BUILDING THE HOUSE OF WISDOM
Sergii Bulgakov and Contemporary Theology: New Approaches and Interpretations.

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"Building the House of Wisdom: Sergii Bulgakov and Contemporary Theology: New Approaches and Interpretations" edited by Barbara Hallensleben, Regula M. Zwahlen, Aristotle Papanikolaou, and Pantelis Kalaitzidis, is a comprehensive collection of essays curated to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Sergei Bulgakov's birth. Compiled from papers presented at an international conference held at the University of Fribourg in September 2021, this volume offers a nuanced and multifaceted exploration of Bulgakov's enduring theological legacy, highlighting its profound impact on contemporary theological discourse. This anthology features more than 30 authors with diverse academic backgrounds and from various intellectual contexts. The anthology serves as a testament to the burgeoning interest in Bulgakov's work within Western academia, showcasing its dynamic engagement with various theological disciplines and its relevance to ongoing discussions concerning Christology, Triadology, Sophiology, ecclesiology, political theology, and the relationship between faith and reason in a rapidly changing world.

The anthology triumphs in presenting Bulgakov's theology as a dynamic and ever-evolving field of study, directly relevant to the issues and debates facing contemporary theological discourse. The editors have carefully curated a balanced collection that reflects both the depth and breadth of Bulgakov's thought. The inclusion of established scholars alongside emerging voices enriches the discourse, offering fresh insights and sparking a multi-generational dialogue. More than a tribute to existing heritage, the collection of essays serves as a profound exploration of the theological and philosophical landscapes he inhabited and transformed. The authors delve into the intricate details of Bulgakov's theology, illuminating the distinctive paths he forged within both academic and ecclesiastical settings. By comparing the diverse contributions of these scholars, readers can discern how Bulgakov's ideas have been interpreted, expanded upon, and, at times, even challenged.

The section "Personhood and Anthropology" (pp. 23–150) opens with an essay by Rowan Williams on "Bulgakov's Christology" (pp. 25–41). It is characterised by depth and clarity, effectively proving the continuing

relevance of Bulgakov's thought in contemporary theological debates. Williams's nuanced approach offers a solid foundation for navigating the complex terrain of Bulgakov's theological vision. Dissatisfied with the limitations of the Chalcedonian Definition, Bulgakov sought to redefine the Incarnation, arguing that it was not a mere union of divine and human substances, but a profoundly transformative event that defied simplistic explanations. He viewed the Chalcedonian formula as a providential but incomplete expression of truth, as a negative limitation rather than a positive affirmation, believing that the key to theological unlocking the mystery of the Incarnation lay in his interpretation of concept of "Sophiology".

In a sophisticated analysis, Williams demonstrates that for Bulgakov, Sophiology was not a detached metaphysical system but rather a framework for understanding "hypostasis," the very essence of being a subject, in relation to the lived human experience. He redefined "hypostasis" as a dynamic process of engaging with and embracing the world – a "hypostaticity" unfolding in acts of love and meaning-making. This active engagement with the world, he argued, was at the heart of divine Sophia, God's active presence permeating both the divine life and the created order. Human beings, created in the image of God, were therefore also "sophianic" possessing an innate capacity for "hypostatizing" their environment, relating to it with intelligence, creativity, and love. This capacity, he believed, constituted the essence of their humanity, finding its ultimate expression in the Incarnation.

Bulgakov's contribution to modern theology lies in the creative reinterpretation of classical concepts. His understanding of "hypostasis" extends beyond mere existence to encompass a profound sense of "care". To exist hypostatically is to engage in a nurturing relationship with the world, embracing its inherent otherness while fostering its well-being. This "care" reflects the essence of the divine life, manifested in God's self-giving love, and constitutes the fundamental calling of humanity to participate in this loving "care" for the world. It is this profound vision of interconnectedness and care that makes Bulgakov's work so relevant today. His thought challenges the prevailing narratives of individualism, self-sufficiency, and a detached approach to human existence. Instead, Bulgakov calls us to recognize our inherent "sophianic" vocation, to nurture the world, and to participate in the reciprocal exchange of life-giving love. He invites us to embrace our interconnectedness, acknowledging the fundamental truth that to be fully human is to be in a state of "care" for all that surrounds us.

Creatively analyzing the legacy of Bulgakov, David Bentley Hart's contribution on personhood (pp. 43–62) is another highlight, offering a profound exploration of Bulgakov's metaphysics. Hart's analysis underscores the originality of Bulgakov's thought and its potential to inform

contemporary discussions on personhood and identity. Hart's essay provides a philosophical depth that complements Williams' theological focus, enriching the reader's comprehension of Bulgakov's constructs from different angle. Hart deftly navigates the complex terrain of metaphysical personhood, revealing Bulgakov's insights as both revolutionary and deeply rooted in Orthodox tradition not as a series of static formulations and apologetic attempts, but as an infinitely rich source of metaphysical innovation.

Hart counters interpretation, suggesting that the perceived contradiction arises from a misconstruing of Bulgakov's concept of "hypostasis." Bulgakov, he argues, understands hypostasis not as an enclosed interiority prior to relation, but as an essential unity of the hidden and the manifest, always already constituted by its outward expression in relation to another. This "hierarchy" of the hidden and the manifest, of immanent and transcendent in proper sense of the word, he contends, is the very structure of personhood, both divine and human. He emphasizes the importance of seeing Bulgakov's Trinitarian theology not as a collection of discrete individuals, but as a single subject in three hypostases, each distinct in their "idiom" or mode of subsistence, yet united in the one divine essence. Hart highlights the profound interconnectedness of the Father, Son, and Spirit, where the Father, though hidden, is fully revealed in the Son, and their shared life is manifested in the Spirit. This interconnectedness, he argues, is essential for understanding the Incarnation, as Christ's human experience of suffering is not a private event exclusive to the Son, but a manifestation of God's self-giving love in its fullest expression.

Hart further critiques the common notion that "person" transcends "nature" in Christian thought, arguing that this leads to a dangerous "ontological portmanteau" where personhood becomes a hollow, abstract category capable of containing any combination of natures without a unifying principle. He argues that personhood is inherently linked to and dependent upon the nature it actualizes, creating a dynamic relationship where "nature" is "hypostasible" and "hypostasis" is "natural." This understanding of personhood, Hart suggests, extends beyond the relationship between divine and human natures, offering an ontological framework for understanding reality itself. He echoes Bulgakov's claim that the structure of personhood, as subject, predicate, and copula, forms the basis of all being, where every "who" and "what" is ultimately revealed in a personal expression. Hart concludes by proposing a radical interpretation of Bulgakov's thought, suggesting that the distinction between image and archetype may be ultimately a formal one, leading to a realization that God, as the "Person" who is all that is, encompasses both the divine life and creation.

In the two next essays of the section, Mark McInroy (pp. 63–75) and Ivan Ilin (pp. 77–89) each explore distinct yet complementary aspects of

Sergii Bulgakov's theological impact. Mark McInroy shows how Myrrha Lot-Borodine served as a key intermediary in bringing Bulgakov's vision of deification to Western audiences. Her writings, though often viewed independently, subtly transmit Bulgakov's theological insights and played a foundational role in shaping Western understandings of the doctrine. Ivan Ilin analyzes Bulgakov's Unfading Light as a powerful critique of Western immanentism. He emphasizes how Bulgakov defends divine transcendence through the practices of faith, prayer, and Name-Worship, offering a spiritual and philosophical path beyond the limits of ontotheology. Sarah Elizabeth Livick-Moses's essay, "The Kenotic Iconicity of Sergii Bulgakov's Divine-Humanity" (pp. 91–105) explores the interplay between Bulgakov's sophiological theology, his understanding of icons, and the implications for a feminist retrieval of his thought. Livick-Moses argues that Bulgakov's concept of Divine-Humanity, deeply informed by his liturgical experience and iconographic hermeneutic, offers a profoundly relational and dynamic vision of humanity's relationship to God, grounded in the kenotic love of the Trinity. She highlights the centrality of liturgy and icon veneration in Bulgakov's theological vision and emphasizes that Bulgakov's theology is not merely an abstract system, but a lived experience rooted in the rituals and symbolism of the Orthodox Church. The icon is not simply a representation of the Divine, but a tangible mediation of God's presence in the world. Livick-Moses explains that humanity is created in the image of Christ, who is the eternal Image of the Father, the Proto-Image of divinity. This imaging, however, is not a static reflection, but a dynamic participation in the kenotic love that constitutes the Trinity's inner life. She suggests that Bulgakov's Sophiology can be interpreted as a call to embrace a kenotic iconicity a way of being in the world that reflects the self-emptying love of God. This kenotic iconicity, Livick-Moses contends, transcends rigid binaries and offers a vision of human flourishing grounded in mutual love, service, and creative participation in the divine life.

Since the theme of kenosis is one of the main and more or less constantly represented themes in Bulgakov's late work, it is not surprising that several essays are devoted to this aspect. Jack Louis Pappas's essay, "Sergii Bulgakov's Fragile Absolute: Kenosis, Difference, and Positive Disassociation" (pp. 107–122) presents Bulgakov's approach to the concept of personhood and its relation to the Absolute. Pappas positions this theology as a counterpoint to contemporary metapsychological theories, particularly those influenced by Hegelianism. The essay explicates role of Kant's transcendental subject, despite claims of its obsolescence in contemporary thought. Pappas argues that this influence persists in the form of a residual Kantian dogmatism, a reliance on a historically situated, finite self as the foundation of knowledge. Pappas asserts that Bulgakov's theology anticipates and articulates a unique metapsychological theory

of personality. Bulgakov recognizes the importance of antinomy as a defining characteristic of both human and divine personhood. He draws heavily from Hegel and Schelling, yet diverges in his interpretation, aligning more closely with a "positive disassociation" as opposed to a "negative association".

The idealist philosophical context of Bulgakov's discourse, in which he both grapples with and honors dialectics, becomes attractive for juxtaposing it with the approach of modern dialecticians. Žižek's Hegelian interpretation of Christianity positions the crucified Christ as the "monstrous truth" of contradiction, a self-alienated God whose death reveals the constitutive negativity of the Absolute. "Christian atheism" ultimately finds reconciliation in a virtualized community, where God is made conscious through the collective actions of godless individuals. Pappas then contrasts Žižek's perspective with Bulgakov's. Bulgakov, like Žižek, recognizes the constitutive split between subject and "Not-I" but he affirms this split as inherent to the Absolute. For Bulgakov, the Absolute's self-sundering is an act of "kenosis" a self-sacrificial donation that inscribes difference with utmost positivity, not antagonism.

This "kenosis" manifests in the Trinitarian God, where the Father, Son, and Spirit are not three separate subjectivities, but rather three hypostases of a singular divine substance. The Holy Spirit, as the "copula" actualizes the positive content of this substance, revealing its inherent unity-in-difference. Bulgakov further emphasizes the concept of "Sophia" as the substance of divine self-consciousness. "Sophianicity" acts as the grounding principle for both the divine and created realities, representing a panentheistic view of God within creation. Pappas argues that Bulgakov's sophiology offers a compelling alternative to the pessimism of contemporary meta-psychological theories. By embracing the "fragile absolute" of divine kenosis, Bulgakov presents a vision of personhood as an ongoing process of self-revelation through love and communion. This vision challenges the notion of a closed, self-contained subject and instead emphasizes the inherent relationality and interconnectedness of all beings, ultimately leading to a more optimistic and affirmative view of the human condition.

Deborah Casewell (pp. 123–136) compares the anthropological thought of Bulgakov and Nikolai Berdiaev, focusing on themes of authenticity, freedom, and creativity. While Berdiaev approaches these themes through existentialism, Casewell shows that Bulgakov also articulates a personalist vision of authentic human existence, rooted in his theological anthropology and shaped by a nuanced engagement with German Idealism. Justin Shaun Coyle (pp. 137–150) turns to Bulgakov's rarely studied satanology, exploring how he blends theological speculation with scriptural interpretation. Coyle highlights Bulgakov's engagement with F. W. J. Schelling, identifying key points where Schelling's vision of Satan

significantly informs and enriches Bulgakov's own complex understanding of evil, freedom, and the figure of the "Mangod."

The section on "Politics, Economy, and Ecology" (pp. 251–271) is particularly timely, given the current global crises and circumstances. The essays by Dionysios Skliris (pp. 235–246) and Tikhon Vasilyev (pp. 247–257) are noteworthy for their ability to contextualize Bulgakov's ideas within late modern political and ecological frameworks. Their work illustrates how Bulgakov's theology can offer valuable insights into addressing today are pressing issues. Skliris' analysis of Bulgakov's political theology demonstrates the practical applications of his thought in contemporary governance, while Vasilyev's exploration of Bulgakov's ecological perspectives highlights the profound connections between theology and environmental stewardship. These essays collectively underscore Bulgakov's relevance in modern socio-political discourse, bridging the gap between theological speculation and practical application.

Bulgakov's political vision is inherently tied to his understanding of the Church as the site of divine-human communion. His late theology emphasizes the convergence between humanism and the Church, arguing that true humanism can only be realized within the framework of ecclesial life. This vision is articulated in his major trilogy on divine-humanity, culminating in The Bride of the Lamb, an explicitly ecclesiological text. His concept of "ecclesial humanism" is grounded in his belief that the Church is the embodiment of sobornost, a term that signifies a society of love that gathers humanity into a community of divine-human communion. For Bulgakov, the Church is not merely an institution but the realization of humanity's vocation to divine-human communion. This vision of the Church as the true society of love stands in contrast to secular political ideologies, which often fall into either individualism or collectivism.

Several essays examine different dimensions of Sergei Bulgakov's engagement with politics, culture, and theology, highlighting the complex interplay between historical context and theological innovation. Catherine Evtuhov and Regula M. Zwahlen (pp. 153–176) revisit Bulgakov's active political engagement during the revolutionary years through the lens of his short-lived Christian Socialist newspaper Narod. They explore how Bulgakov sought to embody his religious convictions in political practice, revealing a formative moment when theological and social ideals merged in public life. Nikos Kouremenos (pp. 177–192) reflects on Bulgakov's "By the Walls of Cherson", reconsidering the Byzantine theological legacy often critiqued in Russian thought. Kouremenos shows how Bulgakov reclaims this legacy, integrating it into his sophiological vision while also contributing to early ecumenical dialogue between Orthodox and Anglican traditions. Alexei P. Kozyrev (pp. 193–207) places the "Sophia dispute" within the broader framework of political ontology, drawing on Bourdieu's and Spengler's readings of the Zeitgeist. He inter-

prets Bulgakov as both shaped by and responding to the intellectual and spiritual tensions of his time, positioning his sophiology not only as theology but as a historically grounded intervention into political and cultural meaning. Nathaniel Wood (pp. 221–233) explores how Sergii Bulgakov integrates the Orthodox doctrine of theosis with political theology, emphasizing human dignity and freedom. Bulgakov's thought links personhood closely to deification, grounding the absolute value and uniqueness of each individual. His work contributes to Orthodox personalism by affirming the ethical and political importance of protecting personhood. This framework offers guidance for Christian political action in modern democratic contexts. Austin Foley Holmes (pp. 259–271) shows how Sergii Bulgakov developed a comprehensive theological ecology, viewing life and history as creative, interconnected activities. Drawing on the concept of ecology as relationality, Bulgakov's thought anticipates contemporary ecological concerns by emphasizing humanity's deep connection to the nonhuman world. His work contributes to a relational ontology that seeks new ways to address ecological crises. Bulgakov's ecology bridges theology, philosophy, and environmental awareness.

Integral and surprising flexibility of Bulgakov's thought allows us to find promising interpretations of his theological ideas in relation to current politics. Antoine Arjakovsky's essay, "Sophiology and Personalism, Foundations of the New Political Science in the Twenty-First Century" (pp. 209–219) presents a compelling argument for a radical reconfiguration of political science rooted in a Christian eschatological metaphysics. Drawing inspiration from the works of Sergii Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdiaev, and Jacques Maritain, Arjakovsky diagnoses a profound crisis in modern consciousness, manifested in the rise of fundamentalism, global conflicts, environmental degradation, and a prevailingly un-spiritual approach to the economy. He identifies a detachment from morality in contemporary political science, echoing John Milbank and Adrian Pabst's critique in "The Politics of Virtue". Tracing the historical shift from a focus on the common good to a focus on power acquisition, Arjakovsky draws on Jacques Maritain's "The End of Machiavellianism" highlighting the influence of Machiavelli and Hegel in this development. He posits that a renewal of eschatological metaphysics, as championed by Maritain, Bulgakov, and Berdiaev, is essential to re-orient politics toward justice and peace.

Arjakovsky introduces Sergei Bulgakov as a figure who, even prior to the Russian Revolution, challenged the limitations of modern political thought and sought to reconcile Christian faith with a vision of "sophic communism". He highlights Bulgakov's critique of Machiavelli and the theory of "two swords" emphasizing that Bulgakov sought to transcend a purely secular view of politics. Drawing attention to Bulgakov's later works, including "The Apocalypse of John" Arjakovsky emphasizes the

importance of understanding the Kingdom of God on earth. He connects Bulgakov's thought with Nicolas Berdiaev's embrace of a "mystical" understanding of the Kingdom of God, where every creative act has the potential to participate in its realization. Arjakovsky further argues that Bulgakov's eschatology offers a vision of political power grounded in divine wisdom and an ecumenical understanding of shared spiritual values. Arjakovsky argues that Bulgakov's Sophiology, coupled with personalist thought, offers a powerful framework for reimagining political and moral science in a world grappling with unprecedented crises. His vision emphasizes the importance of recognizing the spiritual dimension of human life, the need for ecumenical dialogue, and the transformative power of love and justice.

Expanding the perspective on Bulgakov's legacy, the exploration of his variant of Sophiology by Liubov Petrova (pp. 275–287) and Natalia Vaganova (pp. 289–300) delves into the hidden philosophical and theological roots of the concept. Their essays provide a comprehensive understanding of Bulgakov's sophiology, revealing its intricate connections to broader theological and philosophical traditions.

Joshua Heath's (pp. 301–316) examination of the implications of sophiology for theological anthropology further enhances this section, offering a nuanced perspective on Bulgakov's visionary synthesis of wisdom and theology. Heath's contribution underscores the transformative potential of Bulgakov's sophiology, suggesting new pathways for integrating theological and philosophical inquiries. Dario Colombo (pp. 317–330) argues that Mariology is central and necessary to Christian theology, highlighting Bulgakov's view of Mary as the personal heart of creation. Colombo shows how Mariology completes Bulgakov's theological trilogy on Divine-humanity. Despite resistance Bulgakov faced, the article insists Mary cannot be ignored in incarnational theology. Mariology is presented as a personalized expression of Bulgakov's sophiology.

No great system of thought will emerge in an existential vacuum as the product of abstract reasoning. Paul L. Gavrilyuk's essay "The Training for Dying and Death: A New Reading of Bulgakov's Sophiology" (pp. 331–348) presents a compelling argument that his theological system, particularly Sophiology, was profoundly shaped by his personal encounters with death throughout his life. Gavrilyuk challenges the common understanding of Sophiology as primarily a response to the metaphysical problem of God's relation to the world, arguing instead that it was shaped by Bulgakov's deeply personal experiences of loss and mortality. Gavrilyuk explores Bulgakov's childhood, marked by regular exposure to death in the context of his father's work as a priest and the deaths of several siblings. He highlights the particularly impactful death of his son, Ivan, which shattered Bulgakov's self-centeredness and revealed a profound experience of selfless love and the presence of God in suffering.

Examining Bulgakov's Spiritual Diary, Gavrilyuk underscores the consistent presence of the *memento mori* theme in Bulgakov's spiritual life, showcasing his deep piety towards Christ and Mary. He analyzes two crucial moments in Bulgakov's life: his near-death experience in 1926, which brought him an assurance of God's mercy and forgiveness, and his subsequent battle with cancer in 1939, a painful ordeal that revealed the mystery of co-dying with Christ. Gavrilyuk argues that these experiences, which he considers revelatory, formed the experiential ground for Bulgakov's Sophiology. He emphasizes how Bulgakov's understanding of the world, his theology, and his personal life are profoundly intertwined with his acceptance of death and his profound faith in God's presence and love.

Taylor Ross's essay, "The Schellingian Echoes in Bulgakov's Sophiology" (pp. 365–379) unpacks the profound influence of Schelling's philosophical system on Bulgakov's theological project. Ross masterfully illuminates the intellectual lineage that connects these two towering figures, revealing how Bulgakov creatively appropriates and transforms Schelling's key concepts, particularly his dynamic understanding of nature and his conception of the Absolute as a process of self-revelation. Ross's meticulous analysis demonstrates how Bulgakov found in Schelling's philosophy a vital resource for bridging the gap between traditional Orthodox theology and the burgeoning currents of modern thought. Schelling's emphasis on the dynamism and inherent creativity of nature resonated deeply with Bulgakov's own theological intuitions, leading him to develop variant of "Sophiology" – a vision of God's immanent Wisdom as the animating principle pulsating within the heart of creation. By tracing the intellectual genealogy that connects Bulgakov to Schelling, Ross provides a crucial historical and philosophical context for appreciating the originality and audacity of Bulgakov's theological vision. Bulgakov, deeply influenced by dynamic understanding of the Absolute, reconceived the relationship between God and creation, envisioning a world where the divine and the created are not separated by an unbridgeable chasm but interwoven in a dynamic tapestry of mutual participation and ongoing revelation. This profound insight, rooted in Schelling's dynamic metaphysics, became a cornerstone of Bulgakov's Sophiology, offering a radical new perspective on the interconnectedness of all things and the transformative power of divine Wisdom. Caleb Henry (pp. 351–363) explores Sergii Bulgakov's early engagement with Legal or Critical Marxism, which combined Marxist materialism with Kantian critical philosophy. Bulgakov's early writings promoted social change through existing legal structures while reflecting on philosophical critique. This blend marked his unique approach within the pre-Revolutionary Russian Marxist landscape. Bulgakov later acknowledged Kant's significant influence on his early Marxist thought.

Brandon Gallaher's essay, "Sergii Bulgakov's Chalcedonian Ontology and the Problem of Human Freedom" (pp. 381–408) focusing on Bulgakov's complex and controversial sophiological account of creation, particularly his engagement with the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*. The essay delves into the tensions inherent in Bulgakov's thought, navigating between the potential pitfalls of pantheism and dualism while attempting to articulate a coherent vision of creaturely freedom within a profoundly panentheistic framework. Gallaher begins by acknowledging the elephant in the room: the accusation of pantheism often leveled against Bulgakov's sophiological vision. This charge stems from Bulgakov's blurring of the uncreated/created distinction, suggesting a potentially problematic continuity between God and creation. To address this concern, Gallaher carefully examines the diverse interpretations of *creatio ex nihilo* within Christian orthodoxy. He acknowledges the broad spectrum of views, ranging from emanationist models that see creation as an outpouring of God's being to models that emphasize the radical contingency of creation and its absolute dependence on God's sustaining will. Bulgakov's distinctive contribution, as Gallaher elucidates, lies in his insistence that creation, while existing "in" God and "of" God, does not collapse back into a undifferentiated monism. This is where Bulgakov's "Chalcedonian ontology" comes into play. Drawing upon the Christological formula of Chalcedon, which affirms the union of divine and human natures in Christ "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation," Bulgakov argues for a similar "unity-in-difference" between God and creation.

Antonio Bergamo's essay (pp. 409–418) investigates the complex theological vision of Sergii Bulgakov, focusing on two interrelated dimensions: the kenotic theology of the event and the Trinitarian ontology. Bulgakov's work uniquely combines the kenosis of Christ with a deep ontological understanding of the Trinity, highlighting relationality and the dynamic interplay among the divine Persons as the foundation for creation and human experience. While early Western reception, notably by Hans Urs von Balthasar, praised Bulgakov's kenotic approach, it also criticized his sophiological ideas as tending toward Gnosticism. Bergamo shows how Italian theologians like Marcello Bordoni later proposed a synthesis, seeing Bulgakov's two poles as a unified theological framework centered on the paschal event and agape-driven relationality. The essay traces the evolving translation, publication, and theological engagement with Bulgakov's thought in Italy, underscoring its significance for contemporary Trinitarian theology.

Of particular interest is the reading of Bulgakov from a different intellectual and methodological horizon, which hardly overlaps with the one in which himself worked. This is the analytic tradition, which today represents a very significant part of the English-speaking academy in the field of theology and philosophy. Nikolaos Asproulis's essay, "From

Social Trinity to 'Linguistic Trinity': Sergii Bulgakov's Contribution to Analytic Theology" (pp. 419–433) delves into the intriguing intersections between Bulgakov's unique Trinitarian metaphysics and contemporary analytic philosophy of religion. Asproulis contends that Bulgakov, though not explicitly engaging with the tools and methods of analytic philosophy, nonetheless offers valuable insights into the "logical problem" of the Trinity—a problem that has preoccupied both theologians and analytic philosophers for centuries.

The essay describes the historical trajectory of Trinitarian thought, tracing the development of key concepts from the early Patristic period through the medieval period and into the modern era. Asproulis highlights the enduring influence of the so-called "de Régnon paradigm," which posits a fundamental division between Eastern and Western approaches to the Trinity. This paradigm, while critiqued for its historical oversimplifications, continues to shape contemporary discussions of the Trinity, leading to a distinction between "social trinitarianism" and "Latin trinitarianism".

Asproulis then surveys the diverse models and theories that have emerged within both social and Latin trinitarianism, each attempting to provide a philosophically coherent account of the paradoxical nature of the Triune God. He examines models like "functional monotheism" which grounds the unity of the Godhead in the harmonious functioning of the three persons; "group mind monotheism," which posits the Trinity as a collective mind composed of three sub-minds and "trinity monotheism" which understands the Trinity as the sole instance of the divine nature, with the individual persons possessing only "divine" status. Asproulis situates Bulgakov within this complex landscape, arguing that Bulgakov's thought, rooted in the Eastern Patristic tradition and deeply informed by his controversial concept of Sophia, aligns most closely with social trinitarianism, particularly the "Trinity monotheism" model. However, Bulgakov's unique contribution lies in his attempt to transcend the limitations of traditional approaches, offering a more dynamic and nuanced vision of the Trinity that incorporates insights from both Eastern and Western thought. Crucial to this vision is Bulgakov's "linguistic trinity" a concept he develops in his works, The Philosophy of the Name and The Tragedy of Philosophy. Bulgakov, drawing upon his participation in the "name-worshipping" controversy on Mount Athos, argues that language possesses a profound ontological significance. Words are not mere arbitrary signs but modes of being and acting of that which is named.

John Milbank, in his intense essay "Sergii Bulgakov: From Grammar to Wisdom" (pp. 435–459) offers a compelling interpretation of Bulgakov's profound engagement with German Idealism, particularly his critique of Fichte, and its implications for a renewed theological philosophy. Milbank argues that Bulgakov, while deeply influenced by the idealist tradi-

tion, ultimately transcends its limitations by affirming the primacy of a constitutive metaphysics grounded in the revelatory insights of Christian dogma. He begins by outlining Bulgakov's complex and often ambivalent relationship with German culture and philosophy. Bulgakov, while acknowledging the positive aspects of German Romanticism's celebration of life, nature, and the divine presence within the world, ultimately critiques its tendency towards pantheistic monism and its pessimistic undercurrents. He views German Idealism, particularly in its Fichtean form, as embodying a "Luciferian" exaltation of the human ego that risks eclipsing the Divine.

Despite this critique, Milbank highlights Bulgakov's surprising affinity for Fichte, arguing that he finds in Fichte's radical subjectivism a valuable resource for re-envisioning a theological philosophy that places the person at the center of its ontological framework. Bulgakov, like Fichte, affirms the primacy of the knowing subject, the "truly existing" self whose direct awareness of its own existence forms the foundation for all knowledge. However, Bulgakov departs from Fichte's attempt to "deduce" the objective world from the subjective self. He argues, instead, that our experience of the world is fundamentally relational, shaped by the structures of language and the pre-rational commitments of faith.

This leads Bulgakov to embrace the "linguistic turn" not as a rejection of metaphysics, but as a return to a more robust and constitutive realism. He champions the primacy of grammar over logic, arguing that the subject-predicate-copula structure of language reveals a fundamental truth about reality itself: that being is inherently relational and that all knowledge is mediated through the expressive appropriation of the world. Bulgakov, drawing upon the insights of proto-Romantic thinkers like Hamann and Herder, argues that philosophy cannot transcend its linguistic and cultural embeddedness. We are always already situated within a web of meaning shaped by language, myth, and religious tradition. This realization, Milbank suggests, undermines the idealist project of constructing a purely rational system of knowledge, forcing us to re-engage with the pre-rational foundations of thought.

Bulgakov's understanding of the Trinity, as Milbank elucidates, has profound implications for his conception of personhood, ethics, and aesthetics. He rejects the Fichtean notion of a self-made ego, arguing instead that the self is always already constituted by its relations to others and to the world. Our selfhood is shaped by the "names" we receive, the stories we inhabit, and the material world we engage with. Inspired by Bulgakov's bold vision, Milbank calls for a renewed theological philosophy, one that embraces the fullness of human experience, the richness of the created world, and the illuminating power of Christian dogma. This philosophy, he suggests, will lead us "through grammar to wisdom"

revealing the profound interconnectedness of all things and the ultimate grounding of all being in the Triune God.

The final section devoted to the discussion of ecumenical implicatures of Bulgakov's work opens with an essay "Father Sergii Bulgakov's 'Karamazov's Excursus'" by Pavel Khondzinsky (pp. 463–474). He analyzes Bulgakov's critique of Augustine's doctrine of predestination, specifically its implications for human freedom. Bulgakov sees Augustine's emphasis on God's absolute will and election as problematic, arguing that it negates genuine human freedom and leads to a deterministic view of salvation. Bulgakov proposes an alternative vision of predestination based on the concept of "Divine-Humanity" grounded in his understanding of Sophia, God's Wisdom. He argues for a universal predestination for mercy, where all of creation is ultimately drawn towards God, though respecting human freedom to choose. He reinterprets biblical passages often used to support predestination, emphasizing God's universal love and the inherent "sophianic" dignity of all creation.

However, Khondzinsky points out weaknesses in Bulgakov's critique. He argues that Bulgakov selectively reads Augustine, overlooking nuances in his thought that emphasize the pastoral importance of affirming God's desire for the salvation of all. Furthermore, Khondzinsky suggests that Bulgakov's own "sophianic determinism" while more optimistic, still raises questions about the true extent of human freedom and potentially leads to the same kind of "universal harmony" that Ivan Karamazov found so repugnant. Ultimately, the essay highlights the ongoing tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom, a tension that both Augustine and Bulgakov attempt to address, albeit with differing emphases and conclusions.

Graham McGeoch's essay, "Ships in the Theological Night? Sergius Bulgakov and Liberation Theology" (pp. 475–487) explores the surprising lack of direct engagement between Bulgakov's sophisticated sophiological theology and Latin American Liberation Theology, despite shared concerns for social justice and human liberation. McGeoch identifies key theological convergences between these two traditions, while also highlighting the fundamental methodological and ideological differences that account for this "academic silence" McGeoch emphasises that the lack of direct engagement between Bulgakov and Liberation Theology represents a missed opportunity for fruitful dialogue. While both traditions share a passion for social justice and human liberation, their differing methodologies and ideological commitments have led them to chart divergent courses. He suggests that a deeper engagement with Bulgakov's "Sophiology" could enrich Liberation Theology's understanding of the divine presence within the world and its implications for social and political transformation.

In "Your Labor Is Not in Vain" Oliver Dürr (pp. 489–500) explores the concept of "synergy" as the possibility of divine-human cooperation in shaping God's eschatological kingdom, drawing upon the insights of Sergius Bulgakov and the reflections of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Dürr contends that contemporary theology often struggles to articulate a coherent understanding of synergy due to metaphysical uncertainties surrounding the relationship between God and creation. Dürr critiques two extreme positions that undermine a robust concept of synergy: "univocity" which collapses the distinction between God and creation, leading to a competitive relationship where God must overrule human freedom to act; and "equivocity," which posits an absolute separation between God and the world, rendering divine action in creation a violent intrusion. Dürr suggests that Sophiology can serve as a key for a renewed theology of the Kingdom of God, one that affirms both the sovereignty of God and the genuine freedom of creatures to cooperate with God in the ongoing work of creation and redemption.

The ecumenical perspectives offered by Paul Ladouceur (pp. 501–519) and Adalberto Mainardi (pp. 521–533) highlight Bulgakov's vision of Christian unity both from the historical perspective of the interaction of Christian denominations and from the theological perspective of the difference between the expressions of a transcendent truth. Their essays position Bulgakov as a bridge between Eastern and Western theological traditions, suggesting that his ideas can foster greater understanding and collaboration among different Christian denominations. He emphasized that the true boundaries of the Church are not limited by its canonical structures but extend to the mystical reality of the Body of Christ. This view challenged the traditional understanding of the relationship between the Church and sacraments administered outside its boundaries. Ladouceur's exploration of Bulgakov's ecumenical thought reveals the depth of his commitment to Christian unity, while Mainardi's analysis underscores the practical implications of theological vision for contemporary ecumenical dialogue.

A cursory glance through the varied treasures of this immense volume we may conclude that it is a carefully crafted and insightful academic anthology that significantly advances the study of Sergii Bulgakov's theology, demonstrating its enduring relevance not only to Bulgakov scholarship but also to broader theological disciplines. The volume serves as a fitting tribute to Bulgakov's enduring influence and a significant contribution to contemporary theological scholarship, transcending the boundaries of specialized inquiry and offering a rich resource for theologians, philosophers, and scholars in related fields. Its interdisciplinary approach and diverse range of perspectives make it a valuable resource for scholars seeking to engage with complex and multifaceted thought.

The anthology's strength lies in its ability to present Bulgakov's theology as a dynamic and evolving field of study, directly relevant to many of contemporary issues. The editors have masterfully curated a balanced collection that reflects the depth and diversity of this thought, ensuring that the anthology will be a valuable resource for years to come. The essays explore Bulgakov's work through diverse lenses, examining his contributions to political theology, sophiology and the Trinity, the Byzantine legacy and the Russian Church, the crisis of modern consciousness, and eschatological metaphysics and the Kingdom of God. The volume offers a nuanced exploration of his engagement with Christian socialism, his critique of Marxism and liberalism, his thoughts on church-state relations, and his nuanced view of democracy. The essays explore how Bulgakov's thought provides a compelling response to contemporary challenges, including the rise of fundamentalism, totalitarian regimes, and the global ecological crisis, examining his vision for a "sophic communism" that transcends the limitations of Marxist economics and offers a more holistic approach to understanding economic activity. They also examine his critique of materialistic conceptions of the economy and his emphasis on the importance of beauty, creativity, and humanization as central to a truly Christian understanding of economics. The anthology delves into Bulgakov's eschatological vision, examining his interpretation of the "thousand-year reign" of Christ as a real event in human history, and his understanding of the Kingdom of God as both a present reality and a future hope.

This volume emerges as a testament to the enduring vitality of Bulgakov's thought, not as a static monument to a bygone era, but as a vibrant source of inspiration for grappling with the multifaceted complexities of the 21st century. It transcends the conventional limitations of a festschrift, evolving into a dynamic intellectual ecosystem where Bulgakov's ideas are subjected to rigorous analysis, creative reinterpretation, and passionate engagement. The volume functions as a polyphonic chorus, bringing together a diverse ensemble of established scholars, theologians, philosophers, and emergent voices in a rich and stimulating conversation with Bulgakov's multifaceted legacy. Each contributor offers a unique perspective on the intricate tapestry of Bulgakov's thought, weaving together insights from various disciplines and enriching the reader's understanding of his enduring relevance for navigating the pressing issues of our time.

The anthology unflinchingly confronts the tendency to confine Bulgakov to the annals of theological history, arguing instead that his ideas remain profoundly relevant, indeed prophetic, for a world grappling with the seismic shifts of modernity, the resurgence of political and social fragmentation, and the looming ecological crisis. It excavates the foundational principles, conceptual nuances, and daring theological innovations that define Bulgakov's oeuvre, revealing their capacity to challenge,

inspire, and ultimately transform our understanding of the human condition, the nature of reality, and our relationship with the divine.

One of the central themes that pulsates throughout the volume is Bulgakov's radical re-envisioning of the relationship between theology, philosophy, and lived human experience. The contributors masterfully demonstrate how Bulgakov transcends the artificial boundaries that often separate these disciplines, forging a dynamic synthesis that illuminates the interconnectedness of thought, belief, and action. They highlight Bulgakov's relentless pursuit of an integrative understanding of reality, one that embraces the fullness of human experience – encompassing both the heights of spiritual contemplation and the depths of embodied existence within a "sophianic" vision of the cosmos.

The volume delves into the depths of Bulgakov's Christology, revealing how he reinterprets the Incarnation not as a static union of two natures, but as a dynamic, ontological event that transcends the limitations of traditional formulas. Drawing upon conception of "Sophiology" Bulgakov envisions the Incarnation as the ultimate manifestation of God's immanent Wisdom penetrating and transforming the created order. The contributors perfectly analyze Bulgakov's sophisticated Trinitarian theology, illuminating its radical implications for understanding the nature of personhood and the divine-human relationship. Bulgakov, as they demonstrate, rejects static models of the Trinity, instead emphasizing the dynamic perichoresis, the mutual indwelling and interpenetration of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the Godhead. This profound relationality, they argue, offers a compelling alternative to individualistic conceptions of selfhood and points toward a vision of communion as the foundational principle of all existence.

The anthology also unflinchingly confronts the socio-political and anthropological dimensions of Bulgakov's thought. The contributors carefully unpack his vision for a "sophianic" social order, one that transcends the limitations of both individualistic liberalism and totalitarian collectivism. They highlight Bulgakov's profound interpretation of theological concepts deeply rooted in his conviction that true human flourishing can only be realized within the context of a vibrant, loving community, guided by divine Wisdom and oriented toward the common good. The volume concludes by challenging readers to engage actively with Bulgakov's legacy, not as a mere object of historical inquiry or example of confessional limited apologetics, but as an ecumenical source of profound insight and inspiration for confronting the challenges of our time. Bulgakov's theology, as this collection of essays powerfully demonstrates, remains a living force, a vibrant and evolving tradition capable of guiding us towards a more just, compassionate, and spiritually grounded future.