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# BUILDING THE HOUSE OF WISDOM

Sergii Bulgakov and Contemporary Theology:  
New Approaches and Interpretations



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Abstract

Sergii Bulgakov (1871–1944) is one of the preeminent theologians of the 20th century whose work is still being discovered and explored in and for the 21st century. The famous rival of Lenin in the field of economics, was, according to Wassily Kandinsky, “one of the deepest experts on religious life” in early twentieth-century Russian art and culture. As economist, publicist, politician, and later Orthodox theologian and priest, he became a significant “global player” in both the Orthodox diaspora and the Ecumenical movement in the interwar period.

This anthology gathers the papers delivered at the international conference on the occasion of Bulgakov’s 150th birthday at the University of Fribourg in September 2021. The chapters, written by established Bulgakov specialists, including Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury (2002–2012), as well as young researchers from different theological disciplines and ecclesial traditions, explore Bulgakov’s way of meeting the challenges in the modern world and of building bridges between East and West. The authors bring forth a wide range of new creative ways to constructively engage with Bulgakov’s theological worldview and cover topics such as personhood, ecology, political theology and Trinitarian ontology.



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Edited by  
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## Father Sergii Bulgakov's "Karamazov's excursus"

*Pavel Khondzinsky*

### 1.

As we know, Father Sergii Bulgakov took a keen interest in the legacy of Blessed Augustine, the pre-revolutionary book *Two Cities* (*Dva Grada*) containing some allusions to his works. In his triadological research, Fr. Sergii criticizes Augustine's concept of the Trinity, although ultimately he turns out to be not far from this concept himself. Moreover, to the final part of his major trilogy, *The Bride of the Lamb*, Bulgakov attaches a special excursus, "Augustinianism and Predestination," dedicating it to the problem of the relationship between grace and freedom. Not only criticizing (as we may guess) the position of the Western Church fathers, but also substantiating his own alternative point of view, Bulgakov in this excursus recalls Karamazov's revolt against "world harmony." We will try to establish how legitimate the reproach of Ivan Karamazov is, if addressed to Blessed Augustine.

### 2.

To begin with, let me briefly recall the main theses of Fr. Sergii. The excursus consists of three sections: "The Teaching of Blessed Augustine on Freedom and Predestination," "Toward a Characterization of Augustinianism," "On Predestination According to the Apostle Paul: Romans 8:28–30 and Ephesians 1:3–12 in Blessed Augustine's Interpretation."

In the first section, Father Sergii develops the idea that the "anti-Pelagian" doctrine of Blessed Augustine is centered on the thought of election (*electio*), which is entirely based on the will of God and has nothing to do with personal merits and faults. "Accordingly, the *donum perseverantiae* is given (or not

given) not corresponding to merits but rather *secundum ipsius secretissimam, eandemque justissimam, sapientissimam, beneficentissimam, voluntatem*.<sup>1</sup>

Any other point of view leads to the conclusion that grace is given according to merits, but this, as Augustine insists, does not agree with the thought of St. Paul. Grace always precedes, and that is why the Church prays for the conversion of the infidels.<sup>2</sup> The elect are chosen “by that predestination by which God has foreknown His future works.”<sup>3</sup> Although Bl. Augustine does not speak about predestination to perdition (“Clearly, Bl. Augustine is himself horrified by his own logic”<sup>4</sup>), this inevitably follows from his doctrine. Like Bl. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and the Council of Trent (as well as the Orthodox Patriarchs in their famous epistle<sup>5</sup>) stopped halfway on this issue, whereas Jansenius and Calvin should be considered consistent in this respect. At the same time, “the question becomes especially burning concerning the salvation of infants who die at an early age, both those elect for salvation through Holy Baptism and those who are rejected for lack of it. [...] Their fate proved a quasi *experimentum crucis* for his entire theory, from which Augustine does not shrink (and, following him, neither has the entire Western Church, compared to which the East has the advantage only of not having defined the issue).”<sup>6</sup>

The second section, “Toward a Characterization of Augustinianism,” expounds the ideas already mentioned. First, the duality of Augustine’s position gave rise to mutually exclusive interpretations of his ideas. Catholics put an emphasis on the Church “as an organization of life in grace” outside of which salvation is impossible. Protestants focus on salvation by grace through faith. However, both of these approaches place an exaggerated emphasis on the importance of grace in human life, and “abolished anthropology along with its attendant teaching on Divine–Humanity.”<sup>7</sup> In this sense, Orthodox theology, being free of the Augustinian past, has every opportunity to “lay bare the contradictions” of Augustinianism “and to intensify the problematic, which is exactly what is most important and valuable in this system.”<sup>8</sup> With extreme

1 Sergii Bulgakov, “Augustinianism and Predestination,” trans. Roberto J. De La Noval, in *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 2.1 (2019), 69–99, 74.

2 Ibid., 72.

3 Ibid., 75.

4 Ibid., 80.

5 Cf.: *Dogmaticheskie poslaniia pravoslavnykh ierarkhov XVIII–XIX vekov o pravoslavnoi vere* (1900) (Moscow 1900), 172–73.

6 Bulgakov, “Augustinianism,” 77.

7 Ibid., 82.

8 Ibid., 83.

tension Augustine raised the question of the opposition and incomparability of the divine and the human, taken in the complete omnipotence of the first, and the complete abjection of the second.<sup>9</sup> But he did not give an answer to this question. The answer in turn consists solely in the idea of Divine-Humanity (Godmanhood), "Divine and created Sophia."<sup>10</sup> Hence all of Augustine's hesitations on the issue of freedom of the will. More likely, Bl. Augustine "teaches not freedom but rather the unfreedom of the will."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, it still remains incomprehensible how this transition from the original freedom of man to unfreedom took place, because Augustine does not explain in any way how humanity (and a particular person) can be charged with original sin.<sup>12</sup>

In order to evade the answer, Augustine refers to the incomprehensibility of the Divine will; however, the motivation of this will, inaccessible to us, makes us recall the *deus ex machina*.<sup>13</sup> Anthropomorphism and rationalism are other consequences of Augustinian predestination. Anthropomorphism (clearly inspired by the anthropomorphic language of Paul the Apostle in Romans VIII, 28–30<sup>14</sup>) reveals itself in the fact that "the matter is presented as if God, before creating the world, thought things over, predestined them, and afterwards created the world according to the previously decided plan which He then implements."<sup>15</sup> The second consequence of Augustine's predestination (rationalism) consists in the attempt to provide answers to all questions, so that the unfathomability of the Wisdom of God turns into "the despotism of election, and in this arbitrary character there remains nothing of mystery."<sup>16</sup> An attempt to justify God in this way is reminiscent of Job's friends and "can satisfy only those who are already satisfied and hypnotized in submissiveness. *But then in others this theodicy provokes this Karamazovism: 'It's not God that I do not accept, but I do not accept His world'*" (italics mine—PK).<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, in contrast to Bl. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom says, "But when he says, 'Which He prepared for glory,' he expresses by this that not everything happens by God alone, because if this were the case, then nothing would prevent Him

9 Bulgakov, "Augustinianism," 83.

10 Ibid., 84.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 84–85.

13 Ibid., 85.

14 Ibid., 89.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 90.

17 Ibid., 89–90.

from saving all. And although the greater part belongs to God, nevertheless we add something small from ourselves.”<sup>18</sup>

Finally, in the last section of the “Excursus,” Fr. Sergii first criticizes Augustine’s exegetical approaches in more detail, and then offers his own interpretation. The ancient interpreters (“beginning already with the Pelagians and Chrysostom”<sup>19</sup>) tried to find a way out by separating foreknowledge (referring it to human freedom) from predestination (which is a consequence of the former). However, “Bl. Augustine insists—implacably and not without certain formal grounds—that God’s foreknowledge is also His pre-destination and is thus identical with it in one pre-eternal act.”<sup>20</sup> This identity arises due to the fact that Paul the Apostle “in a deliberately anthropomorphic manner” inserts the pre-eternal acts of God “into the temporality of the world, into its past ages.”<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, these expressions are only a verbal form for expressing the love of God, which extends to everyone. “They do not in any way contain that limiting sense which was put into them by Bl. Augustine [...]. On the contrary—here the Apostle Paul speaks of (pre)-election and (pre)-determination in general, as the common foundation for both the creation of the human being and for the relationship of God to the world.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, the *election* of God should not be related to “a limited number of the elect but to humanity as a whole, or, more accurately, to Divine-Humanity, which is precisely the pre-eternal foundation of created humanity.”<sup>23</sup> Esau and Jacob’s example is purely historical.<sup>24</sup> The example of clay and a potter indicates only one side of the relationship between God and man,<sup>25</sup> the creaturehood of the latter. At the same time, all those who are rewarded with being are thus rewarded with the love of God, and the comparison of vessels for an honorable and shameful use, “in no way need be understood *in malam partem*, as an expression of the exaltation of some and the disdainful humiliation of others. Here it could not be more appropriate to recall the other comparison from the Apostle Paul concerning the different members of the body of the Church, equally important and necessary in all their differences (1 Cor. 12:14–26).”<sup>26</sup> In general, the text 11:33–36 should be con-

18 Bulgakov, “Augustinianism,” 89 fn. 65.

19 Ibid., 91.

20 Ibid., 92.

21 Ibid., 93–94.

22 Ibid., 94.

23 Ibid., 95.

24 Ibid., 96.

25 Ibid., 97.

26 Ibid.

sidered a semantic center of the Epistle to the Romans. "If we can find here a teaching on pre-destination (within, at least, generally acceptable limits), then we must do so not with respect to an Augustinian-Calvinistic predestination of some for salvation and the abandonment of others for rejection, but rather predestination for universal mercy."<sup>27</sup>

### 3.

The first question that we may raise now is the question of how correctly Sergii Bulgakov was reading the works of Bl. Augustine. On the one hand, we must admit that Fr. Sergii really "exacerbated the problematics," focusing mainly on the theses about the death of innocent children as the main argument, which proves the absurdity of the Augustinian concept. We should say that Augustine really has all these theses. On the other hand, it seems that Fr. Sergii did not know Augustine very well. First, he did not use the last chapters of "The Gift of Perseverance," which could confirm his position. In these chapters, Augustine explains how the truth of predestination should be preached so as not to confuse believers. He thereby implicitly admits that in its straight form, it looks confusing to say the least. Second, Augustine can be much criticized for his theory of original sin as a punishment (*reatus*), which is removed only by baptism, even if a person (foremost a child) does not have personal sins, but we cannot say that he does not have this theory as Fr. Sergii insists.

Third, it would be appropriate to quote here a profound remark of Harnack's, whose works Fr. Sergii, of course, knew. Harnack writes: "When Augustine wanted to clarify nature, world history and the history of the individual, he fell into many contradictions and came to easily refutable assumptions. But there are things that, viewed from the outside, are false, while viewed from the inside they are true. This is the Augustinian teaching on grace and sin. As an expression of psychological and religious experience it is true, but when reflected in history it turns out to be false."<sup>28</sup>

Augustine's thought was indeed based on his pastoral and human experience, facing the facts that are difficult to explain. Why do the children of pious parents sometimes die unbaptized, while the children of impious parents have time to receive the sacrament before they die? Why does a righteous man fall into sin before his death, and the omniscient Lord does not take him away before his fall, just as some of the baptized babies do not die right away, but

<sup>27</sup> Bulgakov, "Augustinianism," 98.

<sup>28</sup> Adolf von Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr 1914), Vol. 3, 311.

grow up to end their lives badly? And are the babies who die after baptism those of whom the Lord foresaw that they would subsequently sin? These and similar examples and questions are often found on the pages of the treatises “On the Predestination of the Saints” and “The Gift of Perseverance,” since Augustine faced them in his pastoral experience at every step. Namely, these questions and examples compel Augustine to construct the theory of predestination, which, in his opinion, is the only theory that can satisfactorily explain them. And if we agree with Harnack that this theory explains them “from the outside” and not in the best way, then does the theory of Fr. Sergii explain them better? He is merely silent about them in his text. It is not correct to reproach Augustine for identifying the concepts of foreknowledge and predestination, not in the sense that this reproach has nothing to do with him, but in that it would be necessary to criticize his concept of divine simplicity as a whole. According to this concept, he really believes that the properties of God, which are called various things in human language, are in fact identical.<sup>29</sup> In addition, while formulating the very concept of predestination in theory very harshly, from a practical point of view Augustine emphasized the completely Christian idea that no one can be sure of their salvation until the last hour of their life:

Keeping this hope, *serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling* (Ps. 2:11), since no one can be sure of the eternal life that the non-lying God promised to the sons of promise before eternal times, before this life of this man, which is a *temptation on earth* (Job .7: 1), is completed. But may the One to whom we say every day: ‘Do not lead us into temptation (Matthew 6:13)’ make us remain in Him until the end of this life.<sup>30</sup>

As for this text we can say in the words of Fr. Sergii: “The first half of the text addresses human will and freedom, and the second speaks of the Divine activity within us.”<sup>31</sup>

It is also characteristic that Bulgakov, in his exegesis of the words of Paul the Apostle, refers only to modern Western researchers, and the reference he once quoted in the text to St. John Chrysostom does not speak in his favor, especially if we turn now to the broader context of the latter’s words.

29 Cf.: Augustinus Hipponensis, *De Trinitate*. VI. 6.

30 Augustinus Hipponensis, *Antipelagianskie sochineniia pozdnego perioda* (Moscow: AS-TRAST 2008), 444.

31 Bulgakov, “Augustinianism,” 99.



4.

Bl. Augustine, as we remember, assumed the notion of the guilt of original sin extending to the entire human race, of the incomprehensibility of the election of the elect (the foreknown and predestinated) and of the inevitability of death for those who were not chosen. St. John Chrysostom also touches on these issues. Although he recognizes mortality as the first consequence of original sin, he regards it not only as damage to nature, but also as a punishment which at first glance may even seem unjust: "It seems not quite fair for one to be punished (κολάζεσθαι), through the fault of the other, but for one to be saved through the other—this is more decent and consistent with reason. If the first is true, then the second should be true especially."<sup>32</sup> A little later, he again returns to this question and again wonders whether not only mortality, but also sinfulness extends to everyone, because by the disobedience of one, many have become sinful, and to be sinful "means people [are] subjected to punishment (τὸ ὑπεύθυνοι κολάσει) and condemned to death."<sup>33</sup> Much to our regret, the Apostle does not explain why this happened. However, despite this, we can derive considerable benefit from mortality itself, since because of mortality, for example, sin in us is not immortal.

In its turn, the question of foreknowledge and predestination in the Augustinian sense does not interest John Chrysostom at all. He recognizes the same problem as Augustine, although he resolves it differently: "God alone knows the worthy, and none of the people do, although they think that they know something well but they are wrong in their conclusion. He who knows secrets already clearly knows who is worthy of crowns, and who is worthy of punishment and torment. Therefore He punished many of those who, in the opinion of men, were good, by reproving them, and He crowned many who were considered vicious, and testified that they were not like that."<sup>34</sup> In other words, election is incomprehensible only for people who are deceived in their judgments, but in fact for Divine Wisdom it is quite consistent and logical. The apophatic theology of Providence in Augustine's works gives way here to a rather cataphatic approach. Assuming that Jacob and Esau differed in the foreknown virtues and vices, Chrysostom at the same time pays attention to the fact that "all Jews committed the same sin, namely, they made a molten calf. However, some were punished while others were not. That's why God said: "I

32 John Chrysostom, *Tvoreniiia*, vol. 9 (Pochayiv Lavra 2005), 619 (On Rom 10.2).

33 Ibid., 621 (On Rom 10. 3).

34 Ibid., 727 (On Rom 16. 6).

*will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*" For it is not yours to know, O Moses, who deserves My love of man, but leave this to Me. But if Moses had no right to know, much less have we."<sup>35</sup> John Chrysostom maintains that he speaks not about denial of free will but about full obedience and submission to God: "For as the potter (he says) of the same lump makes what he pleases, and no one forbids it; thus also when God, of the same race of men, punishes some, and honors others, be not thou curious nor meddlesome herein, but worship only, and imitate the clay. For He works nothing at random, or mere hazard, though thou be ignorant of the secret of His Wisdom."<sup>36</sup> Besides, St. John is not confused by the idea of the possible death of many people: "Do you see that according to Isaiah, not everyone will be saved, but only those who are worthy of salvation? I am not afraid of the multitude, says (God), and I am not afraid of the generation that has multiplied so much, but I save only those who are worthy of it."<sup>37</sup>

Thus, based on the absolute goodness and wisdom of the Creator and at the same time on the incomprehensibility of His decisions, to which we can only submit without reasoning, St. John protects both the freedom of human will and the foreknowledge, if not of deeds, then of the inner dignity of the elect for salvation. However, St. John gets away from these hard questions of Augustine's, and if one of the two lacks a consistent teaching on original sin, then, of course, it is more likely that it is John Chrysostom, not Augustine. Yet it is not necessarily a drawback.

## 5.

From everything that has been said before, we may assume that Fr. Sergii was reading Bl. Augustine from a somewhat predetermined point of view. Hence we must also raise the question of the origin of this point of view. At first glance, it is quite simple: Fr. Sergii needs to "exacerbate the problematics" in order to emphasize (as he often did on other occasions) that the only way out of the arising aporia is to apply for the services of sophiology. Sophiology, as he writes, is grounded in the idea of Divine-Humanity. Here we should remember that long before Bulgakov, Prince Evgenii N. Trubetskoi (in his dissertation dedicated to Bl. Augustine) opposed the idea of the independent value of Divine Humanity to Augustine's teaching on the two cities and the omnipotence

35 Chrysostom, *Tvoreniiia*, 730 (On Rom 16. 7).

36 Ibid., 732 (On Rom 16. 8). Cf. *ibid.*, 731 (On Rom 16. 8).

37 Ibid., 735 (On Rom 16. 9).

of Divine Providence. "The Kingdom of God," he wrote, "as it appears in the teaching of Augustine, does not reconcile humanity with Itself, for humanity is not content with the role of a means of a providential plan alien to it and wants to be its very aim in it."<sup>38</sup> Here we will also meet other motives, famous for us from Fr. Sergii's excursus, for example, criticism of Augustine for justifying the death of infants by the goals of Providence<sup>39</sup> or for the image of the Church as a world organization<sup>40</sup> etc. However, it seems more interesting for us that in his later work *Smysl Zhizni* (The Meaning of Life) Prince Trubetskoi reproaches not Bl. Augustine, but Sergii Bulgakov for underestimating the significance of human freedom and suppressing it with the idea of predestination. Let us dwell a little more on this unexpected turn of the topic.

According to E. Trubetskoi, Sergii Bulgakov mixes the Divine plan for man (the idea of a particular person) with his nature. "If the Divine plan about me is my substance or nature, I cannot but be a manifestation of this nature. Whether I want it or not, I am what God intended me to be and all my actions, whether good or bad, are the product of this nature, the phenomenon of Divine Sophia."<sup>41</sup> Besides, this leads to the assertion that Sophia, on the one hand, is the power of God, inseparable from God, but on the other hand, the substance of the world that is developing and sinful in its freedom. Trubetskoi believes that there is only one way out of this situation—to consider that "the idea of each created being is not his nature, but another reality, different from him, which he may or may not be combined with. The idea is that image of a coming, new creation, which must be realized in freedom."<sup>42</sup> On the one hand, the choice of the creature is predetermined by this image, so to speak, by the irrevocable task of God, but, on the other hand, this creature can either work on its implementation or refuse it.<sup>43</sup> In the latter case, "a free being affirms its selfhood against the idea, loses completely this image and likeness of God."<sup>44</sup> However, this assertion of selfhood in opposition to the predetermined image of God leads, on the contrary, to its loss, because "a being who has finally severed all connection with eternal life becomes, as a result of this rupture, an empty phantom with

38 Evgenii N. Trubetskoi, *Mirosozertsanie blazhennogo Avgustina* (Moscow 1892), 259. Cf. Chrysostom, *Tvoreniia*, 213, 245.

39 Cf. *ibid.*, 206.

40 Cf. *ibid.*, 101, 161.

41 Evgenii N. Trubetskoi, *Smysl zhizni* (Moscow 1994), 99.

42 *Ibid.*, 103.

43 *Ibid.*

44 *Ibid.*, 104.

no selfhood at all.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, “*in eternity*, evil ceases to be real: phantoms without selfhood do not fight, because they do not live: therefore, their life is not the present, but the past that has perished forever.”<sup>46</sup> This, however, does not mean that in this case the eternal Divine idea remained unfulfilled, since “eternal divine ideas are not only God’s plans but they are living creative forces. If man refuses to be a co-worker and bearer of these creative forces, he will be replaced by another co-worker: whether he wants it or not, the fullness of divine life must come true.”<sup>47</sup>

For the sake of justice, it should be noted that Trubetskoi in *The Meaning of Life* criticizes Bulgakov’s *The Unfading Light* and *Philosophy of Economy*. Those who read *The Bride of the Lamb* (to which the excursus about Augustinianism is appended) may think at first that here Bulgakov’s position has become much closer to that of Trubetskoi. Indeed, Father Sergii also says that each created individuality has its own idea, which he calls a “theme.”<sup>48</sup> This theme-idea is a given, within which variations of created freedom or self-creation of creatures can be realized: “In creaturely creativity, we have, on the one hand, an inner *causa* lying in the depths of personal being, a *causa* as the ontological boundary and theme of being. On the other hand, we have in it the free, creative execution of this theme, its ‘original development,’ creaturely creativity, as the actualization of a new possibility.”<sup>49</sup> This novelty is rather relative: as the themes-ideas themselves and the possibilities contained in them are always known to God, the creature cannot bring anything ontologically new into the world. At the same time, “in empirical (“contingent”) being,” the concrete actualization of these possibilities “represents a new manifestation for God Himself, who is waiting to see whether man will open or not open the doors of his heart. God Himself will know this only when it happens.”<sup>50</sup>

The difference between individuals, which results from this, is not only empirical but also metaphysical, since each person enters the world, having already determined himself about the theme given to him.<sup>51</sup> Father Sergii says in one of his works that man can vary the implementation of his “existential

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45 Trubetskoi, *Smysl zhizni*, 104.

46 Ibid., 105.

47 Ibid., 106.

48 Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 96.

49 Ibid., 140.

50 Ibid., 238.

51 Ibid., 233, also fn 23.

theme," as well as that he may not accept it.<sup>52</sup> However, it is not very clear how this is consistent with the statement he insisted on earlier: "there cannot be a hypostasis without a specific theme, or an empty I, so to speak, an I that does not have its own individually colored nature."<sup>53</sup> But what is really more important is that "failure" in the implementation of this theme in life is not final, since there are no people who are so sinful that "the power of the sophianic image of God is totally annulled and who are completely incapable of good"<sup>54</sup> (that is, they would obviously turn out to have completely rejected their theme). Freedom, as absolute arbitrariness, is not given to man precisely because of a pre-determined personal theme. Therefore, "the state of hell must be understood as an unceasing creative activity, or more precisely, self-creative activity, of the soul, although this state bears within itself a disastrous split, an alienation from its prototype."<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, there is every reason to believe that this alienation will be overcome "in the ages of ages."<sup>56</sup>

This last point seems to reveal the fundamental difference between Trubetskoi and Bulgakov. According to Trubetskoi, the number of Divine ideas is finite (similar to the finite number of the righteous in Augustine), but the number of created attempts to implement these ideas is infinite, since created persons who refuse to implement the idea are annihilated in non-existence and others take their place.

In Bulgakov's view, the number of ideas-themes is also determined by the Divine pleroma, but the metaphysical connection between the theme and the person who has accepted it cannot be broken even in hell. Therefore, either we must recognize in God a double predestination: to eternal bliss and eternal torment, or we must come to apocatastasis, for which the most risky variations of created freedom are of no essential importance, since the idea posited in the Divine Sophia cannot but come true.

As we have seen, Father Sergii is inclined to this idea in his interpretation of the Apostle Paul. However, he does not notice that in this way he himself is provoking Karamazov's revolt. Ivan protested precisely against the universal harmony in which a tortured child and his mother would embrace their tor-

52 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 342.

53 Ibid., 96.

54 Ibid., 498.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid., 499.

mentor, and that is why he said “It is not God that I don’t accept, but I do not accept His world.”<sup>57</sup>

## Conclusions

1. Augustine’s excursus completes the entire “Major Trilogy,” and in a sense it is the final apology of its key message—the idea of Divine-Humanity. It is no coincidence, of course, that Bl. Augustine appeared on the stage in the epilogue. The idea of Divine-Humanity, which was put forward by Russian religious thought, had the concept of *De civitate Dei* as its global alternative, although it is not mentioned in the excursus.

2. Unleashing all the power of his philosophical genius on the teachings of Bl. Augustine on predestination, Fr. Sergii nevertheless makes a number of mistakes. Firstly, he does not know the works of Augustine thoroughly. Secondly, referring to St. John Chrysostom, he does not notice that St. John’s position is not at all identical with his own, and in some respects (in particular, in recognizing the impossibility of giving a reason for the actions of Providence or in agreeing that a certain number of people are doomed to eternal death) is much closer to Augustine’s position than to his own.

3. Father Sergii, apparently, does not notice that his own concept of universal predestination for salvation is no less destructive for existential ideas about human freedom and is no less fraught with Karamazov’s revolt than the concept of Bl. Augustine.

4. To sum up, we may assume that, by completing the “Major Trilogy” with “An Excursus on Predestination,” Father Sergii wanted not only to speak about the most important things for him, but also wanted to vie once again with Augustine, who obviously did not give him rest. It may be due to the opposition of beliefs, or it may be due to the equal greatness of both, or because of the excessively close and therefore annoying similarity, which the creator of sophiology (spilling *lux ex Oriente*) could not or did not want to put up with.

*English translation by Julia Rost.*

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57 Fedor Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, Vol. XIV (Leningrad 1976), 223.