



Barbara Hallensleben,
Regula M. Zwahlen,
Aristotle Papanikolaou,
Pantelis Kalaitzidis (eds.)

BUILDING THE HOUSE OF WISDOM

Sergii Bulgakov and Contemporary Theology:
New Approaches and Interpretations

 **Aschendorff**
Verlag

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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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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Building the House of Wisdom. Editors' Introduction	11
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12520-5	

PERSONHOOD AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Sergii Bulgakov's Christology and Beyond	25
Rowan Williams	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12172-6	

Masks, Chimaeras, and Portmanteaux: Sergii Bulgakov and the Metaphysics of the Person	43
David Bentley Hart	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12173-3	

Bulgakov and Lot-Borodine as Shapers of Deification in the West	63
Mark McInroy	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12174-0	

" <i>Transcende te ipsum</i> ": Faith, Prayer and Name-Worship in Bulgakov's <i>Unfading Light</i>	77
Ivan Ilin	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12175-7	

The Kenotic Iconicity of Sergii Bulgakov's Divine-Humanity: Doctrinal, Anthropological, and Feminist Considerations	91
Sarah Elizabeth Livick-Moses	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12176-4	

Sergii Bulgakov's Fragile Absolute: Kenosis, Difference, and Positive Disassociation	107
Jack Louis Pappas	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12177-1	

The Authenticity of Creativity: The Philosophical and Theological Anthropologies of Nikolai Berdiaev and Sergei Bulgakov	123
Deborah Casewell	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12178-8	
Bulgakov on Mangodhood—or, Satan after Schelling	137
Justin Shaun Coyle	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12179-5	

POLITICS, ECONOMY, AND ECOLOGY

Seven Days of <i>Narod</i> : Sergei Bulgakov's Christian Socialist Newspaper	153
Catherine Evtuhov and Regula M. Zwahlen	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12180-1	
Is It All the Greeks' Fault? Reconsidering the Byzantine Legacy in Sergius Bulgakov's <i>By the Walls of Cherson</i>	177
Nikos Kouremenos	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12181-8	
"The Sophia Dispute" in the Context of Political Ontology	193
Alexei P. Kozyrev	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12182-5	
Sophiology and Personalism, Foundations of the New Political Science in the Twenty-First Century	209
Antoine Arjakovsky	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12183-2	
Sergii Bulgakov's Chalcedonian Politics of Personhood	221
Nathaniel Wood	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12184-9	
The World as the Household of Wisdom: Political Theology and Philosophy of Economy	235
Dionysios Skliris	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12185-6	

Rethinking the Language of Economics as a Systematic Christian Response to Economic and Ecological Crises in the Thought of Sergii Bulgakov	247
Tikhon Vasilyev	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12186-3	
Bulgakov's Ecology	259
Austin Foley Holmes	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12187-0	

SOPHIOLOGY

The Reception of Palamite Theology in the Sophiology of Sergii Bulgakov	275
Liubov A. Petrova	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12188-7	
An Unfinished Dispute. How is it Possible to Criticize Bulgakov's Sophiology at the Present Time?	289
Natalia Vaganova	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12189-4	
Sophiology, Ascesis and Prophecy	301
Joshua Heath	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12190-0	
Mariology as Personalized Sophiology. Sergii Bulgakov's Chalcedonian Theology	317
Dario Colombo	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12191-7	
The Training for Dying and Death: A New Reading of Bulgakov's Sophiology	331
Paul L. Gavriluk	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12192-4	

CREATION AND ONTOLOGY

Sergii Bulgakov's Early Marxism: A Narrative of Development	351
Caleb Henry	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12193-1	
<i>Creatio ex sapientia</i> in Bulgakov's <i>Unfading Light</i> :	
The Influence of F. W. J. Schelling	365
Taylor Ross	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12194-8	
Sergii Bulgakov's Chalcedonian Ontology and the Problem of	
Human Freedom	381
Brandon Gallaher	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12195-5	
Sergii Bulgakov: Between Kenotic Theology of the Event and	
Trinitarian Ontology	409
Antonio Bergamo	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12196-2	
From Social Trinity to "Linguistic Trinity": Sergii Bulgakov's	
Contribution to Analytic Theology	419
Nikolaos Asproulis	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12197-9	
Sergii Bulgakov: From Grammar to Wisdom	435
John Milbank	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12198-6	

ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVES

Father Sergii Bulgakov's "Karamazov's excursus"	463
Pavel Khondzinsky	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12199-3	
Ships in the Theological Night? Sergius Bulgakov and Liberation Theology	475
Graham McGeoch	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12200-6	
"Your Labor Is Not in Vain." Sergii Bulgakov's Sophiology as a Key to a (Protestant) Theology of the Kingdom of God	489
Oliver Dürr	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12201-3	
Sergius Bulgakov and Modern Theology	501
Paul Ladouceur	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12202-0	
The Vision of Unity. The Ecumenical Thought of Fr. Sergii Bulgakov	521
Adalberto Mainardi	
DOI 10.17438/978-3-402-12203-7	
List of Contributors	535

Building the House of Wisdom. Editors' Introduction

*Barbara Hallensleben, Regula M. Zwahlen, Aristotle Papanikolaou,
Pantelis Kalaitzidis*

Ten years ago, the Orthodox theologian Sergii Bulgakov (1871–1944) was called an “awakening giant” to whom “much of contemporary Orthodox God-talk can be traced.”¹ Today, the giant seems very much awake. Renewed interest in Bulgakov appeared in the 1970s in the Soviet Union² and turned into a genuine revival in the 1990s.³ Thoroughly annotated new editions of Bulgakov’s works sprouted everywhere and sparked a new general interest in Russian religious thought and Orthodox theology in Europe and the USA. Above all, the publications and English translations by Catherine Evtuhov and Rowan Williams, as well as those by Boris Jakim and Thomas Allen Smith, have triggered a real

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- 1 Brandon Gallaher, “Antinomism, trinity and the challenge of Solov’ëvan pantheism in the theology of Sergij Bulgakov,” *Studies in East European Thought* 64, no. 3–4 (2012), 222.
 - 2 Of crucial importance were Elena Kazimirchak-Polonskaia’s lectures at the Spiritual Academy in Leningrad (“Monakhinia Elena”, one of Bulgakov’s spiritual daughters). Dimitri Sizonenko, “L’héritage du père Serge Boulgakov dans la Russie actuelle,” *Le Messager Orthodoxe* 158 (2015), 22; Dimitrii Sizonenko, “Bor’ba za istinu i retseptsii naslediia Bulgakova v Rossii,” *Vestnik RKhD* 203 (2015), 43.
 - 3 Important international conferences on Sergii Bulgakov with the participation of several contributors to this volume (in brackets): “S. N. Bulgakov: Economics and Culture”, Moscow, October 11–13, 1994 (B. Hallensleben); “S. N. Bulgakov’ Religious-Philosophical Journey (on the occasion of his 130th birthday)”, Moscow, March 5–7, 2001 (A. Arjakovsky, C. Evtuhov, A. Kozyrev); “Russian Theology in European Context: S. N. Bulgakov and Western Religious-Philosophical Thought”, Moscow, September 29–October 2, 2004 (B. Gallaher, R. Zwahlen); “Sergii Bulgakov’s Heritage in Contemporary Social and Humanitarian Sciences (on the occasion of his 140th birthday)”, Kyiv, May 12–13, 2011 (B. Gallaher, R. Zwahlen); “Serge Boulgakov, un père de l’église moderne”, Paris, June 27–28, 2014 (A. Arjakovsky, B. Hallensleben, A. Mainardi, R. Zwahlen).

boom in the study of Bulgakov in the English-speaking world in the last decade, and more translations are still being published.⁴

Sergii Bulgakov—A Preeminent Theologian of the Twentieth Century

A famous rival of Lenin in the field of economics, and, according to Wassily Kandinsky, “one of the deepest experts on religious life”⁵ in the so-called “Silver Age” of Russian art and culture, Bulgakov, professor of national economics, publicist, politician, and later Orthodox theologian and priest, became a significant “global player” in both the Orthodox diaspora and the ecumenical movement of the 1920s and 1930s. Today we discover him as one of the most important theologians of the twentieth century: Sergii Bulgakov, Karl Barth, and Hans Urs von Balthasar have been called “sort of [a] triumvirate over modern systematic theology in Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and Roman Catholicism.”⁶ After him, “upon the branches of Orthodoxy young shoots” grew,⁷ many insights by well-known Orthodox theologians like Vladimir Lossky or John Zizioulas trace their roots back to Bulgakov,⁸ and he prepared the ground for ecumenical encounters to this day.

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- 4 For translations into other languages, mainly into French, Italian, and German, see Sergei N. Bulgakov, *Bibliographie. Werke, Briefwechsel und Übersetzungen*, vol. 3, ed. Barbara Hallensleben and Regula Zwahlen, *Werke* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2017). Updates are published on the website of the Sergii Bulgakov Research Center at the University of Fribourg: <https://www.unifr.ch/sergij-bulgakov> (access 2024/01/26).
 - 5 Andreas Hüneke, ed., *Der Blaue Reiter. Eine Geschichte in Dokumenten* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2011), 48. On Kandinsky and Bulgakov, see Regula M. Zwahlen, “Sergij Bulgakov und Vasilij Kandinskij, ‘über das Geistige in der Kunst’,” in *Veni, Sancte Spiritus! Festschrift für Barbara Hallensleben zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Guido Vergauwen and Andreas Steingruber (Münster: Aschendorff, 2018), Russian version: Regula M. Zwahlen, “Blagoslovenie. O dukhovnom v iskusstve. Pereklichka idei protoiereia Sergiia Bulgakova i Vasiliiia Kandinskogo,” *Dary* (2021/2022), 18–31; Antoine Arjakovsky, “Sergii Bulgakov and Wassily Kandinsky: Two Visionaries of the Wisdom of God,” *The Wheel* 26/27 (2021), 50–59.
 - 6 Brandon Gallaher, *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology*, Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 11.
 - 7 Sergii Bulgakov, “O tsarstvii Bozhiem [1927],” in *Protoierei Sergii Bulgakov. Put’ Parizhskogo Bogosloviia*, ed. Maksim Kozlov (Moscow: Chram sv. Tatiany pri MGU, 2007), 134.
 - 8 Aristotle Papanikolaou, “From Sophia to Personhood. The Development of 20th Century Orthodox Trinitarian Theology,” *Phronema* 33, no. 2 (2018), 1–20: 19.

Yet, tragically, or perhaps dialectically, Bulgakov's most prominent younger colleagues Georges Florovsky (1893–1979) and Vladimir Lossky (1903–1953) established the polarizing narrative of their “neo-patristic turn” mainly against Bulgakov's “sophiology.”⁹ This standard narrative requires serious and thorough revision as Rowan Williams', Paul Gavrilyuk's and other works have shown.¹⁰ The insinuation that “modernist” theologians like Bulgakov and Vladimir Soloviev¹¹ have altogether abandoned the Church fathers, and that the “neopatrists” are not indebted to modernity at all is simply false.¹² On the contrary, the “neopatristic” theologians owe their rediscovery and the “return to the Church fathers” to the “modernists,” if not altogether to the “patristic revival” in the Orthodox Church of imperial Russia in the nineteenth century, often accused of being entirely in “Western captivity.” At that time, the Church's clerical academies were translating thousands of patristic texts into

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- 9 Florovsky, for most of his life, refused to criticize Bulgakov and sophiology openly—in his view, their positions were opposed, but they were not enemies: “the encounter of different poles of thought has always been native to theology itself.” See Paul Ladouceur, “Georges Florovsky and Sergius Bulgakov: ‘In Peace Let Us Love One Another,’” in *The Living Christ: The Theological Legacy of Georges Florovsky*, ed. John Chrysavgis and Brandon Gallaher (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 69–85.
 - 10 Rowan Williams, “The theology of Vladimir Nikolaievich Lossky: an exposition and critique” (PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 1975), <http://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid%3A15b86a5d-21f4-44a3-95bb-b8543d326658> (access 2024/01/26); Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Why Sophia? Bulgakov the Theologian,” *The Wheel* 26/27 (2021), 15–16; Nikolaos Asproulis, “La réception de la sagesse dans la sophiologie russe. Rôle et controverses dans l'orthodoxie,” *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 108, no. 2 (2020), 27–48. The entire double issue of *The Wheel* 26/27 (2021), with guest editor Nikolaos Asproulis, is devoted to a critical overview of Bulgakov's legacy.
 - 11 Jeremy Pilch has convincingly demonstrated that Soloviev's “own teaching about deification was rooted in Chalcedonian Christology [...] and in the spirit and teachings of the Church Fathers.” The conclusion that the same is true for Bulgakov is obvious. Jeremy Pilch, “*Breathing the Spirit With Two Lungs*: Deification in the Work of Vladimir Solov'ev,” *Eastern Christian Studies* (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 19.
 - 12 See Pantelis Kalaitzidis, “From the ‘Return to the Fathers’ to the Need for a Modern Orthodox Theology,” *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2010), 5–36. See also Marcus Plested, *Wisdom in Christian Tradition. The Patristic Roots of Modern Russian Sophiology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Nikolaos Asproulis, “Georges Florovsky and Sergius Bulgakov in Dialogue: The Church Fathers, the God-world Relationship and Theological Method,” in *Ex Patribus Lux: Essays on Orthodox Theological Anthropology and Georges Florovsky's Theology*, ed. Nikolaos Asproulis and Olga Sevastyanova (Volos: Volos Academy Publications, 2021), 101–16.

the vernacular.¹³ Paul Gavrilyuk argues that “the debate [...] was not *whether* patristic theology was foundational [...] but rather *how* to engage the patristic tradition this side of modernity.”¹⁴ The Orthodox theologian Metropolitan Kallistos Ware (1934–2022) concluded that one of the “chief tasks of Orthodox theology will be to transcend the dichotomy between the ‘Neo-Patristic’ and the ‘Russian’ schools, considering how the two may be combined, and at the same time to reach out beyond both trends to a fresh vision of theology that combines what is best in both without being limited to either.”¹⁵ Correspondingly, one of the chief tasks of theology in general is, according to Bulgakov, to reach out to a fresh vision of Christian unity beyond confessional boundaries,¹⁶ to build a common “House of Wisdom,” as it were.

The House of Wisdom

What is “the Wisdom of God” all about? In his booklet on *The Wisdom of God*, written for a Western public in 1937, Bulgakov brings to mind that his development of sophiology in the 1930s was not an old pre-revolutionary project over which he brooded as an isolated Russian emigrant; rather, he boldly pre-

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- 13 Patrick Lally Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls: The Ascetic Revolution in Russian Orthodox Thought, 1814–1914* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017), 59. Rather ironically, the somewhat “Protestant” endeavor to translate and popularize ancient Christian texts in order to combat “protestantization,” led to the “patristic turn” of both “modernist” and “neopatristic” thinkers.
 - 14 Gavrilyuk, “Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance,” 3. Kristina Stoeckl made the same point in: Kristina Stoeckl, *Community after Totalitarianism. The Eastern Orthodox Intellectual Tradition and the Philosophical Discourse of Political Modernity* (Frankfurt, Berlin, Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 2008), 103–04.
 - 15 Kallistos Ware, “Orthodox theology today: trends and tasks,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 12, no. 2 (2012), 114. One of the first recent attempts is Marcus Plested’s *Wisdom in Christian Tradition. The Patristic Roots of Modern Russian Sophiology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2022).
 - 16 Sergej N. Bulgakov, “U kladezja Iakovlja. O real’nom edinstve razdelennoi tserkvi v vere, molitve i tainstvakh,” in *Khristianskoe Vozsoedinenie. Ekumenicheskaia problema v pravoslavnom soznanii. Sbornik statei*, ed. YMCA-Press (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1933), 9–32; Sergej N. Bulgakov, “By Jacob’s Well. On the actual unity of the apparently divided Church: in prayer, faith, and sacrament,” in *A Bulgakov Anthology*, ed. James Pain and Nicolas Zernov (London: SPCK, 1976), 100–13; see also Barbara Hallensleben, “Ökumene als Pfingstgeschehen bei Sergij N. Bulgakov,” in *Ökumene. Das eine Ziel—die vielen Wege.*, ed. Iso Baumer and Guido Vergauwen (Freiburg im Üechtland: 1995), 147–80.

sented it alongside and in dialogue with, for example, contemporary Catholic “Modernism” and “Barthianism,” as a modern theological conception which, in his view, does nothing less than to link *all* the current “dogmatic and practical problems of modern Christian dogmatics and ascetics,” and indeed the problems of Christian theology and culture as whole.¹⁷ But

as a result of the atmosphere of sensation or scandal [...] for [Western readers], of course, [the words ‘Sophia’ and ‘sophiology’] are tinged with the peculiar exotic Oriental flavour of ‘gnosis’, and, indeed, smack of every sort of rubbish and superstition. No one seems to suspect that in fact we are talking about the very ‘essence of Christianity’ [[“Das Wesen des Christentums”]], that is a problem which is even now being discussed by the whole of Western [[“academic”]] Christendom [[Harnack, Schleiermacher, Barth etc. etc.]].¹⁸

Bulgakov located the essential problem of contemporary Christian theology in a one-sided focus on God *or* the world, transcendence *or* immanence, God *or* man. Therefore he, together with some of his colleagues, criticized Karl Barth’s “non-acceptance of the world” in the early 1930s,¹⁹ because in his view “in Christianity is born the new sense of life that one should not flee the world but that Christ is coming into the world for the marriage feast of the Lamb, the feast of Divine-Humanity.”²⁰ For Bulgakov, the essence of Christianity is expressed above all in the dogma of Chalcedon on God-humanity, which defines the complex relationship between divine and human nature that are united unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably, according to the Chalcedonian *Horos*: “The roots of this dogma penetrate to the very heart of heaven and earth, in the inmost depths of the Holy Trinity and into the creaturely nature of human beings.”²¹

17 Sergei Bulgakov, *Sophia. The Wisdom of God. An Outline of Sophiology* (Hudson, N. Y.: Lindisfarne Press, 1993), 3, 13, 25 ff.

18 Bulgakov, *Sophia*, 12–13. The double brackets contain words in Bulgakov’s original manuscript that are not rendered in the English translation. Bulgakov’s Russian text and a new German translation will be published by Barbara Hallensleben and Regula M. Zwahlen: Sergij Bulgakov, *Sophia. Die Weisheit Gottes* (Münster: Aschendorff, forthcoming).

19 Regula M. Zwahlen, “Over a Beer with Barth and Bulgakov,” accessed July 20, 2023, *Public Orthodoxy* (2022). <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/07/18/over-a-beer-with-barth-and-bulgakov-cosmodicy/> (access 2024/01/26).

20 Sergius Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God* (Cambridge, 2008), xv.

21 Bulgakov, *Sophia*, 18.

According to Paul Valliere, it was no surprise that Bulgakov, as author of a *Philosophy of Economy* (1912) with its main question “of man in nature and nature in man,”²² ended up with dogmatic theology, because “what is the dogma of the incarnation of the Word, after all, if not a bridge to the world?”²³ To this extent, by answering the question “Why Sophia, why is it necessary?” we see “the dogmatic theologian, the thinker for whom thought begins and ends with the incarnation of the Logos in Christ.”²⁴

But why should anyone bother to build a House of Wisdom, “since Wisdom found no place where to dwell, a dwelling was made for her in the heavens. When Wisdom came to make her abode among the children of men, and found no habitation, Wisdom returned to her place, and took up her abode among the angels” (1 Enoch 42:2)?²⁵ By engaging in the pre-revolutionary political turmoil of his country, always trying to establish or support Christian politics above party lines, Bulgakov experienced the homelessness of wisdom on earth and the impasses of political policy. It was not the external lack of success of his political efforts that drove him to change direction and become a priest. Rather, the fundamental limitations of human political efforts shaped Bulgakov’s insight that politics is only possible by recognizing its limitations. And in his view, the one “institution” able or even called to prevent overconfidence or even self-deification of human politics,²⁶ was the Church—simply because it is not only a human institution (which as such should, in Bulgakov’s view, remain self-critical and in strict separation from the state²⁷), but also the divine-human

22 Sergej N. Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy: the World as Household* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 35; Sergei N. Bulgakov, “From Marxism to Sophiology,” *Review of Religion* 1, no. 4 (1937), 364.

23 Paul Valliere, “The Theology of Culture in Late Imperial Russia,” in *Sacred stories*, ed. Mark D. Steinberg and Heather J. Coleman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 391. See also Bulgakov, “From Marxism to Sophiology,” 364.

24 Papanikolaou, “Why Sophia? Bulgakov the Theologian,” 16.

25 Sergii Bulgakov mentioned the text in his lecture “Apocalypticism and Socialism. Religious-Philosophical Parallels” in 1910 and published it later in his anthology “The Two Cities. Studies about the Nature of Social Ideals” (Moscow 1911, in Russian), see also fn. 27 below.

26 Regula M. Zwahlen, “Sergii Bulgakov’s Reinvention of Theocracy for a Democratic Age,” *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 3, no. 2 (2020), 193.

27 Sergii Bulgakov, *The Apocalypse of John. An Essay in Dogmatic Interpretation*, trans. Mike Whittom (Münster: Aschendorff, 2019), 98. The discernment of “the difference between a political community and *ecclesia*” (see Aristotle Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political. Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 161) is at the very core of Bulgakov’s political reflections, es-

Body of Christ, the house of wisdom among men.²⁸ In this sense, in a Chalcedonian relationship to homeless Wisdom, Bulgakov's vision of Wisdom that "has built her house, hewn her seven pillars" (Prov 9:1) grew stronger: Wisdom, who found a place to dwell in creation (Prov 8:26–31). The Church "is in the world, without being of this world; it lives and moves within history, without drawing its roots from history, but rather from the eschaton, inasmuch as it constitutes an 'icon' of the eschaton and a 'symbol' of the Kingdom."²⁹ Moreover, in Bulgakov's vision of Christian union,

in the Father's house there are many mansions, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are different, and so are the ministries. There are undoubtedly very strong differences between [different] types of Christian piety, which perhaps make mutual understanding difficult, but one must be patient and wise in order to be able to learn from the other and not to persist in one-sided and vain arrogance. This is what our Christianity demands of us.³⁰

Thus, the title of this volume, and of the conference "Building the House of Wisdom. Sergii Bulgakov 150 Years After His Birth" (September 2–4, 2021, University of Fribourg, Switzerland), from which it emerges, honors Bulgakov as an architect of the "house of wisdom" with "many mansions," which is also a synonym of the "city that is to come" (Hebr 13:14).³¹ In doing so, we go beyond the reverent commemoration of his 150th birthday and take on the task of co-designing a "house of thought" within the human city that the community of authors symbolically represent in their linguistic, cultural, and confessional

pecially in his book *Dva Grada* (The Two Cities) (1911). To date, the work has only been translated into German: Sergij Bulgakov, *Die zwei Städte. Studien zur Natur gesellschaftlicher Ideale*, ed. Barbara Hallensleben and Regula M. Zwahlen, *Sergij Bulgakov: Werke* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2020).

- 28 Barbara Hallensleben, "Die Weisheit hat ein Haus gebaut (Spr. 9,1). Die Kirche in der Theologie von Hans Urs von Balthasar und Sergij Bulgakov," in *Wer ist die Kirche? Symposium zum 10. Todesjahr von Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1999), 33–61; Barbara Hallensleben, "La sagesse a bâti sa maison (Pr 9, 1): l'église dans la théologie de Hans Urs von Balthasar et Serge Boulgakov," in *Visage de Dieu, visages de l'homme* (Paris: Parole et silence et Éditions du Carmel, 2003), 345–66.
- 29 Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012), 123.
- 30 Sergej N. Bulgakov, "Die Wesensart der russischen Kirche," *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 3 (1930), 181.
- 31 Bulgakov, *Die zwei Städte*, 13.

diversity. Indeed, Bulgakov's sophiology is a daring attempt to reconcile God and the world, religion and secular thought.

Sergii Bulgakov—A Theologian for the Twenty-First Century

In a text about „Orthodox theology in the twenty-first century,” the English bishop and Eastern Orthodox theologian Metropolitan Kallistos Ware expressed his view „that there will be a *shift in the central focus of theological inquiry from ecclesiology to anthropology*. [...] The key question will be, not only, „What is the Church?’ but also and more fundamentally, ‘*What is the human person?*’”³² Bulgakov addressed both questions because, in his view, they are intertwined. Human persons are inescapably relational and „each man enlarges itself infinitely into the life of others, ‘the *communio sanctorum*,’” and „humanity is one in Christ” and the Church is the Body of Christ.³³

Bulgakov's influence on Orthodox ecclesiology of the twentieth century is indisputable, but in view of Ware's assessment, we are happy that this volume—alongside topics such as personhood, ecology, political theology, and trinitarian ontology—prominently contributes to Bulgakov studies with regard to theological anthropology. This does not come as a surprise, since we asked our speakers to critically correlate Bulgakov's thought with current theological and philosophical, political, social, and economic issues. Some thirty-three authors, both established Bulgakov researchers and competitively chosen young researchers, have brought forth a wide arrange of new creative ways to critically engage with Bulgakov's work. Their chapters are arranged in five large parts:

- *Personhood and Anthropology*—with chapters on Christology (Rowan Williams, David Bentley Hart), on Bulgakov's concepts of deification (Mark

32 Kallistos Ware, *Orthodox Theology in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Doxa & Praxis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012), 17, 25 (emphasis added).

33 Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (with a foreword by Thomas Hopko) (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 1, 5; see also Michael A. Meerson, „Sergei Bulgakov's Philosophy of Personality,” in *Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Judith Deutsch Kornblatt and Richard F. Gustafson (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 139–53; Regula M. Zwahlen, „Different concepts of personality: Nikolai Berdiaev and Sergei Bulgakov,” *Studies in East European Thought* 64, no. 3–4 (2012), 183–204; Konstantin M. Antonov, „Problema lichnosti v myshlenii protoiereia Sergiia Bulgakova i problematika bogoslovskogo personalizma v XX veke,” *Khristianskoe chtenie* 4 (2017), 178–206.

- McInroy), faith and prayer (Ivan Ilin), kenosis (Sarah Livick-Moses; Jack Pappas), creativity (Deborah Casewell), and mangelhood (Justin Coyle);
- *Politics, Economics, and Ecology*; with chapters on Bulgakov within intellectual history (Catherine Evtuhov and Regula Zwahlen, Nikos Kouremenos, Alexei Kozyrev), and his contributions to modern Political (Antoine Arjakovsky, Nathaniel Wood), Economic, and Ecological Thought (Dionysios Skliris, Tikhon Vasilyev, Austin Foley Holmes);
 - *Sophiology*; with chapters on the philosophical and theological roots of Bulgakov's Sophiology (Liubov Petrova, Natalia Vaganova) and its implications for contemporary questions of theological anthropology (Joshua Heath, Dario Colombo, Paul Gavriluk);
 - *Creation and Ontology*; with chapters on Bulgakov's examinations of Marx's materialism (Caleb Henry) and Schelling's „positive Philosophie“ (Taylor Ross), and on the relationship of his Chalcedonian Ontology to Trinitarian Theology (Brandon Gallaher, Antonio Bergamo, Nikolaos Asproulis, John Milbank).
 - *Ecumenical Perspectives*; with chapters on Bulgakov's thought on Augustine (Pavel Khondzinsky) and on his (possible) contributions to Liberation Theology (Graham McGeoch), Protestant Theology (Oliver Dürr), and Ecumenical Theology in general (Paul Ladouceur, Adalberto Mainardi).

All chapters resonate well with Metropolitan Kallistos' suggestion to develop a theological anthropology that focuses on the human being as a mystery, image and likeness of God, and mediator between heaven and earth (“priest of creation”).³⁴ With regard to the latter, Bulgakov's work is about “our true relation as human beings to the material world”³⁵ and about “a more positive relationship between person and nature.”³⁶ If, in Ware's view, the Greek Fathers' emphasis on negative theology requires a “negative anthropology” with a focus on the indefinable character and dignity of the person,³⁷ we

34 Ware, *Orthodox Theology*, 31–32, 43.

35 Ware, *Orthodox Theology*, 27. On the “importance of the material world and collective Christian social action,” see Mark Roosien, “The Common Task: Eucharist, Social Action, and the Continuity of Bulgakov's Thought,” *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 3, no. 1 (2020), 71–88.

36 Papanikolaou, “From Sophia to Personhood,” 20: “rather than the diametrical opposition that is implied especially in the theologies of Lossky and Zizioulas.”

37 Ware, *Orthodox Theology*, 33.

would add that it requires a “negative cosmology” as well.³⁸ An “ecological turn” based on Bulgakov’s view of an anti-positivist but not anti-scientific, apophatic dimension of creation is represented by several contributions to this volume.³⁹

Metropolitan Kallistos also points out that “anthropology is a chapter or subdivision of Christology.”⁴⁰ In this sense, it seems to be no coincidence that the first chapter in this volume, by Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury (2002–2012), considers “Sergii Bulgakov’s Christology and Beyond” and is based on Williams’ keynote as patron of our conference. At the same time, it reminds us of one of his recent books, *Christ the Heart of Creation*, in which he argues that Christ restores

a lost or occluded capacity in humanity, the capacity to be a mediatorial presence in creation, a priestly vocation to nurture the harmony and God-relatedness of the finite order overall and to articulate its deepest meaning in terms of divine gift and divine beauty.⁴¹

In this sense, “Bulgakov in effect claims that hypostatic existence is intrinsically a form of life characterized by *care*: to exist hypostatically is to be in a relationship of ‘nurture’ towards the world that is encountered.”⁴² This is only one example of a fresh reading of Bulgakov’s sophiological theology presented in this volume. However, readers might miss the odd subject that could have been examined while dealing with Bulgakov’s immense work, such as the abovementioned

38 Barbara Hallensleben, “Kosmodizee. Das Böse im apokalyptisch-geschichtstheologischen Horizont bei Sergij N. Bulgakov,” in *Das Böse in der russischen Kultur*, ed. Bodo Zelinsky (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2008), 21.

39 See also John Chryssavgis, *Creation as Sacrament. Reflections on Spirituality and Ecology*, London 2019; Laura Marie Hartman, *The Christian Consumer*, Oxford 2011; Gayle Woloschak, “Ecology, Evolution, and Bulgakov,” in: Daniel Buxhoeveden, Gayle Woloschak, eds., *Science and the Eastern Orthodox Church* (London: Routledge, 2011), 53–64; Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace*, Oxford 2013; Bruce V. Foltz, *The Noetics of Nature: Environmental Philosophy and the Holy Beauty of the Visible* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 88–112 (chapter “The Resurrection of Nature: Environmental Metaphysics in Sergei Bulgakov’s Philosophy of Economy”).

40 Ware, *Orthodox Theology*, 39.

41 Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018), 223.

42 Rowan Williams, “Sergii Bulgakov’s Christology and Beyond,” see below, p. 25.

tioned ecclesiology,⁴³ the theology of language and the name,⁴⁴ his theology of history,⁴⁵ the social dimension,⁴⁶ and other topics. Therefore, we hope that the present volume will inspire other scholars to carry the field of Bulgakov studies forward by exploring further dimensions.

Lastly, Bulgakov would certainly subscribe to Kallistos Ware's final suggestion to replace Descartes' principle *Cogito, ergo sum* with the principle *Amo, ergo sum* ("I love, therefore I am") or even *Amor, ergo sum* ("I am loved, therefore I am"): "If we can make love the starting-point and the end-point in our doctrine of personhood, our Christian witness in the twenty-first century will prove

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- 43 See Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox theology in a New Key* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 347 ff.; Robert F. Slesinski, *The Theology of Sergius Bulgakov* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017), 207 ff.; Hallensleben, "Die Weisheit hat ein Haus gebaut (Spr. 9,1). Die Kirche in der Theologie von Hans Urs von Balthasar und Sergij Bulgakov," 33–61; Pavel Khondzinskii, "The Personalistic Ecclesiology of Archpriest Sergey Bulgakov, Archpriest Georges Florovsky and V. N. Lossky (in Russian)," *Nauchnyi zhurnal Sankt-Peterburgskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi* 5 (2020), 177–200; Brandon Gallaher, "L'action eucharistique catholique: l'ecclésiologie du père Serge Boulgakov," *Contacts. Revue Française de l'Orthodoxie* 279–80 (2022), 323–40; Yulia Antipina, "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Fr. Sergius Bulgakov's Project for Partial Intercommunion," *The Quarterly Journal of St. Philaret's Institute* 45 (2023), pp. 29–44.
- 44 See e.g.: Joshua Heath, "Sergii Bulgakov's Linguistic Trinity," *Modern Theology* 37, no. 4 (2021), 888–912; Research will be certainly enhanced by the recent translation of Bulgakov's *Philosophy of the Name* by Thomas Allen Smith (Northern Illinois University Press 2022).
- 45 Bulgakov, *The Apocalypse*; Myroslaw Tataryn, "History Matters: Bulgakov's Sophianic Key," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 49, no. 1–2 (2005) 203–18.
- 46 Sergej N. Bulgakov, "Social Teaching in Modern Russian Orthodox Theology," in *A Bulgakov Anthology*, ed. James Pain and Nicolas Zernov (London: Westminster Press, 1976); reprint, *Orthodoxy and Modern Society*, ed. Robert Bird. New Haven, Conn.: Variable Press, 1995. 5–25); Sergii Bulgakov, "The Soul of Socialism," in *Sergii Bulgakov: Towards a Russian Political Economy*, ed. Rowan Williams (Edinburgh: 1999); Katharina Anna Breckner, "Vladimir Solov'ev as the Mentor of Anti-Marxian Socialism: Concepts of Socialism by S. N. Trubetskoj, S. N. Bulgakov and N. A. Berdiaev," in *Vladimir Solov'ev, Reconciler and Polemicist*, ed. Wil van den Bercken, Manon de Courten, and Evert van der Zweerde (Leuven, Paris: 2000), 447–60; Josephien van Kessel, "Sophiology and Modern Society. Sergei Bulgakov's Conceptualization of an Alternative Modern Society" (PhD dissertation, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, 2020); Regula M. Zwahlen, "The Revolutionary Spirit of Revelation: Sergii Bulgakov's Personalist Sociology," *The Wheel* 26/27 (2021), 60–64; Roosien, "The Common Task: Eucharist, Social Action, and the Continuity of Bulgakov's Thought," *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 3,1 (2020), 71–88.

altogether creative and life-giving.”⁴⁷ Metropolitan Kallistos was probably not aware that Bulgakov made the same suggestion almost exactly a hundred years ago in a piece on “Nature in the Philosophy of Vladimir Soloviev” (1910): “One can also adopt the metaphysical formula: *amo, ergo sum*, because in love life finds its most sublime manifestation.”⁴⁸ That is why Bulgakov was and is a theologian of both the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries.

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47 Ware, *Orthodox Theology*, 49. This is exactly what the late Metropolitan of Pergamon John D. Zizioulas has suggested in his very influential *Communion and Otherness. Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 89.

48 Sergej N. Bulgakov, “Priroda v filosofii Vl. Solov’eva,” *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii* 105 (1910), 1911; Sergij Bulgakov, “Die Natur in der Philosophie Vladimir Solov’evs,” in *Die Philosophie der Wirtschaft*, ed. Sergij Bulgakov (Münster: Aschendorff, 2014 [1910]), 271. See also Andrew Louth, “Sergii Bulgakov and the Task of Theology,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 74 (2009), fn. 19. For Bulgakov on love, see Michael A. Meerson, *The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1998), 169 ff.; Johannes Miroslav Oravec, “Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov: God’s Love-Humility for His Creation,” in *God As Love. The Concept and Spiritual Aspects of Agape in Modern Russian Religious Thought* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2014), 292 ff.