

Fourth, subjects assert they have suffered wrong by their own state. Here, Grotius says there is no right to intervention. He references Aristotle in arguing that the purpose of an alliance is to prevent wrongdoing between the states, not within them, which is an argument for state sovereignty. He finally argues that "the right on the part of the leading ally to hold command, that is hegemony, does not take away the independence of the others."[86] We see this ongoing respect for a weaker state as its own sovereign.

Even with these controversies, Grotius notices the reality that if one state is vastly superior in power relative to others, it will gradually usurp their sovereignty, especially without limits to the time within the treaty. This brings us to the question of the right exercise of sovereignty. Grotius distinguishes between right and exercise, where a person might have a right by virtue of a political system to use power but be unable to actually exercise it at any given moment. An example is a legislator traveling to a foreign country. He will not be able to exercise his political authority there. This corresponds to a right to sovereignty that cannot be exercised because it is thwarted by powerful states.

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82. DJBP 1.3.21.4–7.

83. DJBP 1.3.21.4–7.

84. DJBP 1.3.21.4–7.

85. John Jay, having read Grotius' treatise on war and peace, suggested mixed commissions to resolve lingering disputes between the newly formed United States and Britain in 1780s. James Brown Scott, "John Jay, First Chief Justice of the United States," *Columbia Law Review* 6, no. 5 (1906): 289–325, https://doi.org/10.2307/1109004; James Brown Scott, "Introduction," in *On the Law of War and Peace*, trans. Francis Kelsey (Birmingham: The Legal Classics Library, 1984), xxxix–xl.

86. DJBP 1.3.8.

Even so, using the law of nature rather than only the practice of the law of nations makes room for an enduring justice based on human nature and moral knowledge, an attribute that distinguishes man from beasts. And here Grotius cautions against destroying our own enduring peace by prioritizing an immediate gain, offering a caution especially to those stronger states that are in a position to usurp the sovereignty of others: "If a citizen who breaches civil Right for his own immediate interest destroys the fabric which protects the enduring interests of himself and his posterity, so a people that violates natural Rights and the Rights of nations, undermines the supports of its own future tranquility."[87] Indeed, the ongoing and future peace requires that people work in international affairs with the long game in mind. Immediate interest ought to be subjected to a standard of natural right, which supports long-term interest by tranquility.

To the point about unequal alliances, the idea of the shifting of power and changing of types of international order is relevant. Grotius explains, "there is no state so powerful that it may not some time need the help of others outside itself, either for purposes of trade, or even to ward off the forces of many foreign nations united against it," which is why "even the most powerful peoples and sovereigns seek alliances, which are quite devoid of significance ... to ... those who confine law within the boundaries of states."[88] This early idea about the need for mutual cooperation is that states cannot predetermine when they will need the assistance of friendly nations. A state powerful now may not forever be so. At some point—and no state knows when this will be—even the most powerful state will need the help of others. What kind of international order it has built and upheld through international agreements and domestic application of them, with transparent, due process, might influence how other states respond in its time of need.

Justice enters the analysis of state-to-state interaction in two main ways. The first is how one state treats other states: even when in power, a stronger state's actions will have consequences for the future when it may no longer enjoy a superior position, or even if it does, when it might need assistance. In this self-interested way, states ought to consider and act on the law of nature because their actions shape the disposition that other states will have in a future, undetermined time of need. If a state is trustworthy and follows through on its commitments, it will be able to count on the aid of others who share this reciprocity. On the other hand, for states that extract every bit of concession in overbearing ways on weaker states, we should not be surprised to have other states relish the chance to exploit them at a moment of weakness.

The second way to consider justice in moderating the idea of might makes right is that might should enable right. For as much as Grotius is hailed or derided for his brief comment that there would be "the maintenance of social order" as the "source of law" with obligations to each other "even if we should concede that which cannot be conceded without the utmost wickedness, that there is no God, or that the affairs

87. From Hugo Grotius, *The Right of War and Peace,* Prolegomena, reproduced in Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, eds., *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought 100–1625*, 795.

88. DJBP Prolegomena 22.

of men are of no concern to him,"[89] his writings demonstrate that he does in fact believe God is watching and judging human actions. Where the first sense of justice is enforced by self-interested state concern with how other states will treat it in the future, this second sense of justice is enforced by the idea of a divine being to whom humans are accountable, the being who gave people reason and sociability, leading to the law of nature, obligation, and the law of nations. Grotius holds Christian rulers, diplomats, and statesmen to the standard that the creation of law based on the nature of man does not stop within the borders of a state. He argues that rulers should be held accountable, especially for "useless shedding of blood."[90] For Grotius, the law of nature extends to all peoples, and the fact that the law of nations has emerged from state practice that implicitly takes account of human limits means that it is both descriptive and prescriptive.

Theorizing A Law of Nations Rooted in the Law of Nature

This article has argued that the distinction between the law of nature and the law of nations in Grotian thought is necessary for understanding his analysis of the permissibility of actions in international affairs. His law of nature is rooted in human sociability that obligates right action. The law of nations comes through mutual consent of states and is similar to, although not identical to, the positive law application of municipal law between states. Because the law of nations is, by definition, linked to state practice, it changes over time within the generally accepted conditions and actions put forward by states interacting with each other.

Grotius' discussion of practical aspects of war and peace, including poison, killing in war, and unequal alliances, must be understood in each case as to whether he is discussing the law of nature or the law of nations. While in an ideal world, actions according to the law of nature and law of nations would converge, Grotius' diplomatic, real-world experience taught him that this is not always the case. When reading Grotius' on permissibility of actions between states, analysis must distinguish when he is speaking of the law of nature, which is less changeable and more normative, and the law of nations, which does change according to the practice of the international order at any particular time, although they should not be wholly unmoored from their foundations in mutual consent and obligation, right, and sociability. Formulating a theory of what constitutes the law of nations today, which will be informed by public international law and state practice, should not stray far from the underlying sociability principles of the law of nature that promise trust, good faith, and reliability.

For international affairs today, our own society of states will have a law of nations that looks different from Grotius' time, as state practice and technology have evolved. This means that Russia's aggression in Ukraine, if followed by other nations, may alter the day-to-day expectations and ways of interacting across states. The more other states buy into Russian historical revisionism and use of force, the more the law of nations changes toward those means. On the other hand, the more states counter Russia's ac-

89. DJBP Prolegomena, 8–11.

90. DJBP 3.11.19.

tions and unite against the illegitimate use of force (e.g., in violation of agreed upon border treaties), the more the existing law of nations will hold. It is still too early to tell what the lasting consequences of the Russia-Ukraine war will be. The liberal international order may be strengthened if the end result is Russian failure—a weaker, more isolated Russia that is worse off for having pursued aggression. The message to other states considering revisionism would be clear: act against the principles of the existing law of nations, of existing treaties outlining boundaries of state sovereignty, and you will fail. However, if Russia ultimately gains ground, in terms of actual territory, or in terms of alliances, partners, and world opinion, the opposite will be true, and other states may use force to attempt to extract territorial and political gains. Grotius' legal philosophy would recognize these facts on the ground while reminding leaders of all nations that the universal law of nature binds all and benefits all together, that leaders should abide by agreements within the society of states, and that all should pursue right action vis-à-vis other people because human sociability is intrinsic, universal, and enduring, and because right action is knowable.

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Human Rights and Orthodox Christianity: Learning from our Differences

by John Witte, Jr.

Orthodox Christians have long been wary about the modern regime of human rights, given its common association with liberalism, libertinism, and individualism; its insistence on separating church and state, if not secularizing society altogether; its disastrous effects on post-Soviet Russia; and its growing attacks on majority and minority religions alike. His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, however, has recently encouraged his followers to see that rights and liberties are God's gifts to humanity, even if they have sometimes become prodigal and dangerous when not well rooted and routed. Rights and liberties, the Patriarch has recently argued, ultimately depend on Christian and other ontological beliefs and values for their grounding and reformation. Particularly Orthodox theologies of conversion and theosis, symphonia and society, church and state, sacrifice and martyrdom, silence and love have much to offer to modern human rights around the world—as illustrated in the opening story in this article about an encounter with Moscow Patriarch Alexei II.

Keywords: Patriarch Bartholomew; Patriarch Alexei II; Orthodox Christianity; Russian Orthodoxy; proselytism; human rights; religious liberty; freedom of speech; freedom of silence; church-state relations; symphonia; liberalism; individualism

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Human Rights and Orthodox Christianity

Learning from our Differences

John Witte, Jr.

Patriarch Alexei II and the Freedom of Silence

In 1995, I had the privilege of joining a small group of human rights advocates who had a forty-five-minute appointment with Patriarch Alexei II, the religious leader of the Russian Orthodox Church.[1] The meeting—long and difficult in planning—was designed to foster a frank discussion about the problem of proselytism in post-glasnost Russia.

With Mikhail Gorbachev's liberating policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the late 1980s, various Western missionary groups had poured into the long-closed Soviet Union to preach their faiths, to offer their services, to convert new souls. Initially, the Russian Orthodox clergy and laity had welcomed these foreigners, particularly their foreign co-religionists, with whom they had lost contact for many decades. But soon the Russian Orthodox came to resent these foreign religions, particularly those from North America and Western Europe, that assumed a democratic human rights ethic. Local religious groups resented the participation in the marketplace of religious ideas that democracy assumes. They resented the toxic waves of materialism and individualism that democracy inflicts. They resented the massive expansion of religious pluralism that democracy encourages. And they resented the extravagant forms of religious speech that democracy protects.

Led by Patriarch Alexei, the Russian Orthodox Church had turned to the state to protect them, much as a millennium of Orthodox church leaders had done as part of the constitutional and cultural system of *symphonia*. They called for new statutes and regulations restricting the constitutional rights of their foreign religious rivals—through firm new antiproselytism laws, cult registration requirements, tightened visa

1. This text is drawn in part from my chapter in Norman Doe and Aetios Nikiforos, eds., *Legal Thought and Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Addresses of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew* (London: Routledge, 2023), 59–68 and is used herein with permission. The opening section on the meeting with Patriarch Alexei is included in John Witte, Jr., *Table Talk: Short Talks on Law and Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2023; open access), 12–14. For a bit more about Orthodox law and theology, see Paul Valliere and Randall A. Poole, eds., *Law and the Christian Tradition in Modern Russia* (London: Routledge, 2022); John Witte, Jr. and Frank S. Alexander, eds., *Modern Orthodox Teachings on Law, Politics, and Human Nature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); and John Witte, Jr. and Michael Bourdeaux, eds., *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia: The New War for Souls* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).

controls, and various other discriminatory restrictions on non-Orthodox and non-Russian religions. The Russian Parliament had already enacted the first of these proposed restrictions before our meeting and had several bills pending.

Our little group of human rights lawyers and scholars, led by my colleague Harold J. Berman, a fluent Russian speaker and expert on Russian law and religion, was there to try to persuade the Patriarch and Parliament to abandon this restrictive campaign, and to embrace free speech and free exercise rights for all parties—Orthodox and non-Orthodox, Russian-born and foreigners alike.

The Patriarch and his entourage came into the room where we had gathered. We all stood and bowed in respect. "God bless you, my brothers and sisters," he said through an interpreter. "Let's take a moment for prayer." For the next forty-four minutes—I timed it—we all stood in absolute silence. The Patriarch had his eyes tightly shut and was swaying slightly throughout. Then the Patriarch fell to his knees, we with him, as he prayed aloud: "Oh Lord, who taught us by word and by deed, by silence and by suffering, teach us all how better to live out your final commandment: 'Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.'" The Patriarch then stood, faced us, and said: "God bless you, my brothers and sisters." And he left, and his entourage with him.

There we stood. Dressed in our best suits, primed with our best arguments for freedom of speech and religion, armed with strong letters from political and religious leaders who opposed the Orthodox Church's political protectionism, we were utterly defeated by the power of silence by a religious leader. Rarely have I heard a more powerful sermon or speech. Rarely have I seen such a moving expression of freedom of speech. Rarely have I been more convinced by the wisdom of the ancient prophecy: "For everything there is a season and a time ... a time to keep silent and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7b).

Here was a poignant glimpse into one of many distinct features of the Orthodox Christian tradition: its celebration of spiritual silence as its highest virtue—not just for hermits and monastics, but for every member of the church. This was a sobering lesson for us busy Western Christians, particularly Protestants, to hear. We are always so busy getting on with the Lord's work—with our singing and praying, teaching and preaching, billboards and crusades, relentlessly sharing the Gospel in word and deed, in person and on screen. Silence and meditation, the Patriarch taught us, are virtues and gifts to be enjoyed, forms of worship to be exercised. There is a reason the Bible says, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

This was also a sobering lesson for us constitutional lawyers, brought up to believe that an open and robust marketplace of ideas, including religious ideas, was the best way to find truth. We were all weaned on John Milton's famous panegyric to freedom of speech in his *Areopagitica* (1644), which argued that the best antidote to bad speech is good speech, and the best pathway to religious freedom was allowing an open contest between truth and falsehood, between old dogmas and new beliefs. In forty-five short minutes, the Patriarch taught us all a rather different way of thinking about the freedom of speech and the freedom of silence.

Ontological Differences Between Orthodoxy and Western Liberalism

"Ontological differences!" In 1997, that was the phrase His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople used to explain the Orthodox Church's reticence about embracing the human rights reforms that Western churches were advocating for the newly liberated Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.[2] "The Orthodox Church is not a museum church," the Patriarch explained. "It is a living church which, although keeping the old traditions from the very beginning, nevertheless understands very well the message of every new era, and it knows how to adapt itself." The "message" of the modern era is Enlightenment liberalism, libertinism, materialism, scientism, individualism, and human rights. While Eastern Orthodoxy has resisted this modern message, Western Christianity has come under its "shadow." Hence the "ontological differences" between the churches and cultures of the East and the West. "Since the Enlightenment, the spiritual bedrock of Western civilization has been eroded and undermined. Intelligent, well-intentioned people sincerely believed that the wonders of science could replace the miracles of faith. But these great minds missed one vital truth—that faith is not a garment to be slipped on and off; it is a quality of the human spirit, from which it is inseparable." "There are a few things [the West] can learn from the Orthodox Church," the Patriarch declared—not least "that, paradoxically, faith can endure without freedom, but freedom cannot long abide without faith."[3]

Twenty years later, in his 2017 Berlin Lecture on "Orthodoxy and Human Rights," Patriarch Bartholomew echoed and elaborated some of these same themes.[4] He continued to argue that human rights were shaped by the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, with its false "optimistic anthropology," "its forgetfulness of sins, its rationalism, individualism and autonomism." The Patriarch repeated common Orthodox worries that the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a "smug" "humanistic manifesto" and a secular "Trojan horse" filled with dangerous modernist ideas that threatened the heart and soul of Orthodox faith, family, morality, and nationhood. And he repeated recent warnings that the newly liberated Orthodox Churches of the Soviet bloc and Eastern Europe were being forced to compete with Western missionizing faiths in an open marketplace of religious ideas, without having the experiences or resources needed to compete.[5]

In this same 2017 Lecture, however, the Patriarch also pushed beyond these "ontological differences." He now stated that human rights ideals of liberty, equality, dignity, and fraternity had been "rooted in Christian culture" before the Enlightenment and

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2. Patriarch Bartholomew, "Address of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew *Phos Hilaron* 'Joyful Light,'" Georgetown University, October 21, 1997, https://www.oocities.org/trvalentine/orthodox/bartholomew_phos.html. See further John Chryssavgis, ed., *Speaking the Truth in Love: Theological and Spiritual Exhortations of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

3. Ibid.

4. Patriarch Bartholomew, "For Human Rights: HAH Lecture at the Headquarters of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Berlin," June 1, 2017, http://arhiva.spc.rs/eng/his_allholiness_patriarch_bartholomew_germany.html. See further John Chryssavgis, ed., *In the World, Yet Not of the World: Speaking the Truth in Love: Social and Global Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2022).

5. Ibid.

could still be "nourished from that deep Christian freedom, freedom through faith, expressed in selfless love." He stressed that faith and freedom together could "mobilize forces of solidarity in man and spur him on the fight against justice and for a more humane world." He urged all Christians to embrace "solidarity, peace and reconciliation and ... protection of fundamental human rights." He encouraged his fellow Orthodox Christians not to reject modernity altogether, but to embrace its promise of individual freedom while also demonstrating the "power of social freedom." He further encouraged the Orthodox faithful not to equate modernity with secularism alone, but to appreciate the diverse "political, social, and economic realities" of the modern world. And he encouraged the Orthodox faithful to look beyond the separatism, secularism, and *laïcité* of some Western laws and appreciate that some modern Western nations still established Christianity and shared the Orthodox appreciation for "the close relationship between Church, people, and state." "Human rights will remain a major concern for mankind in the future," the Patriarch concluded, and it is an "essential priority for our churches, together with their commitment to the implementation of human rights, to be the place of that freedom at the core of which is not the claiming of individual rights, but love and the *diakonia*, the freedom that is not a work of man but a gift from God."[6]

Patriarch Bartholomew's growing appreciation for the mutually beneficial interaction of Christianity and human rights offers new hope for deeper Christian ecumenism and broader religious collaboration in support of human rights around the world. The "ontological differences" between Western and Eastern Christians remain real and require continued conversation to foster better mutual understanding. The next two sections of this chapter take up two areas of difference today but concludes with a couple illustrations of what Western churches and human rights advocates "can learn from the Orthodox Church," as Patriarch Bartholomew put it.

Baptism, Mission, and Conversion

Let's go a little deeper into the ontological differences over "baptism, mission, and conversion" that had led to our group's meeting with Patriarch Alexei in 1995. Ironically, it was the liberation of traditional Orthodox lands in the 1990s that highlighted one area of intense "ontological difference" today—that between Eastern and Western Christian views of baptism, mission, and conversion. Mikhail Gorbachev's campaigns of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the late 1980s soon led to the implosion of the Soviet Union and eventual dissolution of Soviet bloc lands from the Baltics to the Balkans. Russia and several Eastern European countries threw off their Communist yokes and created new Western-style constitutions and ratified many of the most progressive international human rights instruments. The Russian Constitution of 1993, with its sweeping embrace of rights and liberties, was a model that a number of former Soviet nations followed.[7]

This rapid political transformation not only liberated local Orthodox and other churches, but also opened these societies to foreign religious groups, who were granted

6. Ibid. See further discussion in A.G. Roeber, *Orthodox Christians and the Rights Revolution in America* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2023).

7. Michael Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnost, and Gospel* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990).

rights to enter these regions for the first time in decades. After 1990, these foreign missionaries came in increasing numbers to preach their faiths, to offer their services, to share their literature, to build new schools, to establish new charities, and to convert new souls. Initially, Orthodox and other local religious groups welcomed these foreigners, particularly their co-religionists abroad, with whom they had lost real contact for many decades. But local Orthodox leaders soon came to resent these foreign missionaries, particularly those from North America, Western Europe, South Korea, and elsewhere who entered in large numbers to preach their gospels and compete for souls. The long-trammeled Russian churches had none of the training, resources, experiences, or expectations needed to participate in an open marketplace of (religious) ideas, and too little time to prepare themselves.[8]

A new war for souls thus broke out in these regions—a war to reclaim the traditional Orthodox souls of these newly opened societies and a war to retain adherence and adherents to the Orthodox Church. In part, this was a legal war—as local Orthodox leaders pressured their political leaders to adopt statutes and regulations restricting the constitutional rights of their foreign religious rivals. Beneath shiny constitutional veneers of religious freedom for all and unqualified ratification of international human rights instruments, several Orthodox-majority countries in the 1990s and early 2000s passed firm new anti-proselytism laws, cult registration requirements, tightened visa controls, and various discriminatory restrictions on new or newly arrived religions. Those policies have continued in some Orthodox-majority lands of Eastern Europe today, driving beleaguered religious minorities and foreigners to seek protection from the European Court of Human Rights.[9]

In part, this has been a theological war between fundamentally different theologies about the nature and purpose of mission. Western Christians, particularly Evangelicals, assume that in order to be saved every person must make a personal, conscious commitment to Christ—to be born again, to convert. Any person who has not been born again, or who, once reborn, now leads a nominal or non-Christian life, is a legitimate object of evangelism—regardless of whether and where the person has already been baptized. The principal means of reaching that person is through proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel. Any region that has not been open to the Gospel is a legitimate "foreign mission field"—regardless of whether the region might have another majority Christian church in place. Under this definition of mission, traditional Orthodox lands, where the Communist yoke had long suppressed the Gospel, are prime targets for Christian witness.[10]

The Orthodox Church, too, believes that each person must come into a personal relationship with Christ in order to be saved. But such a relationship comes more through birth than rebirth, and more through regular sacramental living than a one-time conversion. A person who is born into the Orthodox Church has by definition started

8. John Witte, Jr., ed., "Soul Wars in Russia: The Problem of Proselytism in Russia," special issue, *Emory International Law Review* 12 (1998): 1–738; John Witte, Jr., ed., "Pluralism, Proselytism and Nationalism in Eastern Europe," special issue, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 36 (1999): 1–286.

9. See cases in John Witte, Jr. and Andrea Pin, "Faith in Strasbourg and Luxembourg: The Fresh Rise of Religious Freedom Litigation in the Pan-European Courts," *Emory Law Journal* 70 (2021): 587–661.

10. Witte and Bourdeaux, eds., *Proselytism and Orthodoxy,*108–226.

theosis—the process of becoming "acceptable to God" and ultimately "coming into eternal communion with Him." Through infant baptism, and later through the Mass, the Eucharist, the icons, and other services of the Church, a person slowly comes into fuller realization of this divine communion.[11] Proclamation of the Gospel is certainly a legitimate means of aiding the process of *theosis*—and is especially effective in reaching those not born into the Orthodox Church. But, for the Orthodox, "mission does not aim primarily at transmission of moral and intellectual convictions and truths, but at the ... incorporation of persons into the communion that exists in God and in the Church."[12]

This theology has led the Orthodox Church to quite a different understanding of the proper venue and object of evangelism. Traditional Orthodox lands are hardly an open "mission field" that other Christians are free to harvest. To the contrary, this territory and population are under the "spiritual protectorate" of the Orthodox Church. Any person who has been baptized into the Orthodox Church is no longer a legitimate object of evangelism—regardless of whether that person leads only a nominal or non-Christian life. Only if that person actively spurns the Orthodox Church, or if they are excommunicated, are they open to the evangelism of others.

This is an important theological source of the Orthodox clergy's complaints about the proselytizing activity of many Western churches in their traditional homelands. They are not only complaining about improper methods of evangelism—the bribery, blackmail, coercion, and material inducements used by some groups; the garish carnivals, flashy billboards, and expensive media blitzes used by other faiths. They are also complaining about the improper presence of missionaries—those who have come not to aid the Orthodox Church in its mission, but to compete with the Orthodox Church for its own souls on its own territory.[13]

Human rights norms alone will ultimately do little to resolve this fundamental theological difference between Orthodox and Western Christians. "In seeking to limit the incursion of missionary activity we often are accused of violating the right to freedom of conscience and the restriction of individual rights," Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexei explained in 1997 during the height of the soul wars in Russia. "But freedom does not mean general license. The truth of Christ which sets us free (John 8:32) also places upon us a great responsibility, to respect and preserve the freedom of others. However, the aggressive imposition by foreign missionaries of views and principles which come from a religious and cultural environment which is strange to us, is in fact a violation of both [our] religious and civil rights."[14] The Orthodox Church must be as free in the exercise of its theology of baptism, mission, and conversion as Western Evangelicals wish to be. Both groups' rights, when fully exercised, will inevitably clash.

The thirty-year war for souls in traditional Orthodox lands requires a theological resolution as much as a human rights resolution. Interreligious dialogue, education, and

11. Ibid., 31–77.

12. Joel A. Nichols, "Mission, Evangelism, and Proselytism in Christianity: Mainline Conceptions as Reflected in Church Documents," *Emory International Law Review* 12 (1998): 563–650, at 624.

13. See Harold J. Berman, "Freedom of Religion in Russia: An Amicus Brief for the Defendant," in *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia: The New War for Souls*, ed. John Witte, Jr. and Michael Bourdeaux (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), 261–83.

14. Quoted in Witte and Bourdeaux, eds., *Proselytism and Orthodoxy*, 22–23.

cooperation sound like tried and tired remedies, but these are essential first steps. Self-imposed guidelines of prudent and respectful mission work by Western Christians are essential steps as well: know and appreciate Orthodox history, culture, and language; avoid Westernization of the Gospel and First Amendmentization of politics; deal honestly and respectfully with theological and liturgical differences; respect and advocate the religious rights of all peoples; be Good Samaritans before good preachers; proclaim the Gospel in word and deed.[15] Such steps will slowly bring current antagonists beyond competing caricatures into a greater mutual understanding and a greater unity in diversity.

The ultimate theological guide to resolve the deeper conflict over mission and conversion, however, must be a more careful balancing of the Great Commission and the Golden Rule. Jesus called his followers to mission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. ..." (Matt. 28:19). But Jesus also called his followers to exercise restraint and respect: "Do unto others, as you would have done unto you" (Matt. 7:12). If both sides in the current war for souls would strive to hold these principles in better balance, their dogmatism might be tempered and their conflicts assuaged.

Church, State, and Nation

A related ontological difference between Eastern and Western Christianity is reflected in the Orthodox Church's attitude toward the state. The Orthodox Church has no concept akin to the Western dualistic constructions of two cities, two powers, two swords, two kingdoms, two realms—let alone a "high and impregnable wall of separation between church and state."[16] The Orthodox world, rooted in the ancient Roman and Byzantine Empires, views church and state as an organic community, a veritable *symphonia* of religion, politics, society, language, ethnicity, and national culture.[17]

For many centuries, this organic unity of church, state, and nation gave the Orthodox clergy a unique spiritual and moral voice in traditional Orthodox societies, and unique access to the power, privilege, and protection of the political authorities. It allowed the Orthodox clergy to lead and comfort Orthodox lands in times of great crisis —during the Hun, Mongol, Magyar, and Ottoman invasions, the Napoleonic Wars, the Turkish genocide, the great World Wars, and more. It allowed the Orthodox church to heal and teach these societies through its schools and monasteries, its literature and preaching. It also allowed the Orthodox clergy to nourish and inspire the people through the power and pathos of its liturgy, icons, prayers, and music.

But this organic unity also subjected the Orthodox Churches to substantial state control over their polities and properties, and substantial restrictions on their religious ministry and prophecy. It also required them to be obedient and supportive of the political authorities. In return for their subservience, the Orthodox clergy could turn to the state to protect them against religious outsiders and competition. A poignant

15. See examples in ibid., 185–96, 323–40.

16. See John Witte, Jr., "Facts and Fictions About the History of Separation of Church and State," *Journal of Church and State* 48 (2006): 15–46.

17. See John McGuckin, *The Ascent of Christian Law: Patristic and Byzantine Formulations of a New Civilization* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012).

illustration of this is offered by Joachim, the Patriarch of Moscow at the turn of the eighteenth century. In a 1690 testament, the Patriarch implored co-Tsars Ivan and Peter "never to allow any Orthodox Christians in their realm to entertain any close friendly relations with heretics and dissenters—with Latins, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Tatars." He further urged the tsars to pass a decree "that men of foreign creeds who come here to this pious realm shall under no circumstances preach their religion, disparage our faith in any conversations or introduce their alien customs derived from their heresies for the temptation of Christians." "Such was the position of the Muscovite Church," leading Russian historian Firuz Kazemzadeh concludes, "and such, in essence, it has remained" not only in Russia but in many parts of the Orthodox world today.[18]

We can easily read the recent Orthodox church-state alliances in fighting against foreign missionaries and faiths as yet another act in this centuries-long drama. And, in turn, we can see the sad condonation of the current Moscow Patriarchate in Russia's outrageous war in Ukraine as the necessary price for the Orthodox church to pay for Putin's ongoing protection and patronage.

With this "ontological difference," too, simple invocations of religious freedom norms, American-style separatism, or French-style *laïcité* will do little to assuage these conflicts between East and West. Western Christians must appreciate that their own long history of church-state relations featured a variety of constitutional forms and norms, some of them rather close to the *symphonia* of Orthodox lands. They must also remember the adage of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. that "[t]he life of the law is not logic but experience."[19] Constitutional laws are not commodities to be imported or exported *en masse* to other nations. These laws must grow out of the souls and soils of the people who create and live under them, who breathe into them their own cultures and experiences, their own *Volksgeist.* Western formulations of human rights, religious freedom, and church-state relations cannot and should not be fully duplicated or imitated in Orthodox lands. Indeed, the sobering lesson learned during the heady days of *glasnost* and *perestroika* was that the full-scale importation of these Western constitutional norms created a toxic compound that these long-closed societies had little capacity to absorb. The better course for Orthodox lands is to use Western constitutional and human rights norms as a valuable resource and inspiration for gradually reconstructing a better constitutional order for the protection of individual and institutional religious freedom for all their people.

What Western Christianity Has Contributed to Human Rights

Orthodox Christians, in turn, must appreciate that modern norms of human rights and religious freedom are not simple creations of the Western Enlightenment nor a ward under the exclusive patronage of its secular liberal values. A veritable cottage industry of recent new scholarship has documented the long history of rights talk before the En-

18. Firuz Kazemzadeh, "Reflections on Church and State in Russian History," in *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia*, ed. Witte and Bourdeaux, 227–38, at 236; see further Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky, eds., *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

19. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., *The Common Law* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1881), 1.

lightenment. We now know a great deal more about classical Roman understandings of rights (*iura*), liberties (*libertates*), capacities (*facultates)*, powers (*potestates*), and related concepts, and their elaboration by medieval and early modern civilians. We can now pore over an intricate latticework of arguments about individual and group rights and liberties developed by medieval Catholic canonists and moralists. We can now trace the ample expansion and reform of this medieval handiwork by neo-scholastic writers in early modern Spain and Portugal and by Lutheran, Anglican, and Calvinist Protestants on the Continent and in Great Britain and their colonies. We now know a good deal more about classical republican theories of liberty developed in Greece and Rome, and their transformative influence on early modern common lawyers and political revolutionaries on both sides of the Atlantic. We now know, in brief, that the West knew ample "liberty before liberalism"[20] and had many fundamental rights in place before there were modern democratic revolutions fought in their name. It is a telling anecdote that by 1650, almost every right listed 150 years later in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) and the United States Bill of Rights (1791) had already been defined, defended, and died for by Christians on both sides of the Atlantic.[21]

To be sure, some modern human rights advocates have deprecated and sometimes denied these Christian roots, and many current formulations of human rights are suffused with fundamental liberal beliefs and values, some of which run counter to cardinal Christian beliefs. But liberalism does not and should not have a monopoly on the nurture of human rights. The law of human rights norms is the *ius gentium* of our times, the common law of nations, which a variety of Jewish, Greek, Roman, Patristic, Catholic, Protestant, and Enlightenment movements have historically nurtured in the West, and which today still needs the constant nurture of multiple communities, in the West and beyond. For human rights are "middle axioms" of political discourse.[22] They are a means to the ends of justice and the common good, and they depend upon the visions and values of human communities for their content and coherence—or what the Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain once described as "the scale of values governing [their] exercise and concrete manifestation."[23]

It is here that Christianity and other religious communities have, can, and should play a vital role—even in modern liberal societies. Religion is a dynamic and diverse, but ultimately ineradicable, condition and form of human community. Religions invariably provide some of the sources and "scales of values" by which many persons and communities govern themselves. Religions help to define the meanings and measures of shame and regret, restraint and respect, responsibility and restitution that a human rights regime presupposes. They help to lay out the fundamentals of human dignity

20. Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

21. See John Witte, Jr., *The Blessings of Liberty: Human Rights and Religious Freedom in the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

22. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, "Towards an Islamic Hermeneutics for Human Rights," in *Human Rights and Religious Values: An Uneasy Relationship?* ed. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 229–42; Robert P. George, "Response," in *A Preserving Grace: Protestants, Catholics, and Natural Law,* ed. Michael Cromartie (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 157–161.

23. Jacques Maritain, "Introduction," in *Human Rights: Comments and Interpretations*, ed. UNESCO (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949).

and human community, and the essentials of human nature and human needs upon which rights are built. Moreover, Christianity and other religions stand alongside the state and other institutions in helping to implement and protect the rights of a community—especially in transitional societies, or at times when a once-stable state becomes weak, distracted, divided, or cash-strapped. Churches and other religious communities can create the conditions (sometimes the prototypes) for the realization of first-generation civil and political rights of speech, press, assembly, and more. They can provide a critical (sometimes the principal) means to meet second-generation rights of education, health care, childcare, labor organizations, employment, artistic opportunities, among others. And they can offer some of the deepest insights into norms of creation, stewardship, and servanthood that lie at the heart of third-generation rights.

What Orthodoxy Can Teach Us About Human Rights

Orthodox churches, too, have immense spiritual resources and "scales of values" that hold great untapped promise for modern human rights. These spiritual resources lie, in part, in Orthodox worship—the passion of the liturgy, the pathos of the icons, and the power of spiritual silence. They lie, in part, in Orthodox church life—the distinct balancing between hierarchy and congregationalism through autocephaly; between uniform worship and liturgical freedom through alternative vernacular rites; between community and individuality through a trinitarian communalism, which is centered on the parish, on the extended family, on the wizened grandmother (the "babushka" in Russia). These spiritual resources lie, in part, in the massive martyrdom of millions of Orthodox faithful in the twentieth century—whether suffered by Russian Orthodox under the Communist Party, by Greek and Armenian Orthodox under Turkish and Iranian radicals, by Middle Eastern Copts at the hands of religious extremists, or by North African Orthodox under all manner of fascist autocrats and tribal strongmen.[24]

These deep spiritual resources of the Orthodox Church have no exact parallels in modern Catholicism and Protestantism, and most of their implications for law, politics, and society have still to be drawn out. It would be wise to hear what an ancient church, newly charred and chastened by decades of oppression and martyrdom, considers essential to the regime of religious freedom. It would be enlightening to watch how ancient Orthodox communities, still largely centered on the parish and the family, will reconstruct social and economic order and attendant rights. It would be prudent to see how a culture, more prone to beautifying than to analyzing, might transform our understanding of culture. It would be instructive to listen to how a tradition that still celebrates spiritual silence as its highest virtue might recast the meaning of freedom of speech and expression. It would be illuminating to feel how a people who have long cherished and celebrated women's religious experience and faith—the wizened babushka of the home, the faithful remnant in the parish pews, the living icon of

24. James H. Billington, "Orthodox Christianity and the Russian Transformation," in *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia*, ed. Witte and Bourdeaux, 51–65.

of the Assumption of the Mother of God—might elaborate the place of women and the meaning of women's rights in church, state, and society.[25]

Patriarch Bartholomew was certainly wise to remind us that "[t]here are a few things" that Western churches and states "can learn from the Orthodox Church." We would do well to listen and learn as Orthodox churches embrace more fully the global ecumenical project, and as Orthodox-majority lands come into greater contact with the rest of the world. Particularly on questions of law, religion, and human rights, the world needs new wisemen from the East.

25. Ibid.; see also Aristotle Papanikolau, *The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

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Reviews

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Russian Religious Philosophy

Paul Valliere

K. M. Antonov, gen. ed. *Russkaia religioznaia filosofiia*. Moscow: Uchebnyi komitet Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi, 2024. 616 pp.

The volume at hand is an introductory survey of Russian religious philosophy designed for students of theology at the baccalaureate level. The authors are a team of eleven scholars, including the general editor, Konstantin M. Antonov, head of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at St. Tikhon's Orthodox University for the Humanities in Moscow. Most of the contributors are professionally trained philosophers, and all but one are laypersons. The sections of the text for which each contributor was responsible are identified in an appendix.

In keeping with what Antonov calls "settled tradition" (14) in the study of Russian religious philosophy, the subject matter is presented historically rather than thematically. Chapter One describes the "prehistory" of religious-philosophical ideas in Russia during the period stretching from the eleventh through the eighteenth century. Chapter Two deals with the gestation of a distinctive religious-philosophical tradition in Russia from the 1820s through the 1870s. Chapter Three addresses the last quarter of the nineteenth century, "the period of philosophical systems," when Russian philosophy, including religious philosophy, declared its (relative) independence from the literary and journalistic contexts with which it was tightly interwoven during the preceding period. The longest section in this chapter—indeed, the longest section devoted to an individual thinker in the entire volume—deals with Vladimir Soloviev (175–208). This section was written by A. P. Kozyrev (Moscow State University).

Chapter Four presents the "religious-philosophical renaissance" of the Russian Silver Age, a story that (in this volume) begins with the Religious-Philosophical Meetings of 1901–1903 and ends with *Iz glubiny* (1918), the last of the three most important religious-philosophical and socio-political *sborniki* of the Silver Age, the other two being *Problemy idealizma* (1902) and *Vekhi* (1909). In this period, as our authors put it, "religious-philosophical thought, extending its influence to [Russian] culture as a whole, became a powerful instrument of desecularization, of the return of religion to the public square, and of the return of a part of the intelligentsia to the Church" (486).

Like V. V. Zenkovsky before them, the authors of this volume do not neglect to discuss the study of philosophy in the theological academies of the Russian Orthodox Church during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While "Russian religious philosophy" in the first instance refers to pursuits that developed in the Russian intelligentsia apart from ecclesiastical institutions, philosophers and other critical thinkers

were not lacking among the faculty of the Church's four graduate theological academies (St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kyiv, and Kazan). The representatives of theological-academic thought discussed in this volume are Fr. I. M. Skvortsov, Fr. F. A. Golubinskii, A. M. Bukharev, Fr. F. F. Sidonskii, V. N. Karpov, Archbishop Nikanor (Brovkovich), V. A. Snegirev, V. D. Kudriavtsev-Platonov, M. I. Karinskii, A. I. Vvedenskii, S. S. Glagolev, M. M. Tareev, and V. I. Nesmelov.

The longest chapter in the volume is the fifth and last: "Main Tendencies and Leading Representatives of Twentieth Century Russian Philosophy: Russian Religious Thought in the Emigration and in Soviet Russia." The unnatural division of Russian religious philosophy into émigré and Soviet streams resulted, of course, from the tragedy of Russian civilization in the twentieth century.

Among the thinkers who remained or came of age in Soviet Russia, *Russian Religious Philosophy* presents detailed portraits of only two: Father Pavel Florensky and A. F. Losev. But our authors provide a list of many other philosophers, scholars, and artists who managed, under extremely difficult conditions, to engage with religious questions in one way or another during the Soviet period (315–317). Some of these figures are well known in the West (e.g., Bakhtin, Lotman, Averintsev), but others are not (e.g., A. A. Meier, P. P. Pertsov, S. N. Durylin, M. M. Prishvin). For Western scholars of Russian religious thought, the roster of names on these pages serves as a kind of syllabus that can lead us to a broader view of Russian religious thought as it pertains to the Soviet period. Mikhail Epstein has already set a high standard for work along these lines, but there is room for more.

Turning to the emigration, our authors classify the "greats" of religious philosophy into three main schools of thought: the philosophy of all-unity (S. N. Bulgakov, S. L. Frank, L. P. Karsavin); existential personalism (N. A. Berdiaev, L. I. Shestov); and metaphysical personalism (N. O. Losskii, S. A. Levitskii). Most of these figures had achieved eminence already during the Silver Age. But a holistic assessment of their accomplishments must include an account of the works they produced in the emigration, works that were by no means a mere coda to what came before. In addition to the "greats," our authors treat a number of younger émigré philosophers who do not fit into one of the three main schools: B. P. Vysheslavtsev, V. V. Zenkovsky, I. A. Il'in, G. P. Fedotov, and V. N. Il'in.

Almost all of the émigré religious philosophers showed a heightened interest in Orthodox theology, even if most of them did not follow Bulgakov's lead and become Orthodox theologians. There were practical as well as psychological and intellectual factors involved in this shift. Theological schools, ecclesiastical fellowships, engagement with the Ecumenical Movement, and (in some cases) clerical vocations took the place of the higher educational institutions and civil society networks that supported Russian religious philosophy before the revolution. As one would expect, the new context had the greatest impact on younger émigrés who were still fashioning their careers. For the younger generation, the options for professional development included: further elaboration of ideas inherited from Silver Age thinkers (e.g., the continuation of Novgorodtsev's legal-philosophical thought by I. A. Il'in, N. N. Alekseev, and Vysheslavtsev); new departures in socio-political thought (e.g., *novogradstvo*, Eurasianism); inter-

preting Russian culture to Western audiences; more or less complete assimilation into the Western philosophical tradition (e.g., Alexandre Kojève, Alexandre Koyré, Isaiah Berlin), and finally, "switching over wholly to theology ('neopatristic synthesis,' personalism, eucharistic ecclesiology, liturgical theology)—theology that for the most part presented itself as opposed to the traditions of the 'older' generation (Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov, Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky, Fr. Alexander Schmemann, Fr. John Meyendorff)" (315).

The last of the options just named—"switching over wholly to theology"—refers to the rise of what is usually called "Neopatristic" theology. A survey of the Neopatristic thinkers does not form part of *Russian Religious Philosophy*. From time to time, the authors draw on some of Florovsky's inimitable characterizations of Russian thinkers and cultural periods in *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (1937), but Florovsky's theological ideas and those of his successors in the Neopatristic movement fall outside the boundaries of this volume. The reason is that our authors make a firm distinction between religious philosophy and theology, enterprises that they hold to be mutually relevant, but methodologically, conceptually, and professionally independent (see pp. 17–19). In the Russian emigration, as our authors believe, the pursuit of religious philosophy eventually came to an end: "To sum up, we have to say that all the conditions [of émigré existence] we have described produced a state of affairs in which *the continuation and further development of the tradition of religious philosophizing in the emigration proved to be impossible. The death of the leading representatives of this tradition brought it to a halt*" (315, emphasis in the original). The Neopatristic movement, on the other hand, set the course of Orthodox theology for the rest of the twentieth century. Our authors do not argue that Russian religious philosophy came to a halt *because* of the Neopatristic movement. It died out, in their view, because the "conditions" that supported it ceased to exist. This reviewer would like to hear more about those conditions, since it is certainly possible to imagine the religious-philosophical tradition continuing and even flourishing in changed circumstances, even if that outcome did not in fact materialize.

One way of construing the fate of Russian religious philosophy in the emigration is to argue that the tradition found an afterlife in Neopatristic theology. That is to say, the Neopatristic theologians, despite their trenchant criticism of the Russian religious-philosophical tradition, were more deeply indebted to it than they (and others) realized. The best recent case for this view has been made by Paul L. Gavrilyuk in *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance* (2014). Although Gavrilyuk's work is not referenced in *Russian Religious Philosophy*, the authors clearly agree with him that the influence of Russian religious philosophy on modern Orthodox theology has been enormous. In our volume's conclusion, we are presented with a list of the religious philosophers' contributions to theology:

> The reinterpretation of ecclesiology and the emergence of personalism in anthropology initiated by Chaadaev and the Slavophiles; the "confessionalization" of theological discourse and the idea of "the Western captivity of Orthodox theology," ideas that go back, again, to the Slavophiles, and, closely associated with the idea of Western captivity, the methodological rethinking of the foundations of dogmatics; the emergence, beginning with Soloviev, of

> ecumenical thought; beginning with Soloviev again, the emergence of the sophiological project—controversial, yet attracting fresh attention in our own day as a new way of thinking about the relationship between the Creator and the creature, the Absolute and the relative; new forms of eschatology and soteriology; the emergence, on the basis of the Symbolist paradigm, of a theology of culture and a theology of the icon; the impetus to the development of a theology of history, and more. From the same perspective, we should examine the influence of religious philosophy on the emergence of new theological movements: the neopatristic synthesis, personalism, eucharistic ecclesiology, liturgical theology, and more. Not one of these developments could have taken place without the rethinking of foundations that we have pointed out (490–491).

This long roster of contributions to theology leads to a conclusion with which this reviewer and many other scholars of Russian thought will heartily agree: "It is not surprising that the resonance of Russian religious thought in the chorus of intellectual traditions throughout the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first is not weakening but growing. Not only Russian researchers but Western scholars too are paying attention to the work of these religious thinkers, not just as an object of study but as a source of inspiration" (491).

Throughout the book, our authors set a salutary example of evenhandedness in the presentation of their material. They stick to their primary mission, which is to tell the story of Russian religious philosophy without telling readers what they should make of it. They let the philosophers speak for themselves.

The scholarly apparatus is also exemplary. Eighty-five bibliographical "commentaries" comprising almost forty pages of text (495–533) provide an excellent guide for readers who wish to learn more about the thinkers and topics surveyed. More specific documentation is supplied by no fewer than 1110 footnotes—a large number for a volume of this kind, but brevity and the absence of pedantry keep the notes from being burdensome. A detailed table of contents and an index of names make for easy navigation. Finally, the volume contains numerous illustrations, including photographs and artist's sketches of the religious philosophers and reproductions of masterpieces of modern Russian art at the chapter divisions.

Konstantin Antonov and his team of authors are to be congratulated for writing an excellent survey of the history of Russian religious philosophy. Anyone who is looking for a comprehensive and reliable introduction to the subject should begin with this book. Language is a barrier, of course, but for scholars of Russia—in any discipline, not just philosophy and religion—*Russian Religious Philosophy* is a gift that should not be overlooked.

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