be the unity which will contain them, and what will be their relations to one another within that unity?"[1]

It is here that the witness of Rome stands out in her strength; a strength, however, that should not repel but rather strengthen the brethren. For which let us pray in the words of the *eirenika* of the Byzantine Liturgy used both by Catholic and Orthodox alike:

> "For the peace of the world,
> For the good estate of all the Holy Churches of God,
> And for the Unity of all let us pray to the Lord,
> Kyrie Eleison."

DOM BEDE WINSLOW.

FATHER BULGAKOV'S "THE WISDOM OF GOD"[2]

WE Westerns would love to enter into the mentality of the Christian East, since by baptism they are our brethren, though separated from us, since by their great sufferings, in recent years especially, they have roused our deepest sympathy and since even after their century-long separation from us they have retained so much Catholic doctrine that their spirit still remains akin to ours. They are closer to us than those separated from us in the sixteenth century. In order to enter into that mentality, to see the drift of their mind, to sense their feelings, to realise their difficulties, it would be most useful to us to come into contact with the main trend of their thought, the great stream of their tradition, to study, so to say, the normal Russian Christian soul under the influence of Byzantinism for so many hundred years.

Here Professor Bulgakov disappoints us.

He himself distinctly proclaims beyond misunderstanding that what he gives us is not the great Byzantine tradition, and this claim is borne out all too clearly by the contents of his book.

> "The main purport of this essay is to expound the doctrine of Sophia, the Wisdom of God. This doctrine is at the present time responsible for a sort of ideological ferment even in our own Orthodox *milieu*. It has already evoked a hurried condemnation on the part of some of the hierarchy, in spite of the fact that the whole problem is only

[1] ibid, p. 225.
[2] *The Wisdom of God*, by the Very Rev. Sergius Bulgakov. (Williams & Norgate). 6*s*.

on the threshold of dogmatic consideration. As a result of the atmosphere of sensation and scandal thus created around the doctrine of the Wisdom of God, the Western reader has already become acquainted with such words as 'Sophia' and 'Sophiology' . . . No one seems to suspect that in this controversy the underlying problem is one which has a profound bearing on the very 'essence of Christianity.' . . . The real point at issue is that of the Christian vocation as it is related to the very nature of Christianity; it is the problem of a dogmatic Μετανοια nothing less than a change and a renewal of men's hearts. The doctrine . . . has nothing to do with putting forward any new dogma and . . . cannot be described as a new heresy within Christianity although such is the attitude adopted by certain 'guardians' of the faith, who see in complete stagnation the only guarantee of a true faith and dread all new ideas accordingly. . . . Sophiology . . . is characteristic only of one trend of thought within Christianity and that one which is by no means dominant in the Orthodox Church."

This lengthy quotation was necessary to put us Westerns on our guard lest we should consider Professor Bulgakov's ideas as at all representative of the Orthodox mind. He calls for "a dogmatic Μετανοια" that is: a change of mind towards all dogma. He does not wish to alter any specific individual doctrine of historic Christianity. He most emphatically asserts that he heartily accepts the Councils, especially Chalcedon and all that it implies. He obviously accepts the whole sacramental system, has the deepest veneration for Our Lady, blessed above the Seraphim, assumed body and soul in heaven, he sings the praises of the Church as the body of Christ. But "*all* Christian teaching and dogma" (italics his) must be reinterpreted according to Sophiology. There is but one Christian dogma which is directly irreconcilable with Sophiology, that is the dogma of eternal punishment. The rejection of this dogma is only referred to quite at the end of the book, pp. 217–219, and that hurriedly and almost cryptically. "Freedom unto evil has no substantive foundation, no resources to endure to eternity and sooner or later must inevitably wither before the radiance of wisdom. . . . The freedom of the rebellious creature cannot stand out to the end against the divine Wisdom on the empty resources of its own nothingness. For in reality there is but one God in his divine Wisdom and outside him nothing whatever. What is not God is *nothing*." (Italics his).

The author vehemently rejects the accusation of being a pantheist and claims to be a pan-entheist: all-in-God theorist.

Beyond all doubt the author has in utter sincerity persuaded himself that somehow he escapes pantheism. He repeats scores of times the distinction between the divine and the creaturely Sophia, but the bewildered reader asks himself: in what then, according to Bulgakov, does this distinction consist? This creaturely Sophia, if not God, must be *nothing*, or if not *nothing*, it must be God, how then is it distinguished from the divine Sophia?

The author accepts the Trinity and devotes a large section of his book to this mystery, but he explains the mystery in a fashion which even the use of the orthodox formulæ leaves very dubious and unsatisfactory. What for instance can be meant by such passages as the following:—

> "We should point out a very important peculiarity of such statements as the following: 'the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Trinity' *is* 'either Ousia or Sophia.' Such a statement cannot be reversed. We cannot on the basis of the foregoing argument affirm the converse in which the place of the subject would be occupied by the Ousia-Sophia and the place of the predicate by the Hypostases, for instance: 'Ousia-Sophia is the Father, Son, etc.' Such a statement would simply be untrue for it would contain the heresy of impersonalism as regards the Holy Trinity. It would equate with the Hypostases a principle which in itself is non-hypostatic, although it belongs to the Hypostases. This is the ontological absurdity, the heresy, which characterises all varieties of impersonal conceptions of the Holy Trinity (beginning with that of St. Augustine, continued in those of Boehme and Eckhardt and culminating in those of Schelling and Hegel.") pp. 83–4.

This can mean nothing else but that Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the Holy Trinity, are or is indeed God, but God is not Father, Son and Holy Ghost. But this is no heresy, it is no absurdity, it is the exact truth. It is the Catholic Faith: the only single and only God *is* the three Persons, and *is* each Person. The Father is God, and conversely God *is* the Father.

Father Bulgakov seems to draw a *real* distinction between each Person and His Godhead. But Catholic theology allows no such *real* distinction. The *only* distinction in the Trinity lies between the Persons: the Father is not the Son, neither Father nor Son is the Holy Ghost. Catholic theology does not allow such a *real* distinction in the Trinity as a distinction between the Person and His Godhead. Nature and Person are in God as a matter of fact identical, though to us owing to the limitations of our finite minds they appear as if distin-

guished because there are Three Persons and only one Nature. There is no abstract "divinity," there is only the one concrete God and that one God is Father, Son and Holy Ghost *and nothing else*. There is no divine Ousia or Sophia or essence or nature, apart from the Three Persons, or distinguishable from their Personality. In us men it is different, in us there is such distinction. I am not manhood. My personality is a distinct principle of reality from that other principle of reality which is my nature. But in the Father or Son or Holy Ghost it is not so, there are no two objective principles of reality in the Father: one His Personality, the other His Godhead, for there is no real distinction between Godhead and God, between divinitas and Deus. Divinitas is only our human abstraction. The "absurdity and heresy beginning with St. Augustine" is the Catholic Faith. The profound error of postulating such a real distinction vitiates the whole of Father Bulgakov's treatise on the Trinity and it pervades the whole of his book. He postulates this distinction because he needs it for his quasi-pantheistic or entheistic explanation of the Universe. This an-hypostatic, impersonal Sophia, which is only another term for the divine nature, is, according to him, required as basis or foundation for the Created All. It is in fact the Creaturely Sophia as God indwelling in the Universe. The Universe embodies it and since man is the crown of the Universe, man embodies this impersonal divinity and man is destined to become, one might almost say, a finite hypostasis of that Sophia or divinity, for what is not God is *nothing*.

In Our Blessed Lady Father Bulgakov rightly sees the highest of all creatures, and since she was assumed into heaven body and soul, he rightly sees in her the highest destiny of sanctified and glorified humanity. So far every Catholic joyfully agrees with him, but when he continues to repeat that she *is* the Created Sophia even ontologically, we begin to fear a profound error somewhere. We already hesitated and suspected, when we read: "According to the sophiological interpretation of the definition of Chalcedon the two natures in Christ correspond to the two forms of Sophia, the divine and the created. The created humanity of Christ, the God-man, came to him from the Mother of God. It belongs to her. In a true sense it is true to say that she herself is this created manhood of Christ. The manhood of Christ belongs at once to him, since it is one of his two natures and to her in whom it personally subsists."

The whole doctrine of the Incarnation is transformed by this strange error of Father Bulgakov. He writes in the chapter on the Incarnation: The personal spirit of man has its divine, uncreated origin from "the spirit of God. It is

a spark of the divine. Through his spirit man is indeed a partaker of the divine nature and seen to be capable of divinization. This spirit once united with and animating human nature . . . man already appears by his composition and destiny alike, to be, in a true sense, theandric. He has something in him which asks for God-manhood. Even before his coming the Christ who was to be was somehow contained in man. . . . Human personality in general is itself supernatural and stands for the divine principle in the make-up of man. That spirit which in man is human . . . in Christ is the everlasting Word. . . . The real basis of the union of the two natures in Christ seems to lie in their mutual relationship as two variant forms of divine and created wisdom. It is conceivable only because manhood is the created form of divine Wisdom, which is simply God's nature revealing itself."

Whatever all this means, it is certainly not what Chalcedon meant. The dogma of Chalcedon has undergone " a dogmatic Μετανοια " indeed.

Hence we deeply regret Father Bulgakov's book. He is the Dean of the Russian Theological Institute in Paris. If his ideas should spread amongst his co-religionists, Catholic truths so long held with admirable tenacity through so many centuries will dissolve in a dreamy pantheism, or pan-entheism. Of the utter sincerity of Father Bulgakov, no reader can doubt. He writes with the fervour of a prophet, he intends to maintain the teaching of the Councils and the Holy Tradition of Orthodoxy, but it must strike him sometimes that after nineteen centuries to ask for a Metanoia, a change of mind concerning the essence of Christianity, can hardly be continuing the " Holy Tradition." Should not the ferment caused by his Sophianic theories, and the condemnation by some of the hierarchy, make him pause and consider ? Is not all he wants to say already said in the Western statement that God is immanent in all creation *per potentiam, per praesentiam, per essentiam* ? If he wants to say something more, or something different, is that likely to be true ? To accuse St. Augustine of absurdity and heresy, to see his forerunners in Boehme and Baader is not to enter into the Holy Tradition of the West and if Father Bulgakov is out of harmony with East and West, ought not that to rouse the gravest suspicions, not of his sincerity, but of the correctness of his startling assertions ?

JOHN P. ARENDZEN.

Signatur:

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