The "West" as the Archetypal Enemy in the Theological and Philosophical Discourse of Orthodox Christianity
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In the modern period, for eastern Christianity "the west" has been a foil which served to differentiate and distance. The historical roots of this differentiation go back to the beginnings of the divergence between the Christian east and west. For centuries, there was almost no contact between Byzantium and Rome. In Russia, the "Slavophiles" and the "Westernizers" of the 19th century were a manifestation of the long-running debate about the direction of Russia. In the Balkans, nationally-oriented, anti-western theological positions emerged. The insight which emerged in the 20th century that the west also influences anti-western positions and the dissolution of the hard divide between the "east" and the "west" have led to a restructuring of Orthodox theology, which also holds the potential of an opening up.

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Introduction

In the modern period, for eastern Christianity "the west" has been a foil – though admittedly not the only one – which served to differentiate and distance, and which helped to emphasize the uniqueness of the eastern Christian tradition. The west was characterized by religious creed (the "confession") and religious practice (primarily the liturgy). It encompassed the people, churches, theologies, and territories shaped by the Roman Catholic and the Protestant traditions. The "east" refers here to the Orthodox religion of the Byzantine tradition, which by the 19th century was under Russian dominance in eastern Europe, while in the southeast of the continent it gradually emerged from Ottoman dominance and organized itself in line with the newly emerging nation-states. Other traditions which would be worth investigating with regard to their perception of the west will not be discussed here (such as pre-Chalcedonian Christianity in Armenia, or the societies in Bosnia and Albania which were primarily influenced by Islam).

The perception of the west in eastern Europe is shaped by a particular interpretation of history. In this interpretation, various historical events and developments in relations between the Christian east and west are interpreted as being connected and as part of a deliberate campaign. In terms of content, this perception is characterized by such terms as betrayal, hunger for power and treachery, which are defined as the dominant and guiding characteristics of the west. Due to its increasingly political and military dominance, over time the west was increasingly perceived as a threat. This view of the west also manifested itself in the Orthodox church and Orthodox theology. The expansion of the western church into the east by establishing church structures, the claims of western scholasticism-based philosophy and theology regarding its own validity, and the increasingly dominant position of western culture in the Christian world, as well as the encroachment of Islamic structures of rule into Orthodox territory (Media Link #ab) resulted in a distancing and the increasingly clear emergence of an independent identity, which was very heavily defined by its opposition to the west.
This negative view of the west existed long before the modern period. Even in the present it remains dominant in many areas of politics and society in eastern Europe. As there is a significant ecclesial and theological element to this perspective, it cannot be understood without taking into account church-historical events and their interpretations.

### Historical Developments Leading to the Emergence of "East" and "West" in Europe

As regards the Christian church, events from the end of the Roman Empire onward were shaped by an increasing alienation between the west and the east of that empire. The west, which had originally received Christianity in the Greek language, increasingly switched to Latin. A Latin theological terminology developed; Greek was replaced by Latin as the language of the liturgy; and western theologians created their own works in Latin independently of eastern theological thought. In the east, the Greek language gained a dominant position as the language of Christianity, after the Syrian language had declined in significance due to political and church developments, and had become isolated. In the debates of the 4th and 5th centuries regarding the Trinity and Christology, using such words as "person", "nature" and "hypostasis" prevailed that was influenced by Greek philosophy, and it was adopted by the imperial church.

At the same time, the popes increasingly claimed a position of preeminence in the church. This view of their supreme authority became apparent for the first time with Leo I (died 461)(Media Link #ac). In subsequent centuries, it repeatedly resulted in conflicts between western and eastern Christianity. In 691, the Council in Trullo made a number of decisions on church law that contradicted Roman customs. The initial response of the pope was to not recognize the decisions. Subsequent councils in the west (such as Frankfurt in 794, and Aachen in 809), which were also an expression of the growing power of the Franconian Empire, took a strong stance against the decisions and the customs of the Greek church.

The debates about the existence and the veneration of images in Christianity, the so-called Byzantine Iconoclasm (ca. 725–843), made clear that Christological discussions had not been resolved. At the church-political level, iconoclasm resulted in popes increasingly turning towards the increasingly powerful Franconians, instead of the Byzantine emperor, as their natural protector and ally. At the same time, the Byzantine Empire was increasingly threatened from the south and the southeast by Arab tribes; northern Africa fell to Islam. These two developments caused the unity of the Roman Empire to finally disintegrate. The Mediterranean was no longer the natural and central space of Christendom, especially given that its southern coast was no longer Christian. The focus of Christendom shifted to the north, creating the conditions for the emergence of a "west", which was defined by the latinitas and which differentiated itself from the Byzantine Empire. Eastern Christendom also expanded northward from the late-10th century onward with the "Baptism of the Rus", the conversion of the eastern Slavic tribes to Christianity. The Muscovite empire which was already emerging from the Rus remained for several centuries the only state with an Orthodox majority population after the fall of Constantinople and the end of the Byzantine Empire.

The year 1054 is usually identified as the year in which the churches separated. Even though more recent research has frequently argued that this year was not decisive for the schism, it cannot be denied that it constitutes a peak in a long history of alienation between the two traditions of the Christian church. The events which occurred in the context of the Crusades, particularly the conquest and plundering of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, further deepened the divide. This event is perceived to be one of many points which illustrate the treachery of the west. It is claimed that, in periods which were politically and militarily difficult for the east, the west (or specifically the pope) capitalized on these weaknesses and used them to its advantage. The history of Kievian Rus also features events which appear to support this view. As the Tatars attacked the Kievan Rus from the southeast in the early 13th century, the Swedes and the Teutonic Knights advanced into the territory of the Rus from the northwest at practically the same time. These events, like the subsequent attacks of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and ultimately the invasion of the German army in 1941, are interpreted as deliberate and planned attempts by the west to subjugate the Orthodox east. According to this interpretation, the pursuit of power was always more important to the west than shared Christian faith and its duty to assist Orthodox Christians in their struggles with infidels. In the case of the Byzantine Empire, this perception appears to be ultimately borne out by the circumstances of the fall of Constantinople. Though the east had entered a union with the pope at the Council of Florence (Media Link #ae) in 1439 – it is argued – the west failed to protect the Byzantine capital against the Ottomans. In consequence, Constantinople fell into Muslim hands just a few short years after the union was concluded and the Byzantine Empire came to an end.
As a result of discord with Rome, anti-Latin polemic developed into its own genre in Byzantium, just as in the west writings contra errores Graecorum circulated widely. As Russian church writing was strongly influenced by Byzantium in its early phase, works of this kind also emerged in Russia. The rejection of western theological models of thought was often expressed in anti-Latin church publications.

The accusations levelled against the west in these publications related to a range of areas of church life and theology. As often occurred in church history, people with divergent views were often described as being under Jewish influence. The use of unleavened bread (so-called azyme) for the Eucharist, which became the standard practice in the west, was rejected in the east as a Jewish custom. The controversy regarding azyme was the proximate cause of the schism in 1054. Additionally, the west was accused of being heretical. The western (Latin) version of the Nicene Creed states that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son" (qui ex Patre et Filio procedit). The word "Filioque" is not contained in the Greek original. As this relates to the very mystery of the faith itself, to the question of the being of God, it gave rise to the accusation of western heresy. It was often claimed (though historically inaccurately) that a pope had ordered this addition to the Creed, which thus made papal authority itself the target of criticism. The church structure in the west was viewed as wrong and at variance with tradition, and the west was therefore viewed as schismatic. The "unions" of Rome with Orthodox clerics and sections of the Orthodox faithful, that is, their subordination to papal authority, was also viewed as contradicting ecclesiology. As such unions were actively promoted by the Roman church, the accusation of proselytism – active attempts to attract away individual believers – was made in the east. Finally, the field of theological thought also deserves mention. From the High Middle Ages, theology was heavily influenced by scholasticism in the Latin Church. In the east, where scholasticism had had no comparable effect, this mode of thought was viewed as rationalistic, dead and mechanical. By contrast, their own theology was viewed as mystical, true and alive.

Due to the political circumstances after the separation of the churches, contact between the Christian east and the west remained only sporadic over a long period of time. Greek Christianity, like oriental Christianity and the churches in the Balkans, was under Ottoman rule. While intermittent contact did of course occur, official communication between the two churches all but ceased. The Catholic church made occasional attempts to establish unions with the Christians in the Ottoman Empire. These efforts intensified in the Orient in the 19th century. They were viewed by Orthodox Christianity as an attack against the independence of its church. The appeal of Pope Pius IX (1792–1878) (Media Link #ah), who on the occasion of his installation in 1846 called upon the eastern churches to enter a union with Rome, and the response of the eastern patriarchs are indicative of the kind of inter-church relations which existed until well into the 20th century. The Russian Empire's only experience of the west was of the schism. It had not experienced the shared church history of the first millennium of Christianity. The attempted union in 1441, during which Metropolitan Isidor of Kiev (1380–1463) (Media Link #aj) had attempted to proclaim and implement the Union of Florence in Moscow, ended with the Russian Church withdrawing from the jurisdiction of Constantinople, which it accused of having turned Catholic, and becoming de facto an independent church.

The perception of the west and debates with it regarding the church, theology, and philosophy occurred before the backdrop of these historical events and processes. In the Orthodox world, the west is not just viewed as "the other", but primarily as a hostile "other".

Developments in the Russian Church

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in particular played a central role in the transfer of western thought to Russia – moreover a very one-sided process, with the west taking hardly anything from the east. In Poland-Lithuania, a numerically significant population of Orthodox Christians were living in a Catholic-dominated polity (which also contained a not insignificant number of Calvinists). To make a career in the state apparatus, a Catholic education (or conversion to Catholicism) was indispensable. It was thus not uncommon for Orthodox Christians to convert and avail of a Catholic theological education in the west, sometimes even in Rome itself. Some of them converted back to the Orthodox church after returning home. This enabled the foundation of Orthodox theological training institutions, but it also contributed to the transfer of western Catholic thought – such as in opposition to Calvinism – into Orthodox theology. This did not so much involve the transfer of individual statements, but primarily the adoption of structures, for example, the description of dogma in tracts and in the adoption of scholastic categories. Thus, Latin theology, which was traditionally accused of being too mechanical and of having too little life in it, did indeed have elements which appealed to Orthodox theologians, particularly its internal logic and its systematic nature. These theological influences seeped into Russia from the border regions and present-day
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Pope. Conversely, the Orthodox religion views itself as a holistic church. As the mystical body of Christ, the shepherds and the flock are laypeople, this view continued, had become objects without their own will, who had no option but to carry out the decrees of the Catholic church) had become ossified as a result of formalism and juridicism, which manifested itself in the focus on the pope. The itself influenced by what the Catholic Church in the 18th and 19th centuries looked like – that the western Church (specifically the

When they were adopted by the entire church in a non-formalized process, i.e., when the decisions of councils and synods of bishops were "recognized by the entire community of the church as the voice of the church". This related primarily to icon painting.

At the same time, a strong aversion towards everything new developed. This had consequences in the 17th century, as Patriarch Nikon (1605–1681) had the liturgical books revised, using Greek books as a model. A significant group of priests and laypeople refused to accept this, which resulted in a large schism. The "Old Believers" (in Russian staroobriadtsi, which actually means "old ritualists") split off from the established Orthodox church, which they accused of deviating from the traditions of their forefathers. In reality, the reforms, which related to a small number of superficial aspects of the church service, represented a return to the original eastern customs. Remarkably, the Old Believers accused the mainstream church of being under western influence. This related

Under Tsar Peter I (1672–1725), the Russian state was completely restructured using western states as a model. The administration and the army were modernized, the newly founded capital city received a western name (St Petersburg), and many old traditions were abolished. The church too was radically reformed along western lines (particularly the example of the Protestant churches). The office of Patriarch was abolished and replaced by a committee ("Most Holy Governing Synod"). The attempt was also made to systematize theological training. For the remainder of the 18th century, the church remained under the control of the emperors, who often tried to utilize it for the benefit of the state and the common good, in line with the principles of enlightened despotism. While theological schools and academies were established and the educational level of the clergy gradually improved, the church had little freedom to act independently. It was very tightly intertwined with the structures of the state.

These developments resulted in the emergence in the 19th century of two main directions in the area of the philosophy of religion. On the one hand, there was a movement which viewed Russia's orientation towards the west as the cause of its decline. Russia must, this argument stated, return to its own values and traditions, which had been lost as a result of Russia turning to the west. The development of western Europe showed, the argument continued, that it was wrong to rely on values which are based on humanism and the Enlightenment. The Slavs had their own system of values, it was stated, which should form the basis for the society and which could even serve as an example to the west. These modes of thought primarily employed an idealized concept of the Russian peasant commune (mir) as a foil. This group of thinkers was referred to as "Slavophiles" (in Russian slaviano-fili).

On the other side of the debate were the "Westernizers" (in Russian zapadniki), who took the contrary view that Russia should turn much more towards the west. The west stands for progress, they argued, and Russia could only overcome its stagnation by adopting the values and principles, and also the political model of the west. Here, the west is used as an opposing model to Russia not for the purpose of rejecting it, but as a model for Russia to emulate.

Both of these directions contained significant church and theological components. The Slavophiles were of the view that, in the Orthodox religion, the Slavs possessed the true form of Christianity and that a return to the tradition of the undivided church was the only way forward for the west. Influenced by ideas from Romanticism, for the Slavophiles the simple people played an important role, as they viewed them as a repository of the unadulterated faith and of tradition. Aleksei Khomiakov (1804–1860), one of the foremost religious thinkers of this school, argued that the prescriptions of the church proved their validity and truth only when they were adopted by the entire church in a non-formalized process, i.e., when the decisions of councils and synods of bishops were "recognized by the entire community of the church as the voice of the church". This view was based on the idea – which was itself influenced by what the Catholic Church in the 18th and 19th centuries looked like – that the western Church (specifically the Catholic church) had become ossified as a result of formalism and juridicism, which manifested itself in the focus on the pope. The laypeople, this view continued, had become objects without their own will, who had no option but to carry out the decrees of the pope. Conversely, the Orthodox religion views itself as a holistic church. As the mystical body of Christ, the shepherds and the flock are charged with the task of maintaining the purity of the doctrine in unity and in conciliar communion.
The Westernizers, by contrast, viewed the Orthodox religion as a hindrance to the development of Russia. Some of them took this thought to its logical conclusion and converted (usually to the Catholic church), while others rejected religion altogether. This position played a very important role among the Russian intelligentsia up to the Revolution of 1917. Many of the most important proponents of this view had no contact with the church, which they did not expect to make any useful contribution to overcoming the stagnation in which the state and society found themselves.

These two directions in Russian thought, both of which were defined by their attitude towards the west, had a lasting effect on intellectual debates in 19th-century Russia. The two groups grew very far apart over time. The Slavophiles descended into a virulent conservatism with a strong nationalist tinge, which politically supported the monarchy. By contrast, many of the Westernizers turned to extreme political views, even to anarchism. The various socialist trends in Russia also emerged in this context. For them, religion was no longer a significant issue. While the unsuccessful attempts at revolution and reform in 1905 ended with a victory for the conservative direction, in 1917 the strongly anti-church and anti-nationalist socialist view prevailed. While traces of both directions were still apparent in individual political decisions and actions during the years of the Soviet Union, the tension between these two directions no longer played an important role. However, with the end of the Soviet regime and the Soviet state in 1991, the question regarding the future direction of Russia arose again. Up to the present, both positions are evident in the political sphere and society in Russia; the question regarding Russia's attitude to the west has not been answered in Russia itself, and the various options always have a religious and philosophical component.

Having lived his formative years in imperial Russia, the famous theologian and polymath Pavel Florenskii (1882–1937) remained active in the Soviet Russia up to his arrest and execution. For him, experience was a central element in Orthodox theology. Only those who experience the life of the Orthodox church from the inside can sense the rightness of the Orthodox religion. In a vivid image, Florenskii compared the efforts of people from the west to understand the Orthodox church with an attempt to learn to swim on dry land. The Orthodox religion must be experienced, he argued, it cannot be learned or proved. This suggests that eastern Christianity can only be understood from the inside; every attempt to comprehend it rationally from the outside is doomed to failure, according to this view. A similar view was also adopted by some western theologians; the abstraction associated with the west is contrasted with the eastern principle of experience. For Florenskii, the west did not so much serve as a foil for his own view of the Orthodox religion. Rather he developed an autonomous and authentic eastern variant of philosophy, which criticizes the Kantian understanding of truth as being insufficient by emphasizing its synthesizing all-encompassing nature.

An important philosophical trend which emerged in the early years of emigration after the October Revolution and initially found no resonance in the Soviet Union (but which has had a degree of influence in Russia since the end of the Soviet period) is Eurasianism. This ideology states that, due to its unique geographical, climatic, historical and also religious characteristics, Russia belongs neither to Europe nor to Asia. It is "Eurasia", a special space between the two continents. Developing this idea further, a model of history emerged which integrated the history of Russia from the Tatar conquests to the October Revolution into the concept of its Eurasian peculiarity and destiny. Eurasianism, which stands in the tradition of the Slavophiles of the 19th century, must be viewed in the context of other civilization-critical understandings of history and culture in 20th-century Europe, and similar ideas have also repeatedly emerged since then – Huntington's idea of a "clash of civilizations" is ultimately also a variation of this idea.

Reception in the Balkans

The attitude of rejection towards the west, which was characteristic of the Slavophiles, can also be observed outside Russia, particularly in the Orthodox churches in the Balkans. During the course of the 19th century, the territories over which these churches were spread gradually separated from the Ottoman Empire and formed new nation-states. Thus, independent churches emerged in Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Rumania, which in general were very nationally oriented. The Balkan Slavs (Serbia and Bulgaria) in particular had been supported by Russia while they had been under Turkish rule, with (among other things) students from these churches being allowed to study at Russian theological institutes. In this way, the ideas of the Slavophiles also spread to Serbia and Bulgaria. After 1917, Belgrade was a particularly common destination for Russian emigres, who tended to be very conservative both politically and as regards the church. These influences played an important role in the emerging Serbian theology. A Russian seminary was established, and the theological faculty founded at the University of Belgrade in 1920 was dominated by Russian professors in the early years of its existence.
Two figures played important roles in Serbian theology in the 20th century: Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović (1881–1956) (➔ Media Link #a2) and the monk Justin Popović (1894–1979) (➔ Media Link #b0). While Velimirović, who became a bishop in 1919, played an active role in public life mainly during the interwar period, Popović became active later on and away from the public sphere. Both came under pressure from the communist authorities after 1945. Velimirović never returned to Yugoslavia (➔ Media Link #b1) and lived out the remainder of his life in the USA. Popović was removed from the university and lived for decades in a remote monastery in Serbia. The theological ideas of both men featured a pronounced distancing from the west.

For Bishop Velimirović – who did not leave behind a fully developed theological system but instead produced numerous occasional papers – the emphasis lay on Serbia, a people that is geographically situated between east and west (by "east" he was referring to the Asian peoples and religions). He saw the religious ideal as being achieved in the simple Serbian peasant. He described the house of the Serbian peasant as the blueprint of the Orthodox monastery. And, according to him, the balance between the divine and the human was as ideal in the Serbian Orthodox religion as it had been in Jesus Christ himself. The west, by contrast, had made the mistake of overemphasizing the human element, he argued, while the (Asian) east only saw the divine and thus completely neglected the human dimension. The concept of the Orthodox religion as an ideal religion between two extremes – in this case between Asia and Europe, in other cases often between Catholicism and Protestantism – clearly emerges again.

In a sense, Velimirović put this theoretical concept into practice. Between the two world wars, the "Bogomoljci" (which roughly means "Worshippers of God") movement played a very significant role in Serbian life. It was an Orthodox spiritual movement of laypeople, which had thousands of members. It had been brought to the Vojvodina region by nonconformist Protestant groups, particularly the Nazarenes, and initially took hold among the German-speaking inhabitants of this ethnically mixed region, before subsequently spreading to Serbians, who through it acquired habits such as collective Bible study, singing and prayer, and demanded regular sermons from their Orthodox priests. As this phenomenon was viewed with suspicion by the Orthodox church and its representatives, many Serbs converted to the Nazarenes. The Bogomoljci formed in reaction to this trend. They acted within the Orthodox church, though they were constantly subjected to criticism. The situation only stabilized after Bishop Velimirović was appointed by the church leadership to liaise with the Bogomoljci. A centre was established under his supervision in the city of Kragujevac, which gained attention through its numerous publications. The training of lay-preachers was made more formal and the movement was brought closer to the church. Large gatherings of the Bogomoljci (sabori) were held almost annually. This movement also resulted in the revival of Serbian monasticism. Numerous members of the movement joined monasteries. However, the Bogomoljci movement went into decline after the Second World War.

The ideology of the Bogomoljci was not so much defined by its view of the west as by its (positive) evaluation of Serbian traditions. It was a successful attempt to introduce western pietist forms into a church of the eastern tradition. In this way, it was possible to fulfil a need of the faithful, which they had developed through their encounter with the Nazarenes. However, the west was not really an explicitly positive model here. Rather it provided the impetus for the development of this pietist practice in the Orthodox religion. However, such phenomena remained an exception, even though, for example, the "Zoi" movement in Greece was a similar phenomenon.

The other theologian referred to, Justin Popović, worked under completely different conditions. During the interwar period, he was sent to various countries to be educated. His studies in Greece clearly had the biggest influence on him. Popović became a well-known dogmatician at the University of Belgrade, but he was forced to leave the university after the communists came to power and he withdrew to a monastery. During his years at the monastery, he contributed to the church primarily through his writings (some of which were published abroad while others were published posthumously) and even more importantly through his circle of adherents, of young men, to whom he gave spiritual guidance and who subsequently became professors at the theological faculty in Belgrade and/or bishops. They are at present the most prominent and the most active members of the episcopate in the Serbian Orthodox church.
The perspective of Popović and many of his adherents is defined by a radically negative view of the west. According to this view, the west is godless and heretical; it is fundamentally incapable of being Christian because the western churches have dispensed with the fundamental principles of the shared Christian inheritance. Basically, this is a reappearance of the types of arguments against the west which can be found in earlier centuries. In the Orthodox religion, by contrast, this inheritance has always endured and still exists today, the argument continues. Following this logic, one of Popović’s adherents published a textbook on patrology, which, according to the publication plan, deals with the western Church Fathers up to the 11th century and with the eastern Fathers up to the 20th century. He thus asserts that the only possibility of salvation for the west is a return to the Orthodox church. If it does not do this, he argues, it is doomed, in spite of all its supposed strengths and advantages.

Similar convictions can still be found today in Serbian theology and in public discourse. In particular, the political events and developments of the last few decades, such as the wars resulting from the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the confrontations over Kosovo, are viewed from this perspective. The Serbian Bishop Artemije Radaslavijević (*1935) (Media Link #b7), who was in charge of the diocese of Kosovo, and other dignitaries repeatedly stated that the Serbian position is the just one and therefore cannot fail, in spite of the obvious military superiority of NATO. In the face of the technological superiority of the west, they point to the putative spiritual superiority of the Orthodox religion. This interpretation is thus not only of relevance to the church and theology, but also to society as a whole.

The East in the West

Russian theology experienced a rupture due to the Revolution of 1917 and the events which followed it, though it continued to develop thereafter outside Russia, albeit in a reduced form. Many thousands of Russians left the country in the years after the establishment of the Soviet regime, often accompanied by their priests and bishops, and many other religious intellectuals were expelled from the country by the new government. Centres of Russian Orthodox theology emerged abroad, initially in Belgrade and Paris (in addition to other places like Berlin and Sofia), and subsequently also in the United States after the Second World War. Additionally, an independent Orthodox clerical hierarchy formed, the so-called "Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia" (ROCOR). The Russian hierarchs organized in exile in this church proved to be particularly conservative. They propounded a monarchist view and lived in isolation from the host societies in western Europe and north America. The Church Outside of Russia did not re-join the Moscow patriarchate until 2007. The two academic institutions which should be named in this context (and which were not subordinate to the hierarchy of the ROCOR) were the Institut Saint-Serge in Paris and St. Vladimir’s Seminary in New York (Media Link #b8). Through their contacts in and with the west, they contributed to a particular form of Orthodox theology.

The institute in Paris was founded in 1924. The Paris Orthodox metropolitan wished to establish an institution to train priests, which were in demand due to the large number of Russians living in Paris and France. From humble beginnings, the institute quickly developed into one of the most important Orthodox training centres, at which the most famous theologians of their time worked. Among these were Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944) (Media Link #b9), Georges Florovsky, Nicolas Afanassieff (1893–1966) (Media Link #ba), Alexander Schmemann (1921–1983) (Media Link #bb) and John Meyendorff (1926–1992) (Media Link #bc) to name a few. On the one hand, the Orthodox theologians influenced Catholic theology in France (the Nouvelle Théologie deserves particular mention in this regard), while, on the other hand, it was forced to engage with the thinking of western theology. In the case of Bulgakov, this occurred through strong ecumenical engagement with Anglicans, which even brought him to the point of suggesting intercommunion at an ecumenical gathering which he attended. Georges Florovsky, who concentrated on church history, got involved primarily in multilateral ecumenism and for many decades he was the most prominent and most active Orthodox theologian in the ecumenical movement.

However, of central importance to Orthodox theology were Florovsky’s efforts to overcome "school theology", Orthodox theology which had been influenced by western models of thought and which could be found in the theological schools and textbooks throughout the Orthodox world. Florovsky suggested a return to the theology of the (Church) Fathers, a view which he expressed clearly for the first time and to a very enthusiastic response at the Congress of Orthodox Theologians in Athens in 1936. He sharply criticized the adoption of models of western theological thought because – he argued – they no longer related to the church, but had developed their own autonomy. This concept of the "pseudomorphosis" or the "Babylonian captivity" of Orthodox theology met with great approval and strongly influenced modern theological thought in the eastern churches. It is noteworthy that, through his call for
the creation of a living tradition which does not restrict itself to the repetition of sentences and phrases which have been handed down, an ecumenical perspective emerged within Orthodox theology. Florovsky was able to develop his ecumenical activities precisely because of his theological position, as it was based on a hermeneutics which created the conditions for theological discussion about the theological differences between the Orthodox and other traditions.

One of the most important students of Florovsky is the Greek theologian Ioannis Zizioulas (*1931) (Media Link #bg), who taught for many years in Glasgow (Media Link #bh) and who was appointed metropolitan in 1986. Zizioulas is one of the foremost proponents of "Eucharistic ecclesiology", as developed before him by Nicolas Afanassieff. In this perspective, the church is always understood as the church in a concrete place, as a community celebrating the Eucharist under a bishop. In a perspective such as this, the church as a whole and the question regarding the primacy of the pope – which is always a bone of contention between the Orthodox religion and the Catholic church – no longer play a central role. Another emphasis in his theology – but one which is also connected with ecclesiology – relates to anthropology. It is through community with others that the human becomes a person, as the latter only exists in the context of contact and dialogue. Zizioulas sees precisely this as a shortcoming in the west. The aspect of community is neglected, and the person is replaced by a human (as described above). While it is based on a stereotype, this point of view is nonetheless fundamentally capable of being combined with a positive attitude towards western Christianity, which as it were has the chance of returning to the original form of the church, the Eucharist, and community.

In addition to these models which are open to ecumenical dialogue, there continues to be theological and philosophical approaches in the east which strongly reject the west and its models. Another figure in the area of Greek theology who crosses the divide between east and west deserves mention: Ioannis (John) S. Romanidis (1927–2001) (Media Link #bj). He grew up in the USA, but as a professor has mainly worked in Greece. Romanidis was also strongly involved in ecumenism. For him, the fundamental cultural differences between the Christian east and the west played a central role, and he traced the theological differences back to them. Like many other Orthodox theologians, he also viewed the mystical theology of Gregorios Palamas (1296–1359) (Media Link #bk) as realizing the Orthodox religion it is ideal form. In the case of Romanidis, this was based on a strong rejection of the theology of St Augustine (354–430) (Media Link #bl), who for him almost personifies the defect in the development of the west. Through hesychia, contemplative peace, one can come to a view (theoria) of God, he argued. This does not involve intellectual ability, but is instead the result of mystical effort.

Christos Yannaras (*1935) (Media Link #bm) is a Greek theologian and philosopher who is also well known in the west as a result of English and German translations of his writings. Yannaras has always attempted to emphasize the differences between western European and Greek philosophy. He does this on the basis of an intensive study and good knowledge of western philosophy (like many famous Greek philosophers and theologians, Yannaras studied in Bonn, completing his PhD on Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) (Media Link #bn)). According to Yannaras, these differences form culture, to the extent that they also give rise to different approaches to life. Similar to Zizioulas, he proceeds from an understanding of the human as a person, which he views as being in sharp contrast to western individualism, which is closely connected with rationalism. The differences are thus not so much metaphysical or theoretical in nature, he argues, but they lead to two very different practices. This also implies a sharp critique of western values and values which are viewed as western, such as human rights – this criticism is also shared by other Orthodox critics of the west. For Yannaras, many negative phenomena in the world can be attributed to the fundamental principles of the west, particularly phenomena such as the decline of the churches, atheism and the careless treatment of creation, which are a threat not only to religion but to the existence of humanity. Like many other critics of the west, he also views Orthodox churchliness as a bastion for the preservation of true humanity, as it was intended by God.

As regards philosophy in Russia, Sergei Khoruzhii (*1941) (Media Link #bo) deserves mention. Though he was a mathematician, he also engaged with philosophical questions and he studied intensively the Orthodox mystical tradition of hesychasm. Khoruzhii viewed this tradition, which combines mystical practice with an experience of God, as an authentic expression of the theology and asceticism of the eastern church. It represents a contrast in focus to western models, which – he argues – are strongly characterized by their rationalistic aspect. He addresses the concept of energies which comes from the hesychastic tradition, and he attempts to investigate them in an interdisciplinary way by including psychology, linguistics and other disciplines. For Khoruzhii, this leads to a new emphasis in anthropology. His system does not adopt such a strong attitude of rejection toward the west as, for example, that of Yannaras, but it does emphasize the uniqueness of the philosophical tradition of the eastern church.
It is conspicuous that many of the accusations that have been levelled against the west have reappeared over the course of history, sometimes with only slight modifications. They have in common that they identify a fundamental difference between the two church and theological traditions. The eastern mystical, true, sincere and in a sense emotional approach is contrasted with a western rational, objective and cold approach. Many phenomena occurring within society are attributed to, and explained in the context of, this difference. This also includes the topos that western theologians have lost contact with the object of their investigation, with God, because they do not approach him with love and awe, but with scientific detachment. The fundamental error of the west, it is asserted, is therefore not to be found in individual contentious statements, but in this fundamentally false and unsuitable type of theology.

However, many of these examples also demonstrate that the concepts of "east" and "west" can now only be understood in relative terms. Orthodox institutions in France and the USA belong to the eastern church but also to the west. The idea of Eucharistic ecclesiology has had considerable influence within the Catholic church, as evidenced by the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Afanasieff is the only Orthodox theologian who is referred to by name in the Council files. Just as western models once influenced the east, the reverse is now occurring, or more accurately, it is no longer so easy to differentiate between east and west.

It must also be noted that the Palamite tradition (Gregory Palamas) has gained greater importance in modern Orthodox theology, having been of no particular significance for centuries. It clearly contains an element that plays an identity-forming role in Orthodox theology. Palamism is a theological teaching in the Greek tradition which had no effect on the west, mainly because scholasticism triumphed in the west. It thus differs from all of the principles of western theological thought and is specific to the Christian east. It comes closer to an understanding of theology which states that theology should be based on experience. It remains to be seen if this, which can be viewed as another aspect of the Orthodox church which differentiates it from the west, is capable of being received in the west.

Finally, it should be pointed out that there is also a relationship between the images that the west and the east have of each other and the historical events from which these images are constructed. These are constructs, as the historical reality is no longer accessible. However, they are not arbitrary, but must be created out of the available materials. Over the course of history, the attitudes and actions of the west towards the east were such that it was not difficult to paint this picture of menace and hunger for power. It is not the only image which it is possible to draw, but it is not completely without basis in history. The churches and theologies should investigate their mutual relationships to determine whether it is possible to find material for other constructs.

Thomas Bremer, Münster

Appendix

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Notes
^ The works of Ernst Christoph Suttner in particular should be mentioned in this context, for example Kircheneinheit 2000.
^ Avvakumov, Entstehung 2002.
^ Podskalsky, Christentum 1982.
^ In their response, the four patriarchs of the Orthodox churches pointed out that the faith is maintained by the whole church ("the body of the church or the people themselves") and not by a special "doctrinal authority". For more detail (with citations): Ivánka, Dogma 1984, pp. 312f.
^ For more detail, see Bremer, Kreuz 2007, pp. 205–224.
^ On this, see Wendebourg, Pseudomorphosis 1996; Oeldemann 2005.
^ See the response of the eastern patriarchs referred to above (in note no. 4), which the Slavophiles also referred to, particularly Khomiakov.
^ Chomjakov, Worte 1923, p. 179.
^ On this, see Schmid, Religionsphilosophen 2003, pp. 211–213.
^ Bremer, Erben 2000.
^ These developments are described in detail in Buchenu, Spuren 2011.
^ Aleksov, Dissent 2006.
^ The so-called Justinovci are primarily represented by the bishops of Amfilohije (Radović), Artemije (Radosavljević), Atanasije (Jevtić) and Irinej (Bulović).
^ For example, in Jevtić, Patrologija 1984, p. 4.
^ On him, see Künkel, Christus 1991; Blane, Florovsky 1993.
^ Florovsky, Einflüsse 1939.
^ See Wendebourg, Pseudomorphosis 1996.
^ Plank, Eucharistieversammlung 1980.
^ On both of them, see Stoeckl, Community 2008.

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