

NARRATIVE PARADIGMS OF EMERGENCE - CONTEXTUAL ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL IDENTITY

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to investigate some paradigms of emergence of contextual (ethno-centered) Orthodox identity, comparing Russian and Greek-American communities. It does not aim at presenting a complete account. Noble as such an effort would be, it is an unrealistic project not just because of the limits of this paper. Orthodox identity is so closely interwoven with Orthodox moral vision and the community's history, which in turn is almost inseparable from Orthodox worship and the way of life, that any attempt to separate the strands, even for a purely academic purpose, would be to do disservice to both Orthodox ethics and the Orthodox community. As the paper progresses I will try to demonstrate this integral unity of the developments of Russian and Greek-American Orthodox identity with the Byzantine past and by means of the major tenets of the theological contributions of these communities.

I will begin by mapping the Orthodox terrain and tracing the Byzantine roots of current Orthodox theologizing. For the latter, my point of departure will be an event at the source of autocephalous Russian Orthodoxy. Further, I will take a closer look at nineteenth and twentieth century Russian Orthodox reflections of the search for theological identity. Next I will broaden the picture by including some insights from the development of Greek Orthodox thought during the same period, with a particular emphasis on contextual creativity in developing Greek-American Orthodox identity.

Some words of caution are needed, both on the scope of the study and on my particular perspective in handling it. In reflecting on the phenomena of Orthodoxy one must

bear in mind that while it has all the distinct marks of a well-defined trend in the larger Christian tradition, it cannot be reduced to a single denomination with common policies and confessional statements. In fact the Orthodox communion is a sisterhood of at least fifteen mutually recognised independent (autocephalous) Orthodox Churches and several other affiliated bodies in a dynamic fellowship.¹ Even more important, in different historical periods all of them have been marginalized under a longer or a shorter period of oppression by an alien religious or social power, or both. These diverse courses of historical destiny led inevitably to adjustments and particularities in the development of the Orthodox communities' moral life that prevent us from making easy generalizations. Finally, by focusing on Russian and Greek-American theological developments I do not wish to imply that Serbian, Romanian, Bulgarian and other Orthodox churches are underdeveloped, nor to polarise the first two as substantially different (granted the differences that exists). Historically, in my opinion, it has happened that the former was given better chances to reflect theologically on the common Orthodox heritage.²

This is a theological study. If theology is a science of convictions, as James McClendon and James Smith argue,³ it is not unbiased research. My theological standpoint at best is that of a sympathetic outsider. In looking at the story of the Orthodox community, I will evaluate it from the perspective of an adherent of the Radical Reformation tradition.

With that in mind, I will turn now to examine the formative forces behind the story of the development of Russian and Greek theological identity with deep roots in Byzantine Christianity.

¹ These are Orthodox churches with autocephalous status such as The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, The Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Russia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Georgia, The Churches of Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, and autonomous churches of Czech Lands and Slovakia, and of Finland. The Orthodox church in America (formerly the Russian Orthodox Metropolia, was granted autocephalous status by the Patriarchate of Moscow, which is not recognized by all of the Orthodox communions. Likewise the autonomous status of the Orthodox Church of Japan is not recognized by all of the rest. The churches are listed in the order followed in Inter-Orthodox gatherings. (See Thomas E. FitzGerald, *The Orthodox Church*, in Henry Warner Bowden, series editor, *Denominations in America Series*, volume 7 (Westport, Conn/ London: Greenwood Press, 1995), appendix II, p. 224.

² On a similar line of thought see the editorial of *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, volume 16:4 (1972), 171. For a recent restatement of Serbian Orthodox theological identity and brief account of the Orthodox ethnogenesis of the Balkan Orthodox Commonwealth (Serbians, Greeks, Romanians and Bulgarians), see Christos Mylonas, *Serbian Orthodox Fundamentals: The Quest for an Eternal Identity* (Budapest/New York: CEU[Central European University] Press, 2003), *passim*, pp. 213-40. For representative excerpts of Romanian Orthodox thinking, see Staniloae 1980, *passim*.

³ James Wm. McClendon, Jr. and James M. Smith, *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism*, 2nd rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994).

The Church and the World: Historic Context of Orthodox Theological Praxis

First I will present a shorthand ‘map’ of modern Orthodoxy moving from the land of the Byzantine Commonwealth⁴ to the expanding frontiers of an Orthodox global presence. Next I will attempt an analysis of a pivotal event in defining Russian Orthodox identity by going back to the Byzantine roots of the Orthodox tradition informed by Eusebius (of Caesarea)’s grand constitution of Byzantine theocracy or the Kingdom of God on earth. This will set the grounds for the following explorations of current Orthodox thought.

Mapping the Orthodox terrain

For many people, any reference to the Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox or Eastern Church conjures up ideas of something exotic, elusive, mysterious, and yet familiar.⁵ Even for someone born and bred in a nominally Orthodox Christian culture (in my case, Bulgarian), it is difficult to give an adequate answer to the question: ‘What is the (or an?) Orthodox Church?’ Judging from my experience, the common response in Orthodox countries will often be: ‘The Orthodox Church is the *right* (in Slavonic, *pravoslavnaia*) church!’ It is a theological response: a claim about ‘correct belief’ and ‘correct worship’.⁶ All other churches are at least semi-heretical.

In Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Middle East, Orthodoxy is much more than simply a church; it is the formative force behind an entire way of life and culture. It is a substantial ingredient in national (and, unfortunately, in nationalistic) identity.⁷ As the

⁴ On the concept see Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 1-4.

⁵ For a somewhat similar account of the first encounter with the Orthodox liturgy, see Daniel B. Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), p. 16. Cf. also *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church: A Report by the Evangelical Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals* (London: Acute, 2001), p. 25. For an exciting pilgrimage into the Orthodox faith and the first impressions of a novice who “did not find Orthodoxy archaic, foreign or exotic”, see Bishop Kalistos (Timothy) Ware’s recollection of his own journey in his *The Inner Kingdom*, in *The Collected Works*, volume 1, second printing, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001, first published in 2000), 1-24; quotation on p. 6.

⁶ According to the Orthodox theologian Stanley S. Harakas, the word ‘Orthodox,’ as applied to the Church, was a sign that it was the true and historic church of Christ. The word is made up of two shorter Greek words. The first, ‘Orthe’, means ‘correct’. The second, ‘doxa’, means both ‘opinion or belief’ and ‘praise or worship’. So, ‘Orthodox’ may be understood as ‘correct believing’ as regards the faith and ‘correct worshipping’ as regards the unity of the Church.’ (*The Orthodox Church: 455 Questions and Answers* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Light & Life Publishing Company, 1987), pp. 239-40.). Cf. John Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p. vii.

⁷ John Meyendorff considers disunity of the sisterhood of Orthodox churches in the world caused by secularised nationalism “the most obvious weakness of the Orthodox Church today.” (*Catholicity and the Church*, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1983), p. 138. For an extended evaluation of Orthodoxy and nationalism, see Donald Fairbairn’s *Eastern Orthodoxy Through Western Eyes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), ch. 10. On the alliance between the leadership of the Orthodox church and the rightist nationalist movements in Post-Soviet Russia, see John B. Dunlop ‘The Russian Orthodox Church as an “Empire-Saving” Institution,’ in *The Politics*

maxim goes, to be a Russian (Serbian, Romanian, Bulgarian, etc.) is to be an Orthodox. Hence, a puzzled Southern Baptist missionary, eager to evangelise people on the streets of Sofia reports: ‘To my question ‘Are you a believer?’, most people answer ‘Yes! I am Bulgarian.’⁸

As an outcome of its Christendom origins, combined with its embeddedness in the local culture, Orthodoxy lost its zeal for mission and evangelism, a loss which became particularly evident with the decline of the Byzantine Commonwealth. The great missionary achievements of the 9th and 10th centuries among Caucasians, Mongols, and Slavs, associated with the ‘Cyrilo-Methodian ideology’ of the ‘indigenisation of the Church’,⁹ set a pattern for authentic Eastern Orthodox mission practice. The distinctive features of St Cyril (826-869) and St Methodius’ (c. 815-885) Slavic mission,¹⁰ according to James J. Stamoolis, can be identified as the use of the vernacular for worship and instruction of the converts, the use of indigenous clergy, and autocephality of the local church. ‘The gospel [was] to be preached and the converts instructed to offer praise to God in their own language.’¹¹ Unfortunately,

of Religion in Russia and New States of Eurasia, ed. Michael Bourdeaux (Armonk, NY: M.E.Sharpe, 1995), 15-40. For an account of Serbian Orthodox ethno-nationalism, see Mylonas 2003, 35-72.

⁸ See James Duke’s report in *Arkansas Baptist News Magazine* (Dec. 1994, quotation from memory). Cf. Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, p. 21 and John B. Dunlop, ‘Orthodoxy and National Identity in Russia,’ in *Identities in Transition: Eastern Europe and Russia after the Collapse of Communism*, ed. Victoria E. Bonnell (Berkeley, CA: University of California at Berkeley, 1996), 117-28. In the cultural Orthodox faith of many in Eastern Europe today, H. Richard Niebuhr would find a good example of his Christ-of-culture type of Christianity (*Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbooks of Harper & Row Publishers, 1951), ch. 3. On the recent disputes and schisms in the contemporary Eastern Orthodox Churches, see Janice Broun’s report ‘Divisions in Eastern Orthodoxy Today’ in *East-West Church and Ministry Report*, Volume 5, No. 2 (Spring 1997), pp. 1-3.

⁹ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical and Doctrinal Themes*. 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), pp. 217-8. For a somewhat more positive account of Orthodox potential for mission, see Alexander Schmemmann, ‘The Missionary Imperative in the Orthodox Tradition’ in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), pp. 250-7.

¹⁰ For biographies of these Orthodox missionaries, see Michael Lacko, *Saints Cyril and Methodius* (Rome: Slovak Editions, 1963). For the cultural and political revival brought by their mission work among the medieval Slavic peoples, see Vladimir Topencharov, *Constantine – Cyril Philosopher: The Beginning of the Renaissance*, (Sofia, Bulgaria: Narodna Mladezh Publ., 1970; in Bulgarian). For the creation of the Glagolitic (latter Cyrillic) alphabet and the advance of Christianity in Central and Eastern Europe, Cyril and Methodius were canonised by the Byzantine Church in the 9th century as saints, with a rare designation of being *isoapostoloi*, ‘equal to the apostles’ (Ibid., 7-8; cf. Binns 2002, p. 149). The canonisation was later confirmed by the Roman Catholic Church in 1880 (p. 171). In 1980 the Roman Pontiff, John Paul II, declared them ‘Patrons of Europe’ (F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, revised (OUP, 1993), p. 370). For a compelling account of the development of the Slavonic Bible and the formative role of the two brothers in the translation and composition of the early Slavic Scriptures, see Henry R. Cooper, Jr. *Slavic Scriptures: The Formation of the Church Slavonic Version of the Holy Bible* (Madison & Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickenson Univeristy Press/ London: Associated University Presses, 2003, 48-79).

¹¹ *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001,1986), pp. 21-2. For a positive Evangelical assessment on the persistent features of Orthodox incarnational outlook on mission practice, see *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church*, pp. 134-5. For a similar assessment of the contextual nature of Orthodox mission strategy, see Binns 2002, pp. 155-6.

for many Orthodox communities this missionary zeal is now only a memory. Even though one of the last Orthodox missions (and the first in the Western Hemisphere¹²) was established on 24 September 1794 in Kodiak Island, Alaska,¹³ by the monks from the Russian monastery of Valamo on Lake Ladoga (one of whom, St Herman, later was canonised as the first American Orthodox saint),¹⁴ it was the result of the expansion of geographical discoveries and trade activity rather than of conscious efforts on the part of the Church. Granted this background and in stark contrast with the crusading expansion of the western Church on the same continent three centuries earlier, it is remarkable to read the words of farewell with which the first Alaskan missionaries were sent by Metropolitan Gabriel of St. Petersburg:

When Jesus Christ leads you to meet those who do not know the Law of God, your first concern will be to serve as an example of good works to them, so as to convert them by your personal life into obedient servants of the Lord.¹⁵

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, apart from the missionary outposts in Alaska and Japan, Orthodoxy tended to be geographically a local Eastern European and Middle Eastern phenomenon as opposed to the other main Christian families: Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and the adherents of the Radical Reformation. After the Russian revolution of 1917, then the establishment of the Socialist countries and the turbulences in the Middle East after the Second World War, massive waves of emigration carried fragments of Orthodox communities in emigrant Diaspora to Western Europe, the Americas, the Far East, Australia and New Zealand. Even the sympathetic observer granting some legitimacy to the Orthodox Church's claim to be "the one true Church of Christ on earth" is puzzled to find

¹² Jaroslav Pelikan, 'In memory of John Meyendorff' in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff*, ed. Bradley Nassif, foreword by Henry Chadwick (Grand Rapids, MI/ Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), p. 8.

¹³ It followed ten years after the establishment of the first permanent Russian settlement of the Kodiak colony based upon the Russian rule of the law. In 1766, Empress Catherine the Great formally extended her rule over the newly discovered land in North America by Vitus Bering and Alexis Chirikov. For more details, see Thomas E. FitzGerald, *The Orthodox Church*, in Henry Warner Bowden, series editor, *Denominations in America Series*, volume 7 (Westport, Connecticut/ London: Greenwood Press, 1995), 13-5.

¹⁴ Timothy Ware (Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia), *The Orthodox Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin, 1993), p. 181. For a well-written account of the Alaskan mission and its expansion under St. Herman and St. John Veniaminov (Bishop Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow), see FitzGerald, 1995, 13-22. It is interesting to find that this last outpost of Orthodox mission today invigorates the revival of the missionary vision of the Orthodox community. For details about the beginning of the current debate in American Orthodox circles, see the contributions by T. H. Dobzhansky, Nicolae Chitescu, Daniel Sahas, Geroge Manzarides, and Lazar Milin at the Second International Conference of Orthodox Theology "The Catholicity of the Church," held at St. Vladimir's Seminary, September 25-29, 1972. In *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 17 (1973), Nos. 1 & 2, pp. 100-51.

¹⁵ This is a remarkable testimony of the emphases on personal example and love to the natives in the Russian Orthodox missionary activity. Quoted after FitzGerald, 1995, 16.

that it “is so ethnic and nationalist in its outlook, so little interested in any form of missionary witness, so fragmented into parallel and often conflicting ‘jurisdictions’.”¹⁶

Yet for a modern-day global and rather diverse, multilingual, multi-ethnic communion of independent ecclesial bodies (a sisterhood of autocephalous churches¹⁷), Orthodoxy displays a remarkable unity of teaching and worship practices. Until the mid-nineteenth century, Orthodox theology was almost exclusively a primary theology, to use McClendon’s terminology:¹⁸ a theology springing from, and directed to, the immediate ecclesial community of reference. Monastic communities developed most of it, particularly in Orthodox countries conquered by the Ottoman Turks. At the very heart of this unity is the intent of Orthodoxy to maintain a direct link with its apostolic and patristic heritage, an unquestioning loyalty to the Church’s tradition. This loyalty is almost mystical, perhaps reinforced also by the apophatic nature of Orthodox theological thinking – the avoidance of propositional language in speaking about God. Drawing heavily on the historical development of Orthodox doctrine, Orthodoxy shaped this development and was formed by historical circumstances in its own development and at the same time in a living tradition of Christian witness.¹⁹

The current situation in the Orthodox communities does not give enough evidence, however to the synthetic unity of life and thought. In an essay published in 1973, John Meyendorff laments that

[i]n contemporary Orthodox theology itself a peculiar compartmentalization of concept and areas (generally imported from the West) has led to a divorce between Church and theology – a divorce which explains why both Church and theology are in deep crisis. One cannot over-emphasize how urgent it is for us Orthodox to recover the sense of a ‘churchly’ theology which is truly Christ-centered and Spirit-centered, and which implies unity between life and dogma, liturgy and theology, love and truth.²⁰

¹⁶ Bishop Kallistos (Timothy) Ware, *The Inner Kingdom: The Collected Works*, volume 1, second printing (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 19.

¹⁷ See in Ware 1993, p. 6 and Clendenin 1994, pp. 31-4. For a wider picture of Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian Orthodox communities, see Binns, 2002, pp. 9-37. Cf. Ken Parry, David J. Melling, Dimitri Brady, Sidney H. Griffin, and John F. Healey (eds.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*, foreword by Rt Revd Kallistos Ware (Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), *passim*.

¹⁸ James W. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology: Doctrine. Volume II*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 24.

¹⁹ As John Meyendorf notes, “[the] lack in Orthodox ecclesiology of a clearly defined, precise, and permanent criterion of Truth besides God Himself, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, is certainly one of the major contrasts between Orthodoxy and all classical Western ecclesiologies.” (*Living Tradition: Orthodox Witness in the Contemporary World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978), p. 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

Renewal movements among Orthodox, particularly in North America and in post-communist countries, are striving to regain the unifying vision not only of the ecclesial and academic, but also of the ethical and theological. In anchoring the vision, more and more Orthodox theologians are resorting to patristic theological thought and moral tradition. I will turn now to examine the roots of the tradition.

Reaching Back to the Byzantine Past

Before getting to the heart of the matter of current trends in Orthodox theologizing, I will use the example of the formation of Russian Orthodox identity to trace back the common roots in the realised eschatology of the Byzantine theocratic worldview.²¹ With the grand baptism under Prince Vladimir of Kiev, Russia entered the Byzantine politico-religious cultural network of nations at the end of the tenth century. The Russian Church “remained formally dependant on Constantinople till the midst of fifteen century. This formative period has been described as ‘Russian Byzantism.’”²² This process of enculturation was interrupted by the Mongolian conquest of Russian principalities and the Ottoman suppression of Byzantium. Russia, or more precisely the Muscovite Principality, became increasingly alienated from the East and isolated from the West while striving to develop a new sense of self-identity.²³

To articulate the ingredients of this identity, let us consider the resilient and formative apocalyptic myth of Moscow as the third Rome and Russian messianic calling with its origins in sixteenth century Russian Orthodoxy. Initially, it was introduced by Metropolitan Zosima in 1492²⁴ and verbalised most forcefully by the monk (*starets*)

²¹ On the formative role of Byzantine theological thought for the Christian east, see John Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow: Historical and Theological Studies*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996, 29-38; cf. his *Byzantine Theology*, op.cit.

²² Alexander Schmemmann, “Russian Theology: 1920-1972. An Introduction,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, volume 16, No. 4 (1972), 173.

²³ On the dynamic of the uneasy break away of the Russian ecclesial life from that of that of the Constantinople Patriarchate after to Ottoman Conquest of Byzantium, see Sir Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity. A Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of the Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 320-37.

²⁴ Michael Christensen, relaying on Paul Miliukov’s insights in *Outlines of Russian Culture* (1975, vol. 3, 148), notes that by the end of the fifteenth century Russian Orthodox theologians “believed that the world was created in 5508 BCE and would end in 1942 CE (7000 Annus Mundi). Contemporary Russian liturgical calendars abruptly ended on that date.” (see his “Russian Millennialism,” in Richard A. Landes (gen. ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Millennialism and Millennial Movements* (New York/ London: Routledge, 2000), 364).

Philotheus of Pskov,²⁵ after the New Rome, founded by Constantine the Great on the spot of the small town of Byzantium and renamed after his death as Constantinople, fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Zosima picked up the idea of Moscow as the Third Rome from his predecessor Metropolitan Jonah and extended it to include the Muscovite Grand Prince Ivan III as Holy Emperor. He wrote: “The Emperor Constantine built a New Rome, Tsarigrad; but the sovereign and autocrat of All the Russias, Ivan Vasilievitch, the new Constantine, has laid the foundation for a new city of Constantine, Moscow.”²⁶ Philotheus followed by giving a theological twist to the vision. He is worth quoting at length because of his significance for understanding the spirit of Orthodoxy in general and, particularly, the piety in the Russian Orthodox Church, Holy Mother Russia, Russian messianism,²⁷ and the unquestioned absolute authority of the Russian monarch over the almost completely monasticised Russian society after the reign of Tsar Ivan IV the Terrible (1533-84). In a letter to Grand Duke Basil III²⁸ (and by implication to Ivan IV²⁹) in 1510 he wrote (emphases added):

The church of ancient Rome fell because of the *Apollinarian heresy*; as to the second Rome - the church of Constantinople - it has been hewn by the axes of the Hagarenes [Ottoman Turks]. But this third, new Rome, the Universal Apostolic Church *under thy mighty rule*, radiates forth the Orthodox Christian faith to the ends of the earth more brightly than the sun.... In all the universe thou art the only Tsar of Christians.... Hear me, pious Tsar, all Christian kingdoms have converged in thine alone. Two Romes have fallen, a third stands, a *fourth there shall not be*.³⁰

²⁵ Cf. S. V. Sannikov, *Twenty Centuries of Christianity. Second Millennium. Volume Two* (Odessa, Ukraine: ‘Bogomisle Publishers’, 2001, in Russian), p. 76. On eschatological anticipation in Russian culture of Zosima’s time, see Michael S. Flier, “Till the End of Time: The Apocalypse in Russian Historical Experience Before 1500,” in Valerie A. Kivelson and Robert H. Green (eds.), *Orthodox Russia: Belief and Practices under the Tsars* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 127-58. For a succinct account of Russian millennial movements, see Christensen 2000, 362-6.

²⁶ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, op. cit., 323.

²⁷ See V. Gorskii’s brilliant survey ‘Russian Messianism and the New National Consciousness,’ in *The Political, Social and Religious Thought of Russian “Samizdat”*: *An Anthology*, eds. Michael Meerson – Aksenov and Boris Shragin (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publ., 1977), 353-93.

²⁸ In 1472 the Grand Duke of Moscow, Ivan III ‘the Great’, (1462-1505) married Zoe (Sofia) Palaeologus, niece of the last Byzantine Emperor, John VIII Palaeologus (1392-1448) and daughter of his younger brother Thomas. ‘[She] brought her husband as part of her dowry the emblem of the double-headed eagle and, it was thought, the spiritual heritage of Byzantium – thereby doing much to foster the image of Moscow as the ‘Third Rome’. Ivan the Terrible was her grand son.’ (John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: Decline and Fall* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996, pp. 446-7). The Grand Duke of Moscow began to assume the Byzantine titles of ‘autocrat’ and ‘tsar’ (an adaptation of Roman Caesar) – thus the title referred to in the monk’s letter.

²⁹ Sannikov 2001, p. 76.

³⁰ Ware 1993, p. 103 and Sannikov 2001, p. 76. On an interpretation of this passage in relation to popular Russian Orthodox nationalism, see Fairbairn, pp. 148-151.

There are several puzzling questions to be asked in relation to this apocalyptic statement. Why is Rome accused of a heresy bearing the name of the fourth-century theologian Apollinarius the Younger (310-390)? What gave to an unknown monk from a provincial Eleazer Monastery several hundred miles away from Moscow the confidence to address the Tsar with such an assertive proposal? (And what led the Tsar to be attentive and evidently to accept it?) Why must the Universal Apostolic Church be under the Tsar's rule? The answers to these questions are theological and lie in a theology developed before Russia (even Kievan Russia) was founded. They lie in Byzantine theology.³¹ Ultimately they are located in the notion of the nature of authority in the Church and in the world.

The accusation of the Apollinarian heresy has its roots in the Great Schism of 1054. The Byzantines considered the procession of the Spirit – “the intrusion, albeit informal, of the *filioque*³² into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed at the third Council of Toledo (598) by the Visigoths in Spain and its later extensive use in the West – as the central point of theological disagreement³³ between the Eastern and the Western Churches of Medieval Christendom. In his encyclical to the Eastern patriarchs (866), Photius (c.820-c.891) Patriarch of Constantinople and one of the finest Byzantine philosophers and theologians,³⁴ considers the *filioque* as the ‘crown of evils’, having been introduced at that time by the Frankish missionaries in an attempt to interfere in the affairs of the newly established Bulgarian Church.³⁵ On the basis of Aristotle's theory of substances he argued that the clause is presupposing a confusion of the hypostatic characters of the Persons of the Trinity.³⁶ For the Byzantines it was, therefore, a new form of modalism. In that, they followed Patriarch Photius' theological worries that

³¹ See John Meyendorff's essay “Was There Ever a ‘Third Rome’? Remarks on the Byzantine Legacy in Russia,” in J. J. Yannias (ed.), *The Byzantine Tradition After the Fall of Constantinople* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 45-60; cf. John Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, op. cit., 131-47.

³² Robert M. Haddad, “The Stations of the Filioque,” *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, volume 46 (2002), Nos. 2-3, 211.

³³ For more details, see Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church*, pp. 91-96.

³⁴ On the details of the fascinating story of Photius – a layman and distinguished scholar to be elected twice as the Patriarch of the Imperial City—and his enduring legacy in the Byzantine ecclesial life and theology, see J. M. Hussey's thorough investigation in *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press, 1986), ch. 3: “The Age of Photius (843-886),” 69-101. Cf. Steven Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 93-5, 163.

³⁵ For an insightful historic survey of the controversy, see Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, op. cit., pp.83-97.

³⁶ For a brief overview of the specific development of Byzantine philosophy and the philosophers' reluctance to engage with the theological controversies or Latin type large scale philosophical schematizations, see Phil Lenos Benakis, “Byzantine Philosophy,” in Craig (gen. ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, volume 2, op. cit., 160-5.

[t]o confuse the hypostatic characters of the Father and the Son by attributing to them the procession of the Spirit is to fall into Sabellianism, a modalist heresy of the third century, or rather into semi-Sabellianism. For Sabelius had confused the three Persons into one, while the Latins limit themselves to the Father and the Son, but then fall into the danger of excluding the Spirit from the Godhead altogether. Thus, Photius clearly demonstrates that behind the dispute on the *Filioque* lie two concepts of the Trinity: the Greek personalistic concept, which considers the personal revelation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as the starting point of Trinitarian theology; and the Latin, Augustinian approach to God as a simple essence, within which a Trinity of persons can be understood only in terms of internal relations.³⁷

Vladimir Lossky, one of the most influential Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century, sums up well the enduring legacy of Photius' charge of Apollinarian heresy to the western branches of the Latin Church. "Whether we like it or not, the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit has been the sole dogmatic grounds for the separation of East and West."³⁸

In the eleventh century, Patriarch Michael Cerularius of Constantinople added a second theological charge to the list of 'Latin heresies': the use of the azymes – unleavened bread – in the Latin Eucharistic celebration, a practice of the Armenian Church. Thus, the Byzantines

... drew a parallel between this practice and the Monophysite – or, more precisely, Apollinarian-Christology of the Armenians: bread, symbolizing Christ's humanity, in order to reflect Chalcedonian orthodoxy, must be 'animated' and dynamic, in full possession of the living energies of humanity. By imitating the Monophysite Armenians in their use of the 'dead' azymes, the Latins themselves were falling into Apollinarianism, and denying that Christ, as man, had a soul.³⁹

³⁷ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 61. Behind theological disagreements, one may feel the growing Byzantine contempt for the Western way of theological thinking which will be cemented by the ill will in the aftermath of the catastrophic fourth crusade in 1204 and will surface in the Orthodox criticisms of the Western church in later centuries again and again.

³⁸ *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 71. Cf. also his *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, ch. 3 "God in Trinity," (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976, 1998), 44-66. Yves Congar, Roman Catholic theologian and contemporary of Lossky, also considered the procession of the Holy Spirit to be the most serious dogmatic difference between Eastern and Western theological traditions: see his *Diversity and Communion*, translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1984), 98. For an extensive treatment of the controversy, see Haddad, "The Stations of the Filioque," op. cit., 209-68 and the historically richer account by Sir Steven Runciman, *The Eastern Schism: A study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches during XIth and XIIth Centuries*, reprint (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press, 1956; first printed 1955). For an excellent account on the Azyme controversy, refer to Mahlon H. Smith, III, *And Taking the Bread ... Cerularius and the Azyme Controversy of 1054*, in *Théologie Historique: Collection fondée par Jan Danielou dirigée par Charles Kannengiesser* (Paris: éditions beauchesne, 1978).

³⁹ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, pp. 95-96.

Hence, the roundabouts charge of ‘Apollinarian heresy’ in Philotheus’s letter.

The second question bears on the role of the monks in Orthodox life. In Russia, they were the dominant spiritual force, both in the church and in society. Before the Revolution of 1917,⁴⁰ there were more than a thousand monasteries in the country. Monastic authority, however, was built up much earlier. The conciliar activity of the Orthodox Church practically ended with the triumph of Orthodoxy over iconoclasm in the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787) in Nicaea. Over the centuries, largely the monks carried on the whole debate. This illustrates not only their traditional involvement in theological controversies but also their sense of responsibility for the Church. As Meyendorff observes, by the end of the 8th century, Byzantine monasticism appears

not only as a school of spiritual perfection, but also as a body which feels responsibility for the content of the faith and for the fate of the Church as a whole.... [It] gave rise to a theology which can properly be called ‘monastic’. In contrast with the formal conservatism of official ecclesiastical circles and in opposition to the traditions of secular Hellenism, this theology happened also to be the most dynamic and creative current in Byzantine thought as a whole.⁴¹

In light of this perspective, one can easily find the source for Philotheus’s confidence and Orthodox zeal.

But why should the Universal Apostolic Church be under the Tsar’s rule? The monk’s statement invokes a model of church-state relationship popularly labelled ‘caesaropapism’.⁴² It is, in itself, too simple to explain his profound admiration for the Tsar. Outwardly, it has political overtones, while at the same time it reflects an Orthodox theology of authority, both in the church and in the state, derived from ‘a form of ‘realized eschatology’, as if the Kingdom of God had already appeared ‘in power’ and as if the empire were the manifestation of this power in the world and in history.’⁴³ In fact, it may be properly

⁴⁰ Clendenin 1994, p. 39; cf. Schmemmann, “Russian Theology,” op.cit., p. 175. On the more complex dynamics of the church’s life and interaction with society in nineteenth century Russia and on the eve of the Revolution see (Zernov 1963, 35-62).

⁴¹ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 66; cf. Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, op.cit., 110-34.

⁴² It is very often a misunderstood term. According to Meyendorff, ‘[c]aesaropapism ... never became an accepted principle’ (Ibid., p. 6) in defining the relationship of the church and the governing worldly power. The relationship is better expressed in terms of Justinian’s ‘symphony’, to which I will refer below. For an insightful study of theological background and realities of Byzantine theocracy, refer to Sir Steven Runciman’s book, op.cit..

⁴³ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 214.

understood only from the more general presuppositions on the nature of the Christian faith and the mode of its preservation and continuity in the Church of Christendom.

As opposed to a literal and somewhat legalistic Latin exegesis of the Petrine *logia* of Jesus (Mt 16:18, Lk 22:32, and Jn 21:15-17) regarding the exclusive authority of the bishop of Rome, Orthodox exegesis finds that the point of these passages is soteriological rather than institutional. Speaking to Peter, Jesus was underlining the meaning of faith as the foundation of the Church, rather than pointing to the organisation of the Church as the guardian of faith. Modelling Peter, a believer's genuine Christian faith is the foundation of the Church, opening the gates of the Kingdom. To use Meyendorff's aphorism, "the whole ecclesiological debate between East and West is thus reducible to the issue of whether faith depends on Peter, or Peter on faith."⁴⁴

The Orthodox concept of the Church (or of the succession of Peter) recognises the fullness of catholicity⁴⁵ in each local Church. The word 'Church' "has always meant the whole body of faithful, alive and dead. This is the Church mentioned in the Creed."⁴⁶ The presence of Christ belongs to each sacramental, Eucharist-centred, liturgical community. This presence was in the persecuted early Christian communities where the faith was preserved and nourished. By participating in the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Christ, these poor and marginalized communities still held to Christ's victory over the powers and authorities, witnessed through their martyrs for God's glory.

After Constantine's Edict of Milan proclaimed religious liberty 'for Christians and all others to follow whatever religion they wished'⁴⁷ in 313, Christianity was given equal status with the other religions in the Roman Empire. This shift caused profound changes in the Empire. The relief felt in the Church found theological expression in the concept of the cosmic victory of Christ over the 'Prince of this world': "here, the state, the main instrument

⁴⁴ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 98. For an extended Orthodox argument in the succession of Peter debate, see J. Meyendorff, A. Schmemmann, N. Affanasieff and N. Koulomzine, *The Primacy of Peter*, reprint (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992).

⁴⁵ On the subtle difference between a more tangible and holistic meaning of Slavonic 'sobornost' as the spirit-guided fellowship (Zervnov 1963, 40) and a more abstract concept of 'catholicity', see John Meyendorff's *Catholicity and the Church*, pp. 7-11; cf. his essays in *Living Tradition*, pp. 81-97 and "The Catholicity of the Church: An Introduction," in *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, vol. 17, Nos. 1&2 (1973), 5-18. Cf. also Nicolas Zernov, *Three Russian Prophets: Khomiakov, Dostoevsky, Solovyev*. (London: SCMP, 1944), 22 and Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox view*. In *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, gen. ed. Richard S. Haugh, trans. Robert L. Nichols. vol. 1 (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Co., 1972), 37-55.

⁴⁶ Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, op. cit., 4.

⁴⁷ Schmemmann 1992, p. 67. Interestingly, centuries later the 17th century Baptist, Roger Williams, would plead for what had been already granted by Constantine but forgotten by Christendom (McClendon 1994, p. 482 ff.).

of diabolic malice against the Church, bowed before Christ.”⁴⁸ The consequence of this theological outlook was that the state acquired a wholly positive significance for Christians. As McClendon put it, “the ‘evil’ power thus became anything that opposed imperial church and ‘Christian’ Empire in their holy union.”⁴⁹

Constantine’s model of State and Church is one of parallelism. There is a secular realm and there is a sacred realm. There are two communities: those in the Church and those outside the Church. However, the Roman principality gradually became a theocratic monarchy and by the time of Emperor Justinian, the Eusebian ideal of *mimesis*⁵⁰ had been modified into a ‘*dyarchy*’ of emperor and patriarch with the emperor being the vicar of God. Justinian I (527-565), the great legislator, was the first major ideologue of the Christian Empire. He never distinguished state tradition from Christian tradition.

He considered himself to be completely and fully the Roman emperor and just as organically a Christian emperor.... Justinian always felt himself to be the servant of God and the executor of His will, and the empire to be the instrument of God’s plan in the world.⁵¹

The Justinian model of State and Church is that of ‘symphony’. As Justinian writes in his Sixth Novella:

The greatest blessings of mankind are the gifts of God which have been granted us by the mercy on high: the priesthood and the imperial authority (*sacerdotium et imperium*). The priesthood ministers to things divine: the imperial authority is set over, and shows diligence in, things human; but both proceed from one and the same source, and both adore the life of man.⁵²

In addition, though, the empire has responsibility for preserving Church dogmas (that is why the Emperor calls the ecumenical councils, presides over the assemblies, and inaugurates the patriarchs) and the honour of the priesthood. The priesthood, for its part, co-operates with the empire in directing all aspects of public life along ways pleasing to God. In Justinian (and later Orthodox) Christendom, there is only one Christian community - the Christian empire -

⁴⁸ Schmemmann 1992, p. 117.

⁴⁹ McClendon 1994, p. 202, cf. also his exegesis of Rom. 12 in McClendon 1986, pp. 309-12.

⁵⁰ This holds the position of the Emperor and of his empire on earth as ‘imitating’ or representing on earth God and his universal heavenly kingdom. The earliest formulations of this theory, with a clear sense of realised eschatology, can be found in the writings of the famous early fourth century bishop of Caesarea, Eusebius (c.260-c.340), particularly in his *Preparatio evangelica* (Preparation for the Gospel).

⁵¹ Schmemmann 1992, p. 145.

⁵² Justinian, *Novella VI*, following the translation in the collection of primary sources of Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen Through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 136; cf. Schmemmann 1992, p. 151.

and only one legitimate authority - that of God - exercised on earth under the *dyarchy* of the emperor and the patriarch (ecumenical of Constantinople or of the national autocephalic Church). The key to the 'symphony' lies in the Justinian maxim 'The well-being of the Church is the defence of the empire.'⁵³ As Schmemmann aptly points out, the fatal flaw in Justinian's theory "lies in the fact that there is simply *no place for the Church* in it,"⁵⁴ at least the Church on earth. The authority in this world is solely that of the Emperor.

Given such a theology of authority, Philotheus's appeal to the Tsar is completely legitimate, even necessary. Furthermore, hierarchical arrangement and concentration of unquestioned imperial power inevitably pervaded ecclesial structures and led to the abuse of the ecclesial power as well. Father Sergius Bulgakov was well aware of this state of affairs. In response to an accusation of him falling into Lutheranism for criticizing the church's hierarchy, he pointed out that his:

'Lutheranism' is a struggle not against but for episcopacy, a striving to reclaim it in its true dignity, to free it from the contamination of [ecclesial] despotism, based on a slavish psychology.

This slavishness is to be found first of all in the attitude of bishops to secular power, in caesaro-papism - the 'union of the church with the state,' in substituting the kingdom of this world for the kingdom of God. While thus submitted to Caesar outside the Church, the bishops have demanded the same submission to themselves within the Church.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid., p. 153.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 146; Schmemmann's emphasis. Cf. McClendon 1994, pp. 202-3. The legacy of the Byzantine Christian theocracy is still strongly felt in uneasy relationship between Orthodoxy and democracy both in emerging democratic states in Eastern Europe and even within American society (see Aristotle Papanikolaou, 'Byzantium, Orthodoxy, and Democracy', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 71 (March 2003), No. 1, pp. 75-98). On Patriarch Photius attempts to alter Byzantine theology of Church and State, see Despina Stratoudaki-White, "The Dual Doctrine of the Relations of Church and State in Ninth Century Byzantium," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Volume 45, Nos. 1-4 (2000), 443-52. For an insightful analysis of the reinforcement of the Byzantine *symphonic* model of interpenetration of church and state by the Ottoman *millet* model in the process of pre-democratic and democratic nation-state formation in Orthodox Eastern Europe, see Elizabeth H. Prodromou's articles, "Toward an Understanding of Eastern Orthodoxy and Democracy Building in Post-Cold War Balkans," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Spring 1994), pp. 126-35, and "Orthodox Christianity and Pluralism: Moving Beyond Ambivalence?" in Emmanuel Clapsis (ed.), *The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World: An Ecumenical Conversation* (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications/ Brookline, MSS: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004), pp. 22-46. In reviewing the tenets of the emerging comprehensive social teaching of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) in relation to the August 2000 Jubilee Sobor (Council) of the Church, Walter Sawatsky has put forward an attractive thesis: "Have we now reached the stage, where that Simfonia theory of church and state, which has for many centuries been totally unsuitable for the realities of Orthodoxy's place in totalist governing institutions such as the Ottoman and the Soviet Empire, has now been replaced with a social doctrine that addresses the realities of the context from a recognizably Orthodox perspective?" ("Russian Orthodoxy Faces Issues of the Day and of the Century - Church and Society, Religious Pluralism, Martyrs and Mission," in *Religion in Eastern Europe*, XXII:2 (April 2002), 3 (1-15).

⁵⁵ *Sergius Bulgakov: A Bulgakov Anthology*, edited by James Pain and Nicolas Zernov (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1976), 15-16.

For eleven centuries the Eusebian theocratic constitution went virtually unchanged. “No other constitution in all the history of the Christian era has endured for so long.”⁵⁶ Its lasting legacy is still felt today. With Tim Grass we must recognize, therefore, “that the ideal of a close and mutually beneficial relationship between [Orthodox] church and state goes back to the Byzantine Empire, and so it will not disappear from Orthodox thinking and practice overnight.”⁵⁷

The last point I would like to make concerns the crypto-eschatological statement in the last part of Philotheus’s passage: his firm belief that a “*fourth [Rome] there shall not be.*” The Orthodox fathers developed a tradition of high pneumatology to the extent that the Church and the work of the Holy Spirit were considered almost synonymous.⁵⁸ “[P]neumatology always has been at the very heart of Eastern Christian theology. It is not a doctrine apart, but an integral aspect of Eastern theological teaching.”⁵⁹ As a result, “the eschatological state is not only a reality of the future but a present experience, accessible in Christ through the gifts of the Spirit.”⁶⁰ The entire tradition of Eastern spirituality, and particularly the hesychast movement,⁶¹ strengthened by St. Simeon the New Theologian (949-

⁵⁶ Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, op. cit., 164.

⁵⁷ “Orthodoxy and the Doctrine of the Church,” in Ian M. Randall (ed.), *Baptists and the Orthodox Church on the Way to Understanding*, IBTS Occasional Publications Series, volume 1: Proceeding of an IBTS Directors’ conference moderated by Dr Ian M Randall and Dr Parush R Parushev, August 02- 08, 2002 (Prague: IBTS, 2003), p. 13.

⁵⁸ As one of the leading Greek theologians today, Christos Yannaras, puts it in his *Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, trans. Keith Schram (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1991): ‘...Pentecost - the descent of the Holy Spirit - is not an event which has been completed ‘once for all time’, but the event, which always and continuously constitutes and forms the Church,’ (p. 128). A very good summary of the Fathers’ teaching about the Holy Spirit and the Sobornicity of the Church in the spirit of V. Lossky is provided by the Romanian theologian Dumitru Staniloae in his *Theology and the Church*, foreword John Meyendorff, trans. Robert Barringer (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980), pp. 45-71. Cf. also Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, *passim*; John Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (Ibid., 1983), ch. 1; Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View. Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, gen. ed. Richard S. Haugh, trans. Robert L. Nichols, vol. 1, (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Co., 1979), ch. iv; Stanley M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Tradition* (Peabody, MSS: Hendickson, 1989), *passim*. John D. Zizioulas rightly points, however, to the pitfalls of bringing Pneumatology and Christology into an organic synthesis to bear upon Orthodox ecclesiology in his *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, with a foreword by John Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir Seminary Press, 1997), p. 126 ff.

⁵⁹ Burgess 1989, p. 1. Cf. Constantine N. Tsirpanlis, *Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought and Orthodox Theology*, Theology and Life Series, vol. 30 (Collegetown, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press/ A Michael Glazier Book, 1991), 83 ff.

⁶⁰ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 219.

⁶¹ On which Russian monasticism was initially built under the influence of the leading Bulgarian theologians and churchmen who found refuge in Russia after the Ottoman conquest at the time of Ivan the Great (15th century). Being considered crypto-messalian materialism by some Byzantine theologians (Meyendorff 1983, p. 76 ff.), hesychasm was accepted under patriarch Theodosios of Tarnovo and, particularly, patriarch Ephantimos of Tarnovo (d. 1402) as the official doctrine of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church since the 14th century (See Ivan Marchevski, *Hesychasm: Teaching of the Uncreated Divine Energies and Lights* (Sofia, Bulgaria: Monarchic – Conservative Union, 1996), chs vi and vii, in Bulgarian). On the Bulgarians playing “crucial role in the Slavic cultural

1022) and furthered by the theological reflections of St. Gregory Palamas (c.1296-1359), is based upon the premise that here and now, in this life, Christians can experience the vision of God and the reality of ‘deification.’ It leads Meyendorff to say that “this strong emphasis on an ‘already realized’ eschatology explains why ... the Christian state, and the Church as such assume a responsibility for society as a whole, receiving guidance and inspiration from the Christian Gospel.”⁶² We will see later the same vision reappearing in the Slavophiles’ ideas of *vseedinstvo* and *sobornost’*.

Philotheus’s logic is clear then: as far as Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church are concerned, the only rightful (and right) bearer of the Apostolic tradition is Basil III, who is ‘the only Tsar of Christians’ in all the universe, and his kingdom is the only Christian Kingdom God should preserve to the end.

I have used this short exploration of the origins of Russian Orthodox thinking in the Byzantine theological tradition to identify the roots of the persistent themes and struggles of nineteenth-century Russian as well as other Orthodox theologies. I will turn now to these struggles and, from that perspective, I will evaluate first the achievements of twentieth-century Russian Orthodox theology which, due to the course of political events, happens to

development” in fourteen century and on furthering Patriarch Euthymius’ program of hesychasm’s renewal in Moskovite Rus, see (Cooper 2003, p.106, cf. 105-16; 121-34). For a contemporary critical engagement with Orthodox hesychastic tradition, see George A. Lindbeck, “Hesychastic Prayer and the Christianizing Platonism: Some Protestant Reflections,” in *Prayer in Late Antiquity and early Christianity*, Year-book 1978-9 (Tantur/Jerusalem: Ecumenical Institute for Advance Theological Studies (Franciscan Printing Press), 1981), pp. 71-88, reprinted in George A. Lindbeck, *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, edited by James J. Buckley in Stanley M. Hauerwas and Peter Ochs, eds. *Radical Traditions: Theology in Postcritical Key Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003; first published in Great Britain in 2002 by SCM Press), 106-19.

⁶² Meyendorff 1983, p. 219.

be largely expatriate.⁶³ Next I will consider similar developments of Greek Orthodox thinking after recovering the country's independence in the nineteenth century.

Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Developments of Russian Theological Thought

*Some formative forces in nineteenth-century Russian Orthodox theology*⁶⁴

Rowan Williams, now the Church of England's Archbishop of Canterbury, has a valuable insight when he insists on the exceptional vitality of Russian intellectual life in the latter nineteenth century.⁶⁵ The main reason for this was the late but very intense encounter of traditional Eastern Christian culture with the early mainly German Enlightenment thought under Peter the Great⁶⁶ and the robust French philosophical Enlightenment worldview

⁶³ Almost right from the beginning of its rise to power, the Bolshevik leadership began systematic terror specifically against the Russian Orthodox Church under the flag of the fight against counter-revolution. The terror reached its peak in the early 1930s, with tragic consequences not only for the spiritual but also for the very physical survival of the few still-left theologians and the Church leadership. It cut any possibility for creative theological work in the Soviet Union. (For accounts of the persecuted faithful and churches across all denominations, see the first hand reports of the founding Director of Keston College, Oxford, Michael Bourdeaux, *Risen Indeed: Lessons in Faith from the USSR*, forward by Bishop Donald Coggan, Keston Book Series No. 16 (London, U.K.: Darton, Longman and Todd/ Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983.) Even under the stagnated leadership of Brezhnev, the communist government set itself on a task of subverting the Church from the inside by creating a type of 'priest-communist'. 'A new type of priest would serve at the same time as a [Party] ideologist. Unfortunately, this strategy was successful, and the results became evident in the times of *Perestroika*.' (Sannikov 2001, p. 456.) This agenda was set by the Orthodox leadership, not only inside the country, but in developing interfaith relationships with other faith communities and most importantly with the World Council of Churches (see J.A. Hebly, 'The State, the church, and the oikumene: the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, 1948-1985', in Sabrina Petra Ramet, (ed.), *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, CUP, 1993), pp. 111-13; cf. Dunlop 1995, pp. 29-32). Cf. Tatiana A. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years* (Armonk, NY/ London, U.K.: M. A. Sharpe, 2002), *passim* and Sergei Hackel, "Russian Orthodox church," in Ken Parry et al., *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*, op. cit., 422-9.

⁶⁴ For a detailed account, see Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*. 2 vols., in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, gen. ed. Richard S. Haugh, trans. Robert L. Nichols, vols. 5 & 6 (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Co., 1979); (Meyendorff, 1983); Aidan Nichols, OP, *Theology in the Russian Diaspora: Church, Fathers, Eucharist in Nikolay Afanas'ev (1893-1966)* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Alexander Schmemmann, *Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*. Trans. Lydia W. Kesich. Crestwood (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992, 1977, 1963); two very informative works of Nikolas Zernov, *Eastern Christendom: A Study of the Origin and Development of the Eastern Orthodox Church* (New York: Putnam, 1961) and *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper, 1963); and the related works on Russian religious philosophy of Frederick C. Copleston, *Russian Religious Philosophy: Selected Aspects* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Search Press Ltd. & Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), and of N[ikolay] O[nufrievich] Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*. (New York: International Universities Press, 1951). For a short summary of the debate which took place largely among the expatriate theologians in France and the United States, I will follow more closely the works of Lewis Shaw, 'John Meyendorff and the Heritage of the Russian Theological Tradition', in Nassif, pp. 10-42; of Timothy Ware (Ware 1993), and of Rowan Williams, 'Eastern Orthodox Theology', in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, volume ii, ed. David F. Ford (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), pp.152-170.

⁶⁵ Williams, 1995.

⁶⁶ It is ironic that the great Tsar, who open in Russia the window to the West and whose ecclesial and administrative reforms marked at the beginning of eighteenth century a radical 'westernization' of the entire Russian life, is to be credited for "the establishment of theological education on solid and permanent foundations," (Schmemmann, "Russian Theology," op. cit., p. 174).

penetrating into Russia from 1740s onward and embraced by Catherine the Great. Characteristically, there was a fusion of French secular Enlightenment values with a heightened moral awareness following the emotionalism of Lutheran Pietism. The religious and spiritual sympathies prevented the Russian Enlightenment from becoming anti-Christian and gave a holistic impetus for the nineteenth century religious-philosophical awakening bounding together novelist, poets, critics, religious and political thinkers.⁶⁷ Three responses emerged from this encounter.⁶⁸

Firstly, the encounter gave rise to the Slavophiles' ideology and their longing for the pre-modern past. The Slavophiles were deeply influenced by the teleological structures of German philosophical idealism of J.G. Fichte, F.W.J. von Schelling and G.W.F. Hegel, and by the French traditionalism of J. de Maistre and L. de Bonald. They sought the ideal for the future development of humanity in peasant Russia prior to the reforms of Peter the Great. They gave firm support to Orthodoxy as an organic part of Russian Slavic culture.

Ivan Vasilievich Kireevsky (1806-56) was the formative influence for the Slavophile movement with his philosophy of integral knowledge,⁶⁹ rooted in (Hellenistic) patristic teaching. He saw Russian Orthodoxy as redemptive both for Roman Catholic and Protestant Scholasticism (mystical holism vs. rationalism) and Western individualism (small peasant communities vs. autonomous individual). Notably, for Kireevskii "authentic faith (and therefore knowledge) cannot be experienced by an isolated individual; it must be rooted in the supra-individual, corporate consciousness of community."⁷⁰ Communal consciousness had been destroyed in the socially fragmented West. Happily, the Orthodox Church from which the Russian thinkers can draw inspiration to provide a remedy for the European spiritual crisis has preserved it.

⁶⁷ For a brief account of this development and its formative sources, see W. Gareth Jones, "Enlightenment in Russia," in Craig (gen. ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, volume 3, op. cit., 324-7. Cf. Aileen Kelly, "Russian Philosophy," *Ibid.*, volume 8, 418-22.

⁶⁸ For this part I depend on Father Frederick C. Copleston, *Philosophy in Russia: From Herzen to Lenin and Berdyaev*. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), pp. 45-76 and pp. 201-40; *Russian Religious Philosophy: Selected Aspects* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Search Press Ltd. & Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), *passim*, and on Shaw's analysis (1996, pp. 10-25).

⁶⁹ His concept is of mental wholeness, or of integrated personality with both faculties of reason and faith (morality), but it is not clearly spelled out. See in F.C. Copleston (1986, pp. 49-68). Kireevskii developed it in an opposition to the disintegrating rationalism and individualism of the West. (cf. Andrzej Walicki, "Slavophilism," in Craig (gen. ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, volume 8, 807-11.

⁷⁰ Walicki, *Ibid.*, 808. For an extended treatment of the Slavophile philosophy see his *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

The theologian *per se* of Slavophiles, however, was a layman, Aleksei Stepanovich Khomiakov.⁷¹ For him, as for Kireevskii, faith is not held by the individual as such but by the organic community of which she or he is a member. Orthodox ecclesiology, with its stress on the authority of the local church as a gathering of the community of the faithful, provided him with an example for the Hegelian synthesis of the two opposing phenomena of freedom and unity. In correspondence with Kireevskii's idea of 'integrality,' he describes this synthesis in his essay, *The Church is One*, by coining a theological term, *sobornost'*⁷² (derived from the Slavic root *sobirat'* "to bring together"; the Russian terms for a gathering and a large cathedral have the same root, *sobor*). In Khomiakov's view, *sobornost'* faithfully represents the Byzantine patristic concept of 'catholicity,' which meant universal unity of all believers and the world, personified by the Church gathering (council) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. *Sobornost'*, or catholicity, conceived in this way was a category which had an ecclesiological, social and epistemological meaning alike.

Khomiakov derived its epistemological sense from the thesis that knowledge is rooted in will and faith, and those in turn depend on the strength of the bonds that link the individual to the Church community. The individual acquires knowledge of the truth only by uniting in love with the Universal Church and thus becoming an organ of *sobornost'* *soznanija*, that is to say, supra individual consciousness stemming from the charismatic unity of life. Separation from community means entering the fatal road of rationalism and individualism.⁷³

Sobornost' represents what Shaw terms a "fundamental link between truth and mutual love in the [Orthodox] Church"⁷⁴ as opposed to the "unnatural authoritarian tyranny" of Roman-Catholicism (unity without freedom) and "unprincipled revolt" of Protestantism (freedom without unity). The harmony of love, freedom, and oneness forms the Church's

⁷¹ For a short biography of Khomiakov, see W. J. Birkbeck, "Introduction," in W. J. Birkbeck (ed.), *Russia and the English: Church A Correspondance between Mr. William Palmer, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford and M. Khomiakoff in years 1844-1854* (London: Rivington, Percival & Co., 1895, reissued for "The Anglican & Eastern Association" by SPCK in 1917), xvii-lvii.

⁷² Often translated as catholicity (also conciliarity, communion, togetherness): Dumitru Staniloae prefers *sobornicity* to avoid the abstract connotation associated with catholicity (1980, ch ii). On the alternative view on catholicity from a Radical Reformation perspective see Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), p. 264 ff. On the role of Khomiakov as a lay theologian and his theology, see (Zernov 1944, 56-63; Zernov 1963, 285).

⁷³ Walicki 1998, 210.

⁷⁴ Shaw 1996, p. 18.

regula fidei,⁷⁵ so to speak, and is preserved only by the Orthodoxy, which become the only depository of true ‘catholicity’.

Kireevskii and Khomiakov laid the foundation of a distinctively Russian tradition in both philosophy and theology. It may look quite unusual that two laymen are at the source of the tradition. A careful look at the dynamics of religious life in nineteenth century Russia will reveal a deep polarization between ‘westernised’ academic theology and the grass-roots creative movements in quest for indigenous spiritual and intellectual identity. Thus one may consider properly two distinct streams of Russian theological tradition - the “academic” and the “free.”⁷⁶ The creative tension between the two will be the force behind much of the vigour and productivity of the Diaspora theologizing in the first half of twentieth century. The significance of Khomiakov for the following generations of Orthodox theologians is unquestionable. Almost all theologians of the Russian Diaspora accepted varying versions of Khomiakov’s ecclesiology with its three basic tenets:⁷⁷ the whole people of God - including both clergy and laity - as the home of the Church’s authority, which cannot be assumed by the bishops-in-council; the use of the term *sobornost*; and the disappearance of division and the enhancement of freedom in the concrete union of love. The most authoritative exposition of this vision at the end of the twentieth century can be found in the works of the late Father John Meyendorff.

The second consequence of the encounter of Russian theology with the Enlightenment was the rise of a speculative religious search for foundations. Vladimir Sergeevich Solovyev(1853-1900), Dostoevsky’s younger friend and disciple made the single most important contribution to nineteenth century Russian philosophical religious thought. He is

⁷⁵ It is interesting to explore the interplay of Khomiakov’s ecclesiology with John H. Yoder’s three basic Church’s practices: the Rule of Christ, the Rule of Paul, and the Fullness of Christ (see his *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*, rep. (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1994)), *passim*.

⁷⁶ Schmemmann, “Russian Theology,” *op. cit.*, 175.

⁷⁷ On the formative role of Slavophiles, Khomiakov, and later Dostoevsky and Solovyov among others in the thoughts of Nicolas Berdyaev see his *Self-Examination: An Attempt for a Philosophical Autobiography* (Moscow, Russia: DEM, 1990, in Russian), p. 10. Cf. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End* (New York: Harper Torchbooks/ Harper & Brothers: 1957), chs. v and viii; Matthew Spinka, *Nicolas Berdyaev: Captive of Freedom* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950), pp. 24, 33, 152. For some earlier assessments of Khomiakov’s theology one may wish to consult also the following resources: W. J. Birkbeck (ed.), *Russia and the English Church*, *op. cit.*; S. Bolshakoff, *The Unity of the Church According to Khomiakov and Moeller* (London: SPCK, 1946); A. Gratieux, *Unam Sanctum* (???, ca. 1938). I am in debt to Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia (Timothy Ware) for his insights and the later bibliography.

Russia's first really systematic religious philosopher, who tried to show how faith and reason, religious belief and speculative philosophy, are capable of living in harmony and making their own contributions to unified understanding of the world and of human life and history.⁷⁸

Solovyev initiated a movement later named by Nikolas Zernov the Russian Religious Renaissance,⁷⁹ and this was formative in setting the agenda for the theological studies of the 'Paris School' of Russian theology around the Orthodox Theological *Institute Saint Serge* as well as in the development of Russian religious philosophical thought.⁸⁰

As for most of the nineteenth-century Russian thinkers, Solovyev's thought was heavily dependent on German idealism, particularly Schelling. Nevertheless, he was faithful to the Russian intellectual tradition by seeing the task of philosophy organically linked to religion and social practice and by keeping Kireevskii's concept of 'integral wholeness,' or 'all-unity' at the centre of his metaphysics. His approach is best characterised as a *mélange* of concepts and philosophies striving for a rational foundational principle for the unification of religion and philosophy. He found it in an "elaboration of a quasi-mythical cosmology centred upon the figure of 'Sophia', the divine Wisdom, the eternal Feminine."⁸¹

Khomiakov's ideas were his "starting point."⁸² Taking further Khomiakov's concept of *sobornost'* and the Patristic teaching of deification, he considered the incarnation of the divine Word as an ontological act of reintegration of the fragmented 'Sophia', both in the universe and in humanity, as a cosmic whole (*vseedinstvo*, or total unity). Sharing with the Slavophiles an appreciation of the unique role of Orthodoxy for Christian faith, he considered that

the Orthodox Church does not operate by external and legalistic systems of authority, as does the Roman communion, nor does it countenance the individualism of the Protestant; it is therefore uniquely qualified to be the bearer of the promise of 'sophianic' humanity, of *bogochelovechestvo*, 'divine humanity' (or 'Godmanhood', as it is often rendered). In Orthodox societies, the aim should be a 'free theocracy,' not legally imposed but

⁷⁸ Copleston 1988, p. 11. Cf. Zernov 1944, p. 117; Zernov 1963, p. 290; Anrzej Walicki, "Solov'v, Vladimir Sergeevich," in Craig (gen. ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, volume 9, 28-33. For a contemporary assessment of Solovyev's philosophical theological legacy, see Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Solovyev, Bulgakov. Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

⁷⁹ Zernov 1963, p. 292. Cf. Spinka 1950, p. 102.

⁸⁰ Shaw 1996, p. 12 and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal,, "Russian Religious-Philosophical Renaissance," in Craig (gen. ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, volume 8, op. cit., 422-8.

⁸¹ Williams 1995, p. 154. For an extended treatment of the concept of 'Sophia' in Russian Orthodox theology see Copleston 1988, pp. 81-99.

⁸² Georges Florovsky, *Christianity and Culture*, volume 2 of his collected works (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974), 138.

organically evolving, which will draw other nations into a universal Christian communion, both church and state.⁸³

We may say with Rowan Williams that the history of Orthodox theology in the twentieth century is largely one of debate with the legacy of Solovyev. As Shaw shows, this is particularly true for the ‘Paris school’ of Orthodox thought where Father Sergius Nikolaevich Bulgakov (1871-1944) was the recognised exponent of Solovyev’s thought and the concept of sophiology.⁸⁴

Thirdly, the encounter of Eastern theology with the Enlightenment brought a widespread patristic revival in Russia which culminated in a twentieth-century neo-patristic synthesis and in an attempted grammar of distinctly Orthodox religious discourse as opposed to the conceptual grammar of secular modernity. The gigantic figures among nineteenth-century thinkers, Khomiakov and Solovyev, are the most instrumental for this third and (from my perspective) most interesting Russian response to the challenges of the Enlightenment.

As is often the case in the history of the Church, the theological revival was initiated by the vision and labour of a solitary enthusiast, in this case Philaret (Drozdov, 1782-1867), Metropolitan of Moscow. He was the crucial factor in the Russian Orthodox Church’s renewal and thorough return to the patristic sources; a process which, thanks to Vatican II, the religious world would get to know a century later as *ressourcement*. Philaret was aware of the influence of Roman Catholicism and liberal Protestantism upon his contemporary Russian Orthodoxy and undertook a return to the biblical and patristic sources of the Christian faith. (Similar moves made by the French Catholic ‘modernists’ in the 1930s initiated a Roman Catholic revival and ultimately led to Vatican II.) Not surprisingly, “there he recovered the ecclesiological themes of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ and the Church as the extension into the present of Pentecost”,⁸⁵ the two most prominent themes in twentieth-

⁸³ Williams 1995, p. 154.

⁸⁴ Zernov 1963, p. 296-8. This legacy is still informative for the emerging new voices in Russian Theology. The seven volume project of history of religion of Alexander Men, unfinished due to the tragic death of the author, is dedicated to the memory of Solovyev and takes further Solovyev’s project, both in intention and in methodology. ‘It has been the task of this series to complete to a certain extent that which was entrusted by VI[adimir] Solovyev to our time...Therefore the whole series may be viewed as an attempt for a religious-philosophical and historical synthesis’ (*History of Religion: In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. Volume I: The Beginnings of Religion*, in seven volumes (Moscow: Slovo, 1991, in Russian), p. 11). On Men’s theological heritage, see Fr. Michael Plekon, *Living Icons: Persons of Faith in the Eastern Church*, forward by Lawrence S. Cunningham, afterword by Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia (Ware), paperback edition (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004, originally published in 2002), 234-60.

⁸⁵ Shaw 1996, p. 12. Cf. Florovsky 1979.

century (Russian) Orthodox theology. Inspired by the Cappadocians and John Chrysostom, he helped the Orthodox community to recover expository preaching as integral to theology.⁸⁶ The only aim of theology in his view was the constant nurture of the Body of Christ. In other words, there is no proper place for theology outside the community of the faithful. Philaret's *Catechesis*, published in 1839, had a tremendous impact on the Russian intelligentsia and initiated intense patristic studies in the four Orthodox theological academies.⁸⁷ Patristics was given a firm place in academic *curricula*.

Twentieth Century Russian Orthodox Theology

At the beginning of his excellent essay on Eastern Orthodox theology, Rowan Williams states: "For most of the twentieth-century, the story of Orthodox theology is the story of Russian theology ...".⁸⁸ Even if the accuracy of this observation may be contested with some of the twentieth-century contributions of Greek, Romanian, and Serbian Orthodox theologies, for some of them I will account later, Russian theology certainly dominated nineteenth-century Orthodox theology. Granted all its significance for Orthodoxy in the last two hundred years, Russian theology should not be detached from the previous eighteen centuries of theological development. The history of Russian theology of the twentieth century is largely one of debate⁸⁹ between modernists, like Sergious Bulgakov (1871-1944), who tried to further Vladimir Solovyev's (1853-1900) philosophical theology of his later period, developing it outside the Church as an academic discipline, and those like Georges Florovsky (1893-1979), Vladimir Lossky (1903-1958), Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983), and John Meyendorff (1926-1992), who repudiate modernism in favour of theology as Church-related inquiry. On the one side, then, was Solovyev's 'sophiology', while on the other side was a development of the Slavophile idea of *sobornost'*⁹⁰ introduced by Alexei

⁸⁶ Sannikov 2001, pp. 647-9.

⁸⁷ At the end of nineteenth century there existed in Russia four higher level theological institutions - Orthodox academies - in Kiev, Moscow, S. Petersburg, and Kazan'.

⁸⁸ Williams, 'Eastern Orthodox Theology', p. 152. Cf. Zernov 1963, p. 281.

⁸⁹ The debate was initiated in the lively Parisian Russian Orthodox community that was the basis of twentieth-century Orthodox thought after the Bolshevik Revolution. The centre of the debate was the theological institute of St. Sergius, founded in 1925 in Paris.

⁹⁰ The apostrophe is added to mark the softened consonant 't' in Russian (miagkij znak). On the meaning of the term, see Meyendorff 1983, pp. 7-10. An extended definition will be introduced later in the paper.

Khomiakov (1804-1860) in an attempt to explain and to reinvigorate the unique messianic role of the Orthodox (and more generally pan-Slavic⁹¹) culture.

After the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the development of indigenous theological thought in Russia was largely suppressed. The centre of Russian patristic studies moved to the Russian 'Diaspora', initially to The Orthodox Institute St Sergius Institute in Paris. The group of leading theologians most recently associated with this current of thought are Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky, Nikolay Afanasiev, Paul Evdokimov, Alexander Schmemmann, and John Meyendorff. Florovsky, Schmemmann and Meyendorff moved to the United States, "where they played a decisive role in the development of American Orthodoxy"⁹² no less, in the newly founded (1937) St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary at Crestwood, outside New York.

Apart from a traditional interest in patristics, the Paris group was formed as a conscious attempt to oppose Solovyevan speculative philosophical theology, and particularly his sophiology (further developed by Pavel A. Florensky),⁹³ which all of them considered being crypto-Gnostic. In a curious match of the German Protestant philosophical theological dichotomy defined by idealist rationalism or romantic experiential emotivism, Solovyev's speculative vision was extended in two different forms by the elaborated theological system of Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, centred solely on Divine Wisdom or Sophia, and Nicolas Berdyaev's mystical existentialism.⁹⁴

The debate was especially intense over Solovyev's most faithful exponent Sergius Bulgakov's works in the mid-thirties.⁹⁵ The agenda of the group was expressed in a term coined by Florovsky - 'neo-patristic synthesis,' or neo-patrology. Florovsky acknowledged that "[the fathers of the church] are much more up to date than many of our theological

⁹¹ Pan-slavism and its Russian counter-part Slavophilism are intellectual and cultural movements of allegiance and devotion to Slavdom as attested by the use of a Slav language with roots, ironically, in and in opposition to German Romantic nationalism, particularly of the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire. For a succinct account, see Nikolai V. Riasanovsky, "Pan-slavism," in Edward Craig (gen. ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London & New York: Routledge, 1998, volume 7, 197-201.

⁹² Ware 1993, p. 179.

⁹³ See his *The Pillar and Ground of Truth: An Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters*, translated by Boris Yakim with an introduction by Richard F. Gustafson (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁹⁴ Berdyaev's rich and lasting philosophical thought deserves a special study. For a recent evaluation of dualistic and crypto-Gnostic elements of his thought, see John Macquarrie, "Berdyaev: A Russian (not very) Orthodox Mystic." in his *Stubborn Theological Questions* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2003), 64-77.

⁹⁵ Williams 1995, p. 159 ff. On the complicated relations between Russian philosophical thinking and the neo-patristic turn in expatriate Russian theology see Sergei S. Horuzhy, "Neo-Patristic Synthesis and Russian Philosophy", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 44 (2000), Nos. 3-4, pp. 309-28.

contemporaries ... [because] they were concerned not so much with what man can believe as with what God had done for man.” And he put forward his project “to enlarge our perspective, to acknowledge the masters of the old, and to attempt for our own age an existential synthesis of Christian experience.”⁹⁶

The aim of the project was to recover the authentic sources of the Church’s theology, to examine them critically in the light of the Orthodox tradition, and to interpret the thought of the Fathers in a modern idiom to advance the Church’s self-understanding. In this sense, Shaw is right to consider ‘neo-patristic synthesis’ (theology for the Church)⁹⁷ as a ‘confessionalist’s’ response to Solovyev’s sophiology (philosophy as theology).⁹⁸ Florovsky wrote: “Solovyev must be judged not only on the basis of his philosophy but also on the merits of his religious life. After all, it is impossible to be a Christian solely by one’s [speculative] worldview.”⁹⁹

The agenda set by the neo-patristic theologians proved to be relevant. It brought about both renewal in the life of the expatriate Orthodox Church and remarkable theological accomplishments. Some of these thinkers and their works, such as those of Vladimir Lossky and John Meyendorff, are especially significant to the life and thought of the entire Christian community.¹⁰⁰

Russian Orthodox theology is formative for current Orthodox thought. Antiochian Orthodox scholar, Dr Bradley Nassif, aptly observes that in the Orthodox community throughout the world the late Georges Florovsky, Alexander Schmemmann and John Meyendorff form “a trilogy of what can possibly be termed the ‘American Fathers’, an epitaph reminiscent to the three great Cappadocian Fathers of the fourth century.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, op. cit., 16.

⁹⁷ On different typological relations of theology and philosophy see Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, eds. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Heaven & London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 28-55.

⁹⁸ Shaw 1996, p. 20.

⁹⁹ Florovsky 1979, vol. II, p. 251. It is surprising to find a close proximity between the Orthodox neo-patristic theological agenda and the radical ‘baptistic’ vision on the role of the church as the primary community of reference for theology (McClendon 1994, pp. 46-8).

¹⁰⁰ One is tempted to draw a parallel here with the “liberal”-“conservative” controversy among the evangelicals (for a concise review, see Nancey Murphy, *Theology in a Postmodern Age*, The Nordenhaug Lectures 2003 (Prague, Czech: IBTS, 2003), 7-23). Such parallel must be resisted due to much wider communality between the two positions in Russians’ debate. (For details, see Alexander Schmemmann, “Russian Theology: 1920-1972. An Introduction,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, volume 16, No. 4 (1972), 178.

¹⁰¹ Nassif 1996, p. xvi. For representative biographical entries on these Orthodox theologians, see FitzGerald, 1995, Part II. Cf. (Plekon, 2004), 178-233.

My purpose in this study so far has been to show the development of Russian theology as an organic part of the Orthodox tradition both in terms of its inheritance and in its current state. There is much to be said about the ways in which an Orthodox community reads the Bible, about how Scripture and tradition inform each other, about the contributions of particular theologians, about the relationship of the Orthodox community with other Christian communions, and, most importantly, about how the community lives out its faith¹⁰² as a moral witness to the culture. None of these can be fully explored in a short study like this.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, one thing is certain. Twentieth-century (Russian) Orthodox theology has firmly situated itself in the service of the Church in the contemporary world, overcoming both the temptation of the Slavophiles to return to pre-modern Russia as well as Solovyev's Enlightenment challenge to view religion as mere philosophy. There are interesting and fruitful insights in the works of V. Lossky and J. Meyendorff, *inter alia*, which can contribute to the development of a communitarian ecclesiology relevant in the face of the ethical challenges of today's world. I would also argue that the heirs of the Radical Reformation have much to learn from the centuries-long accomplishments of the 'third almost unknown' in the Christian family - Orthodox Christianity - on the appreciation of the tradition of our communities and on relating to the world without being 'of the world'.

I will turn now to explore some theological contributions of Greek Orthodoxy beginning with the country's liberation from Ottoman oppression.

Developments of Contemporary Greek Theological Thought

Nineteenth and twentieth century Greek Orthodox theology

The fall of Byzantium and the Balkan principalities under the waves of Ottoman conquest inaugurated a profound theological crisis similar to that of the Russian Orthodox community after the Mongol invasions. The extinction of old theological centres, the penetration of western models of theological thinking, and the humanistic spirit of the Renaissance and of the Enlightenment brought about an abrupt break with the old tradition of integrated theological learning. Orthodox theologians and intellectuals were forced to seek

¹⁰² A crucially important communal dimension of Orthodox Christian life has recently been outlined in Fr. Stanley S. Harakas' *Living the Faith: The Praxis of the Eastern Orthodox Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing Co., 1993) and Vigen Guroian's *Ethics after Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans, 1994).

¹⁰³ For important insights and a succinct summary, see Schmemmann, "Russian Theology," *op. cit.*

theological training in the West. Educated in Roman Catholic and Protestant (mainly German) universities, these theologians “Consciously or unconsciously adopted theological categories, terminology and forms of argument foreign to the tradition of their own Church; Orthodox religious thinking underwent what a contemporary Russian theologian, Father Gerge Florovsky, has appropriately termed a *pseudomorphism*.”¹⁰⁴ This led to the “western captivity”¹⁰⁵ of the Greek Orthodox theological mind. While Russian Orthodoxy was able slowly to attain its distinctive character by the end of the nineteenth century, a genuine religious renaissance is still awaiting other Orthodox communities.

There is something parallel to the Russian story in the development of Greek Orthodox thought. Unfortunately, it is much less known and not easily available for non-native students of theology *per contra* Russian.¹⁰⁶ As the course of history abruptly altered its natural development, Byzantine theology came to an end. Under almost four hundred years of Ottoman domination and during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly, Greek theological thought of the official ecclesial structures and of the Greek speaking intellectuals was primarily a theology of accommodation and adaptation to the Western Protestant and Catholic models to the extent of having an openly Reformed theologian heading the patriarchal see of Constantinople!¹⁰⁷ At the same time, like the Russian Orthodox communities under the Mongols, monastic communities and parish life on a grass root level kept alive the “great tradition” imbedding patristic, mystical and liturgical theological memory.

¹⁰⁴ Timothy Ware, *Eustratios Argenti: A Study of the Greek Church under Turkish Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 7 f.. Cf. Ware, Kallistos Ware, “Easter Orthodox Theology,” in Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason and Hugh Pyper with Ingrid Lawrie and Cecily Bennet (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford/ New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 185.

¹⁰⁵ Father Florovsky is credited with coining the term. For an excellent historic background study of this period and its effect on nineteenth century Orthodoxy, see Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, op. cit..

¹⁰⁶ This does not change since Frank [Stanton Burns] Gavin aired a similar lament almost a century ago. (See his *Some Aspects of Contemporary Greek Orthodox Thought* (London, U.K.: SPCK/ Milwaukee, Wis.: Morehouse Publishing Company, 1936), xxii-iv. Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, “Eastern Christian Theology,” in Ken Parry et al., op. cit., 481-7.

¹⁰⁷ For a very well written account of this period in modern Greek ecclesial history, see Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, op. cit., *passim*; on the attempted reforms of the Calvinist Patriarch Cyril (Constantine) Lucaris (1620-1635) of Constantinople, see chapter 6, pp. 259-88. Lucaris systematics is a prime example of westernized Orthodox theologizing (See, Cyrillus Lucaris, *Orientalis Confessio Christianae Fidei* (Kirill Lukaris, *Vostochnoe Ispovedanie Khristianskoi Very*, serija “Khristianskie Mysliteli”), publication of the original texts (Greek and Latin), introduction, and comments by Prof J. A. Meier (The Netherlands), Russian translation by A. V. Dvuhzhilov, Christian Thinkers Series (Sankt-Peterburg, Russia : Mirt Publishers, 2000).

With the success of Greeks striving for independence kindled by nationalistic neo-Hellenic dreams of the Phanariots¹⁰⁸ and the attraction to the rationality of the Enlightenment humanism in an attempt to catch up faster after the progressing West, it was the official ecclesial way of theologizing that became prominent, contemporary with the liberation from the Ottomans. According to professor Christos Yannaras, the appearance of academic theology in Greece coincides with the founding of the theological faculty of the University of Athens in 1837, which was “a faithful copy of the theological faculties in Germany.”¹⁰⁹ I will begin my historical theological inquiry at this point.

The spirit of the Enlightenment’s theological rationalism (particularly of German philosophical theology¹¹⁰) and the understanding of theology as academic discipline almost completely separated from the life and spirituality of the church had such strong roots, that the delayed opening of the second alternative theological faculty of the University of Thessalonica in the early 1940’s did not alter the dominant mode of Greek theological thought.¹¹¹ It is not surprising to find that most, if not all, of the academic writers of theology were preoccupied with the imported religious problematic. On Yannaras’ rather harsh assessment,

... pietism, natural theology, the religion of sentiment, theological “Enlightenment,” and Christian civilization (*Kultur-christentum*). The moral categories of Wolff, the religious categories of Schleiermacher dominated Greek clergy. Morality was separated from dogma. Dogmas remained a body of theoretical principles without any immediate relationship to the spiritual life of the faithful. Morality was based on rationalistic concepts and in particular on the juridical conception of the relationship between man and God ... Academic theology was totally indifferent to the people and to their

¹⁰⁸ It will make for an interesting research to compare the influence on the respective Orthodoxy of the messianic myths of Moscow as the Third Rome and of the nationalistic Phanariots’ “Great Idea encouraging Greeks to think of themselves as a Chosen People,” (Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, op. cit., 383). They are chosen to bring back the glory of the Byzantine Commonwealth and the Hellenic culture to the world (cf. 360-406).

¹⁰⁹ “Theology in the Present Day Greece,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, volume 16, no. 4 (1972), 196. I will also make use of Prof. Yannaras’ reflections in chapter 10 “Orthodoxy” of *Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1991), 149-64. On an earlier summary account of the development of Greek academic theology, see Gavin, *Some Aspects of Contemporary Greek Orthodox Thought*, op. cit. On socio-anthropological and ethno-religious dynamics of the Balkan Orthodox Commonwealth under and after the liberation from the Ottoman oppression, see Mylonas 2003, 213-40.

¹¹⁰ See Gavin, *Some Aspects ...*, op. cit., xxiv.

¹¹¹ In the late 1960’s the theological problematic of this school took in a different direction with the works of Prof. P. Christou and his younger colleagues in patristic studies and hesychast school of thought, Prof. G. Mantzaridis in Orthodox patristic moral thought and Prof. John Phoundulis in liturgical theology.

spirituality. ...And this attitude prevailed during the entire duration of the free Greek State, up to the present time.¹¹²

Until the 1950's Greek theology had tended to be cast in a rather scholastic mode. The place of honour in Greek academic theology rightfully belongs to Prof. Christos Androutsos. His influence is similar to that of Solovyev in Russia. His theological ideas defined the dominant structure of Greek theological thought throughout almost the whole of the twentieth century. After the publication of his *Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church*¹¹³ he was considered both inside and outside Greece "the most distinguished theological writer of the present day."¹¹⁴ Initially his highly systematic approach did not go unchallenged but it became the theological orthodoxy at the end of the day.¹¹⁵ Apart from summing up the fruits of the theological labour of the nineteenth century Greek theologians, a characteristic feature of his *Dogmatics* is the conscious search for a middle ground between Catholic and (largely Lutheran pietistic) Protestant thought. As with Solovyev, the rationalism, the reliance on abstract principles and axioms, and philosophical speculations involved in this search, according to his critics from the neo-patristic camp, severs the link with the life and experience of the Church and pulls him away from the true spirit of Orthodoxy. In spite of the criticism, his eloquent systematisation compatible with the most serious European thought as well as his exceptional personality and encyclopaedic knowledge in almost any intellectual field made him and his theological position a pole of attraction and a point of departure for generations of the twentieth century Greek theologians.

Androutsos' heritage is taken a step further by P. N. Trembelas in his three-volume *Dogmatics*.¹¹⁶ In an effort to respond to the criticisms of Androutsos' work, he tried a rather mechanical accommodation of the patristic tradition with sterile academic theology, which largely failed. Trembelas is better known as an academic face for a rather influential pietistic "Zoe" movement of Greek popular Orthodoxy. It is a curious example of modernist attempt to blend formal Orthodox belief system with Lutheran pietistic moralism, privatisation of

¹¹² Yannaras, "Theology in the Present Day Greece," op. cit., 197. These are exactly the features of emerging Greek theological school highly praised by the western admirers of systematic "scientific theology" (Gavin, *Some Aspects* ..., op. cit., xxv) at the beginning of the last century.

¹¹³ (Athens, 1907).

¹¹⁴ Gavin, *Some Aspects* ..., op. cit., xxiv.

¹¹⁵ On the debate over Androutsos' project, see Gavin, *Some Aspects* ..., op. cit., xxv-xxvi and Yannaras, "Theology in the Present Day Greece," op. cit., 199-200.

¹¹⁶ Published in Greek 1959-1961.

spirituality and religious autonomy of the lay individual from Orthodox ecclesial structures. In spite of criticisms by able Orthodox theologians of the theological misfit of the “Zoe” project,¹¹⁷ the movement has apologetic appeal to the emancipated and westernised Greeks. It is both influential and subversive to the traditional Orthodox piety and way of life.¹¹⁸

The 1950s mark a turn away from the spells of scholastic theologizing and the appearance of alternative ways of doing theology in the Greek Orthodox community.¹¹⁹ One relates to the embrace of the neo-patristic vision of the Russian Orthodox Diaspora, particularly of Lossky and Florovsky, and the other is connected to art as theology. Three theologians - John Romanides, John Zizioulis and Nikos Nissiotis - were primarily instrumental in preparing the shift from a scholastic to a patristic vein of theologizing, which also proved to be the most fertile.

While doing his doctoral research under Father Nicolas Afanasiev at St Sergius Institute in Paris (1954-55) and building on his earlier insights, Father John Romanides, a Greek-American theologian, came to appreciate a particularly rich perspective on Orthodox ecclesiology known as “Eucharistic ecclesiology.”¹²⁰ It has been popularized later in the writings of Afanasiev himself and Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamum.¹²¹ Romanides’ inspiration came from studying the seven letters to the churches in Asia Minor of St Ignatius (ca.35- ca.107) of Antioch, one of the most significant among the Apostolic Fathers, and who set an example of creative hermeneutical theological engagement with the patristic sources. Study of early patristic sources enabled Romanides in his earlier scholarly works to develop “a fiercely anti-Augustinian theology,” particularly on the concept of

¹¹⁷ For an overview of the argument, see Yannaras, “Theology in the Present Day Greece,” op. cit., 198-9. Cf. John Romanides’ doctoral dissertation at the University of Athens, 1956.

¹¹⁸ Having in mind multiple attempts of conservative evangelical and fundamentalist groupings to “save the lost” in traditionally Orthodox post-communist countries by proselytizing or confronting Orthodox communities on the western doctrinal grounds, it may make for an interesting project to analyze cultural, social and religious dynamics of “Zoe” movement in Greece and Lord’s Army in Romania.

¹¹⁹ Yannaras, “Theology in the Present Day Greece,” op. cit., 205.

¹²⁰ Bishop Kalistos Ware refers to a typescript of Romanides’ paper in circulation by mid 1950’s (*The Inner Kingdom*, op. cit. 16) and published later in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, volume 7 (1961-1962), Nos. 1-2, 53-77. On Afanasiev’s theological thought, see (Plekton, 2004), 149-77.

¹²¹ N. Afanassieff, “The Church Which Presides in Love,” in J. Meyendorff et al. *The Primacy of Peter* (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992), 91-143, and Zizioulas, John D. *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church*. Foreword by John Meyendorff. Crestwood, NY/London, UK: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997. Cf. Aidan Nichols, OP, *Theology in the Russian Diaspora: Church, Fathers, Eucharist in Nikolai Afanas’ev (1893-1966)* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 113-7, 165-77.

original sin.¹²² No wonder his work brought discontent and confusion in Greek academic circles.¹²³

Methropolitan John Zizioulas took also a critical lead from Nicolas Afanasiev's ecclesiology and developed it to a comprehensive metaphysics of holistic relation centred on the Trinitarian image of being as communion. It is possible to correct the great philosophical error of search for ahistoric substances, Zizioulis insists by acknowledging the moral (relational) unity in all reality, which is not an abstract substance, but a relational system. Williams evaluates his doctoral work on eucharistic ecclesiology as "seminally important in ecumenical theology."¹²⁴ It offers a ground for "useful interaction between this kind of ecclesiology and various Western attempts at 'postmodern' or 'postliberal' schemas, in its critique of a metaphysics of unrelated substances and an epistemology based on the myth of a detached or neutral subjectivity."¹²⁵ Zizioulis creatively advanced further his concept of communion in an attempt to give a holistic account of the nature of the human self. I am not able to do justice here to Zizioulis' *communio*-ecclesiology and his promising inquiry in the communal nature of the self, which received attentive hearing across the denominational borders.¹²⁶ It deserves a special treatment in depth.

According to Yannaras, the work of two theologians - Nikos Nissiotis and John Zizioulis - is "in the forefront of [the neo-patristic] renaissance"¹²⁷ within contemporary Greek theology. Following after Romanides, Nissiotis, a professor of theology at the University of Athens, was able to approach the task of theological systematization from a new perspective. In a series of works in the mid 1960's¹²⁸ and similarly to the debate over

¹²² Rowan Williams, "Eastern Orthodox Theology," in David F. Ford (ed.), *The Modern Theologians: An introduction to Christian theology in the twentieth century*, second edition (Cambridge, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 510. Critique of Augustine's concept of original sin is the theme of Romanides' dissertation (1956)

¹²³ See Yannaras' comments in "Theology in Present-day Greece," op. cit. pp. 199, 204.

¹²⁴ Williams, "Eastern Orthodox Theology," op. cit., 510. Cf. Yannaras, "Theology in the Present Day Greece," op. cit., 208. Williams' reference is to Zizioulis' thesis "The Unity of the Church in the Eucharist and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries" (Athens, 1965).

¹²⁵ Williams, "Eastern Orthodox Theology," op. cit., 512.

¹²⁶ Some of the recent work of Miroslav Volf evidences the benefits of a creative engagement with Zizioulis' thought from a Radical Reformation perspective (e.g. *Exclusion and Embrace. A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996); *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, Series: Sacra Doctrina: Christian Theology for a Postmodern Age, gen. ed. Allen G. Padgett (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998) and his Nordenhaug lectures in IBTS November 04-05, 2001, see "After Grave in the Air: True reconciliation through unconditional embrace," *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, volume two, No. 2 (January 2002), 5-11).

¹²⁷ Yannaras, "Theology in the Present Day Greece," op. cit., 208.

¹²⁸ Most notably a sequel of his two works in Greek published in Athens: *Prolegomena to Theological Gnoseology* and *The Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology*. For an example of N. A. Nissiotis synthetic thinking, see his essay *Interpreting Orthodoxy: The Communication of Eastern Orthodox Beliefs to Christians of*

Solovyev's metaphysics in St. Serge Institute three decades earlier, he argued forcefully for the need to move beyond the academic theology of Androutsos and Trembelas.

These expressions of Orthodox 'systematic' theology offer the reader not simply 'theses,' but *criteria* for defining theological truth. The theme of the "incomprehensibility of God and the possibility of knowing him" gives Nissiotis the opportunity to set forth systematically the foundations of theological gnoseology, the fruit of the experience of salvation within the organism of the church.

Thus, the communitarian experiential Neo-Palamite epistemology of Nissiotis makes possible a theological distinction between the essence and energies of God and set the stage for Yannaras' own work.

Christos Yannaras attempted an impressive synthesis of Lossky's apophatic and mystical theology with Heidegger's metaphysics. Born in Athens, he studied under Heidegger in Germany and with Orthodox theologians in St. Serge Institute in Paris, while working on his second doctoral dissertation at the Sorbonne (the first being commenced by the theological school in Thessalonica). He was able to extend the apophatic patristic intuition of Dionysius Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor and to recast the traditional hesychast essence-energies distinction developed by Gregory Palamas in terms of *ossia* as *parousia* into the philosophical theological concept of "being" as "presence." This move affirms both God's otherness and his nearness. The apophatic mystery of the Creator is safeguarded, while he is seen panentheistically everywhere present. His conscious traditionalism further evolved in his creative assimilation of central European concerns with the moral nature of the self and the reworking of the patristic understanding of *eros*.¹²⁹ "He must be counted as one of the most outstandingly creative [and mercilessly confrontational] voices in Orthodoxy today."¹³⁰ Yannaras is making serious efforts to motivate Orthodox theologians to move away from abstract theologizing by reflecting on critical issues of ethics, politics and ecology and of daily living. A prolific lay theologian, he is widely regarded as "the most creative prophetic religious thinker at work in Greece today."¹³¹

Western Church Traditions (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing Company, [n.a.]), reprint from *The Ecumenical Review*.

¹²⁹ In his *The Freedom of Morality*, English edition (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984, 1996), first edition in Greece in 1970, French edition *La liberté de la morale* by Labor et Fides in Genève in 1982.

¹³⁰ Williams, "Eastern Orthodox Theology," op. cit., 510.

¹³¹ Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, "Foreword," In *The Freedom of Morality*, op. cit., p. 9.

I want to conclude my brief observations of contemporary theology in Greece with Jaroslav Pelikan's assessment: "Although often overshadowed by their Russian Orthodox *confrères*, Greek Orthodox theologians in the modern period, especially since independence from the Ottoman empire, have continued to make significant contributions, which have, however, exerted less influence in the West ..." ¹³² Further, if the perception of Orthodox tradition as a way of life is correct, apart from academic theological thinking and its similarity to Russian Orthodox development, much can be learned about the Orthodox way of thinking by engaging the theological reflections of a wider circle of Greek intellectuals, literary figures, and artists. It is regrettable that the limit of this project does not permit an inquiry into implicit and popular theologies particularly in contrast to the modernist 'Zoe' piety. ¹³³ Instead, I will proceed by reviewing the development of the Greek-American Orthodox Diaspora as an interesting case of a grass roots movement constituting communal ecclesial identity. I will rely on Father Miltiades B. Efthimiou's account for guidance. ¹³⁴

Twentieth century Greek-American Orthodox primary theology

I began my inquiry into the background and currents of Orthodox theological thinking by reviewing the implications of a formative myth of Russian Orthodox community. I should like to end my preliminary study with a story of tradition-constituted Greek Orthodoxy constituting Greek-American Orthodox community. As I read Fr. Efthimiou's historical recollection, the earliest Greek immigrants started arriving in North America in the last couple of decades of the nineteenth century. Unlike Russian Orthodox, they were not driven away from the homeland by missionary vision or political turmoil. It was an economic immigration of almost exclusively men or "*gurbet*" as the Balkan peoples call it. ¹³⁵ Most if not all of them did set out to make money and return to Greece. By 1930 "about forty percent of all Greeks admitted to the United States [previously] ... went back to their homeland," ¹³⁶ some driven by Hellenic patriotic feeling to defend the country in the Balkan wars 1912-13.

¹³² "Eastern Christian Theology," op. cit., 486.

¹³³ For a very brief summary one may refer to Yannaras' account in "Theology in the Present Day Greece," op. cit., 209-213; cf. *The Freedom of Morality*, op. cit., p. 131-5.

¹³⁴ "Brief History of Greek Orthodoxy in America 1880-2000," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, volume 45 (Spring-Winter 2000), nos. 1-4, 193-215.

¹³⁵ See Efthimiou, 195. Economic immigration from Balkan area in the end of twentieth century marks an interesting sociological shift. Now considerable number of immigrants are females.

¹³⁶ Efthimiou, 193. This number goes even higher if one realizes that many of the naturalized elderly Greeks who came at that time never married and went back to spend their retirement years and die in Greece (p. 194).

Granted their temporary and quite pragmatic aspirations, it is remarkable to find that the Greeks start organising themselves in Hellenistic societies (of ethnic networking) and church communities (for preservation of ecclesial identity) as early as 1893 in Boston. The organic unity of social and religious in Orthodox tradition was deeply embedded in the convictions of these desperate individuals and inevitably led them to seek an outward expression of their communal identity. “The Greek immigrant soon realized that his survival as an individual depended on the identity with some institution closely related to his ethnic and religious roots.”¹³⁷ In a way very similar to the Jewish communities, when sufficient number of Greeks settled in one place a “*Koinotes*” (a Community) would be formed and was followed by an Orthodox chapel or a church. Thus Greek Orthodox self-governing parishes start emerging initially with very limited ties to the church in Greece.¹³⁸ Thus historic Hellenic colonial and Byzantine Christian traditions were blended and replayed in the immigrant’s life. By reconstituting Hellenism and Orthodox Christianity, the immigrant “became a ‘Greek Orthodox American’ in practice as well as in spirit. To his surprise, there was no conflict between his Orthodoxy and Hellenism, his faith and ethnic pride on one side and Americanism on the other.”¹³⁹

A Hellenic-Christian synthesis helped Greek Orthodox to reconcile their cultural-religious distinctive with American political democracy. The latter came suddenly in conflict with a constitutive feature of Orthodoxy, its cesaro-papism, and slowed the process of unification of local parishes in a canonically recognised Orthodox diocese. Being placed under the jurisdiction of the Holy Synod of Greece since 1908,¹⁴⁰ the Greek-American Orthodox community was strongly affected by the ecclesial distress following the revolutionary and democratic processes in the mother country (as well as in Turkey and other countries in the region) after the upheavals of the Balkan and First World War (1912-1916).

Greece was caught in a prolonged struggle for power between the supporters of the revolutionary republican government of Prime Minister Venizelos and the royalists of King

¹³⁷ Efthimiou, 196.

¹³⁸ It was not until 1908, that the emerging parishes were directed under the care of the Holy Synod of Greece. Even after that the jurisdiction of the American parishes was passed back and forth for several decades between Ecumenical Patriarchate and The Holy Synod of Greece, (Efthimiou, “Brief History of Greek Orthodoxy in America,” op. cit., *passim*). Finally, Patriarch Meletios of Constantinople reversed the *Thomos* and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America was canonically created and placed under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch on May 11, 1922.

¹³⁹ Efthimiou, 196.

¹⁴⁰ By the *Thomos* of the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople from March 08, 1908.

Constantine. The governing church, in line with the venerated ecclesial tradition, was paying its loyalty and endorsing the political powers in Greece. Originally the Church sided with the conservative royalists and the presiding Metropolitan of the Holy Synod, Metropolitan of Athens Theokleitos, excommunicated the Prime Minister. The followers of Venizelos forced the royal family to leave the country,¹⁴¹ dethroned Theokleitos and installed Venizelos' admirer Bishop Meletios Metaxakes of Kition of the Church of Cyprus as the elected Metropolitan of Athens. Venizelos' fortune did not last long. His party was defeated in November 1920 elections and the situation was reversed with King Constantine and Theokleitos regaining their thrones. The deposed Metropolitan Meletios "is to become a prime personality in the history of the Greek Orthodox Church in America."¹⁴² Both as Metropolitan of Athens and later Patriarch of Constantinople¹⁴³ he had shown great concerns for the shaping of the future of the Greek-American Diaspora.

These quick shifts of political and ecclesial power in Greece had a disastrous effect on the life of the Greek Diaspora in America. The communities were split right in the middle by supporters on both sides of the divide whose sentiments and loyalties were further provoked and inflamed by the Greek-American press.¹⁴⁴ Having been entrusted with the preservation of Greek linguistic, cultural and religious identity, Greek newspapers in fact "did much to frustrate the positive developments of the church, by creating dissension among the ranks of the Greek Orthodox faithful."¹⁴⁵ In the 1920's less than a quarter of the Greeks of the Diaspora were born in America.¹⁴⁶ The ties were fresh and the stakes in the debates were running boiling high. The churches and communities in America indeed fragmented on both sides of the controversy: A story all too well known to all of the Orthodox communities in America and not only to them. The riots in Greek communities occupied the front pages of the national newspapers. Often police forces "were stationed at strategic positions within some of the churches to actually prevent bloodshed."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴¹ King Constantine and Regent Queen Olga were forced in exile on June 12, 1917. For a brief account of Venizelos controversy, see Efthimiou, 197-9.

¹⁴² Efthimiou, 198.

¹⁴³ Elected on November 25, 1921.

¹⁴⁴ On the often overlooked role of the fraternity newspapers *Atlantis* and *National Herald* and their editors (each holding to either of the opposing views in of Venizelos controversy) in Greek-American Orthodox life, see Efthimiou, 201-2.

¹⁴⁵ Efthimiou, 202.

¹⁴⁶ Only a generation later the majority of Greek-Americans would be the ones born in the host country.

¹⁴⁷ Peter Kourides, *Evolution of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America*. Quotation cited in Efthimiou, 201.

In spite of its stormy beginning, the Greek-American story has a happy ending thanks to the wisdom of the Greek-Orthodox community at large. After his dethronement Metropolitan Meletios arrived in the United States and assumed the administration of the Greek communities in Americas as canonical Archbishop of Athens. A visionary and ample administrator, he was able to overcome the obstacles caused by the hostile attitude and actions of the Holy Synod in Greece,¹⁴⁸ and to lay the grounds for reconciliation by calling The First Clergy-Laity Congress¹⁴⁹ and signing the certificate of Incorporation on behalf of the Congress. Having the highest legislative authority for the Archdiocese, the Congress was a landmark event, constituting the beginning of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in Americas endorsed by Meletios, who was elected as the Ecumenical Patriarch less than one year later. It took more than a decade to heal the wounds. It took the joint effort, the commitment and good will of the Greek expatriates, the diplomatic ingenuity of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the cooperation of the Holy Synod of Greece for the best of the conciliar spirit of Orthodoxy to overcome the split.

While one may seek to extenuate the significance of this story by pointing to its shadow sides of nationalistic aspirations, power abuse, ecclesial malice, etc, the story of Greek-American Orthodoxy, as I see it, is first and foremost an example of primary theology in action: a living tradition reconstituting itself in a radically different context. It found its humble beginning in the cluster of desperate Greek-American immigrant Diaspora made volatile by the political and ecclesial winds induced from the Motherland. In a span of a century it matured by trials and errors and, with the founding of the higher institutions of reproducing and critically examining its vision by preparing its own parish ministers and academic theologians,¹⁵⁰ it culminated in an organic contextual religious body with distinct identity: “the Church was no longer a Greek immigrant church, but a Church and Archdiocese that was truly Orthodox, Greek, and American.”¹⁵¹ An enduring legacy of a this

¹⁴⁸ On the details of the appointment of Metropolitan Toianos by the Holy Synod as its representative in Americas and the Synod’s attempts to undermine Meletios’ efforts to overcome the division in American parishes, see Efthimiou, 199-203.

¹⁴⁹ Held in New York on September 13-15, 1921.

¹⁵⁰ It is the amalgam of convictions embedded in a sustained form of moral life, interpreted, critically examined and passed to the next generations that constitutes a living theological tradition. See Chapter One; cf. McClendon, *Ethics*, op. cit., and McClendon and Smith, *Convictions*, op. cit.

¹⁵¹ Efthimiou, 208.

robust identity is the social and charitable activities of the Archdiocese and its “right arm”¹⁵² - the Ladies Philoptochos Society.

Significant steps were made toward unification of the parishes and the recognition of the role of the parish priest, the laity and the local congregation by overcoming circumferential forces of decentralisation of the synodal system under legislative reforms initiated by Archbishop Athenagoras. One of his major achievements was the establishment of an extensive network of Greek language educational activities and theological training enabled by the founding of the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological Institute in Pomfret, Connecticut (1937), precursor to the present Hellenic College-Holy Cross School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, and St. Basil’s Teachers College (1944).

Education of the laity and bringing the youth into the fold of the church necessarily followed the development of the community’s self-awareness under the next Head of the Diocese, Archbishop Michael. A renowned theologian and ecumenically minded churchman, he brought depth and breadth to Greek-American Orthodox life and made it nationally recognised.¹⁵³ His legislative measures and active participation in the life of the world’s Christian community brought harmony and unity at home and worldwide exposure so much desired by his predecessors.

It was the leadership of “the great visionary”¹⁵⁴, Archbishop Iakovos, who revisited all major achievements of those laboring before him and brought to maturation American-Greek Orthodox identity. While caring for strengthening the unity and public presence of the Archdiocese by securing a renewed charter from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1977, he was no less concerned with the American Pan-Orthodox dialogue.¹⁵⁵ From my point of view, Archbishop Iakovos’ primary theological achievement was the introduction of English in parts of the Liturgy; a move completed by his successors. ‘Cyrilo-Methodian ideology’ of the ‘indigenisation of the Church’¹⁵⁶ was recalled from the depository of the tradition and used to authenticate Greek-Orthodox home mission practice.

¹⁵² Efthimiou, 209.

¹⁵³ In late 1950’s Greek Orthodoxy was recognized as a major faith in the US by resolutions passed in 26 states.

¹⁵⁴ Efthimiou, 208.

¹⁵⁵ He facilitated the establishing of the “Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in Americas” in 1960. [Archbishop Iakovos died in early 2005 - ed.]

¹⁵⁶ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical and Doctrinal Themes*. 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), pp. 217-8. See note 8.

The ongoing chapter of this inspiring story is that of the involvement of first-rate ecclesiastics and theologians in discerning the shape of the new in the midst of the traditional and cultural which goes hand-in-hand with the renewal of parish life and Greek community.¹⁵⁷ The theological community produced first rate scholars such as moral theologian Stanley Harakas, missiologist James J. Stamoolis and a host of others to whom I will refer in my further reflections. Keeping the holistic balance of primary and secondary theological discourse and of the ecclesial and communal is perhaps one of the most characteristic features of the American-Greek Orthodox community.

Even this short analysis of Greek theological thought at home and in the American Diaspora helps to distinguish clearly three stages in its nineteenth and twentieth century development, similar to that of Russian Orthodox thought. Initially theology had been appropriated primarily as an intellectual academic discipline with strong emphases on rationality and apologetics, while the church was keeping the pace of pre-modern ecclesial life. Modern theology found its public expression also as a privatised religion in the emotivism and inward spirituality of the popular and influential pietistic “Zoe” movement. Recently, however, a third stream emerged on the fertile grounds of intra-Orthodox exchange of ideas with the Russian neo-patristic school of theology and with new contributions of European philosophical thought. It pays serious attention to the communal dimension of Orthodox theology - its dependence upon and responsibility for the life of the church - and to the inseparable bond of theology with the tradition’s rich patristic heritage, particularly evident in the experience of the Greek-American Orthodox contextualisation. This is the latest development that sets a stage for “the beginning of a [theological and ecclesial] renewal”¹⁵⁸ and holds the promise for a genuine Greek Orthodox communitarian theologizing relevant and appealing to the country’s changing context.

Conclusion.

In this attempt to shed light on the current state of Eastern Orthodox theology, one may agree with Archbishop Rowan Williams that:

¹⁵⁷ The significance and the strength of this American-Greek Orthodox community can be evaluated by the fact that two of the Archbishops intimately involved in its life—Metropolitan Meletios (1921) and Archbishop Athenagoras (1949) were elected Ecumenical Patriarchs and Archbishop Michael became a co-president of the World Council of Churches (1954).

¹⁵⁸ Yannaras, “Theology in the Present Day Greece,” *op. cit.*, 205.

Orthodox theology continues to show much vitality, not only in North America and western Europe, but in Asia, where figures like Georges Khodre in the Middle East and Paulos Gregorios (Paul Verghese) in India have echoed Yannaras and Clément in applying the insights of the Greek Fathers on the nature of human person and human community before God to the political and ethical crises of our century. ...Recent developments in eastern Europe mean that the Romanian and Slavonic churches are now free to develop their intellectual life as never before, and there are already signs in Russia of a second 'religious renaissance', in the sense of a new fusion of Orthodox tradition with the main currents of European political and intellectual life. ... There is still a very great deal to hope for from the Orthodox world in the renewal of both church and society in the west.¹⁵⁹

As a mythical Phoenix the once great Byzantine Orthodoxy died in obscurity, for centuries away from the center of western preoccupations. In less than two centuries it went through the cycles of rebirth from the infancy of philosophical instruction through the challenges of emotivist rebellion and existential self-centeredness of adolescence to the theological maturity of recovering the treasures of the great tradition and appreciation for its vitality tested by the worst historic commotions and drastic human predicaments. Orthodox theology today is very much part of global Christian dialogue. It provides it with additional resources and deep insights and it is faced with its own challenges and dilemmas.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Rowan Williams, "Eastern Orthodox Theology," in Alister E. McGrath, editor, *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*. (Oxford: Blackwell Reference/ Basil Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 127. For a peculiar attempt of integration of science and Orthodox theological tradition, see Alexei V. Nesteruk, *Light from the East: Theology, Science, and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003). For an analysis of sociological and socio-economic integration of Russian Orthodox tradition into the modern and post-Communist realities, particularly bearing on economic rationality and creating "new aspects of modernity which may be integrated in the modern configuration," see Andreas E. Buss, *The Russian Orthodox Tradition and Modernity*, in W. J. Hanegraaff (ed.) *Numen Book Series: Studies in History of Religions*, volume 100 (Leiden, The Netherlands/ Boston, Mass: Brill, 2003), quotation p. xviii .

¹⁶⁰ For an outline of the challenges faced by Orthodox in the beginning of the third millennium CE, John H. Erickson, "Orthodox Theology in a Changing World," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, Volume 46 (2002), No. 4, 307-14.