



Amsterdam Lectures 2012-13:

The Ways of Modern Orthodox Theology: Part I

Lecture X: Modern Orthodox Dogmatic Theology

2: St Justin Popović

Revd Prof. Andrew Louth, 20 June 2013

With the last in the first series of these lectures, we shall find ourselves entering different, yet not unfamiliar, territory. Hitherto, through the thinkers we have been discussing, we could be said to have been looking at the so-called Paris School of Orthodox theology, and at its sources in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russia. Next year we shall begin by continuing this approach, looking at other people associated with the Paris school—Evdokimov, Meyendorff and Schmemmann—and with the last two, at the continuation of this school in North America, in the theological circles associated with St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York, where Fr Georges Florovsky, Fr John Meyendorff, and Fr Alexander Schmemmann taught. Because of the renown of these theologians in the English-speaking world, and partly, too, because of the dominance of the Press of the Seminary as a provider of Orthodox theological literature (most of the major works of twentieth-century Orthodox theology, originally published in Great Britain, are now issued by St Vladimir's Seminary Press), it is difficult in the English-speaking diaspora, and I expect further afield in the diaspora, to avoid a perception of Orthodox theology that operates on what one might call the Paris–New York, or St Serge–St Vladimir's, axis. This is, however, only part of the story of the reception of Russian theological and philosophical ideas in the West, just as the history of the so-called Rue Daru jurisdiction and the Orthodox Church of America is only part of the story of the Russian Orthodox diaspora. As we spend his lecture looking at St Justin Popovich, or St Justin the New, as he has been called since his glorification in 2010,

we shall find ourselves at least catching a glimpse of this other story. For St Justin the New was a Serb, and it was Serbia that found itself providing hospitality for another strand of the Russian Orthodox Church outside the Russian homeland, indeed that part of the Russian Church that has been called the Church in Exile, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA) or, more recently, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). This strand of the Russian Church, which consisted of those who had fought against the Revolution and lost—the White Russians—who refused to accept the Revolution and the accommodation that the recently established Patriarchate of Moscow had been forced to accept from the time of the first patriarch, Tikhon, onwards. This Church, which thought of itself as the true successor of the Russian Orthodox Church, was led by Metropolitan Antony Khrapovitsky, who had been Metropolitan of Kiev, a highly respected bishop, who had in fact received a majority of the votes in the ballot for the new patriarch at the 1917/18 synod, though by this time he had been deposed from the synod by the provisional government and could not be considered. It was in Serbia, in Sremski Karlovci, that Khrapovitsky gathered together his synod that defied Moscow and the Patriarchate. Khrapovitsky was immensely respected, and Patriarch Dimitrije of Serbia—the patriarchate of Serbia was also newly established—allowed Metropolitan Antony to rule his church from Karlovci. The reputation of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, the so-called Synodal Church, is very negative: a Church, clinging fiercely to the old traditions, the old language, and deeply opposed to ecumenism. This is true, but it is a partial truth. Khrapovitsky himself, though in many ways conservative, had some original, even surprising, theological views. He was opposed to substitutionary views of the Atonement, and though this might be put down to his deep anti-Westernism, the truth is probably more complex. For him, it was in Gethsemane, in the Agony in the Garden, not at Golgotha, on the Cross, that Christ achieved the redemption of human kind, for it was not Christ's death that wrought salvation, but his solidarity with the sinful condition of the whole of humanity: it was this that was the cause of his agony, and his prayer to the Father, 'Let this cup pass from me', expressed his overwhelming grief for the sinful human race that he so deeply loved. Certainly, it was Metropolitan Antony Khrapovitsky who led the heresy hunt against Fr Sergii Bulgakov's sophiology, but he was not himself a man without theological imagination. Even his anti-ecumenism is not unrelieved: he shared in the common positive attitude towards Anglicans on the part of the Orthodox that we find in the 1920s, and in some way

recognized Anglican orders, proposing that Anglican clergy should be received into Orthodoxy by simple penance. I mention all this because in the 20s, Khrapovitsky had immense influence within the Serbian Church, and St Justin seems to me to make sense in this world. It is a different world from the Paris of Bulgakov, Florovsky and Lossky, but it is world just as indebted to Russia, and a world we need to make something of, especially as ROCOR and the Moscow Patriarchate are now moving closer together.

Life

St Justin was born in Vranje, Serbia, in 1894 on the feast of the Annunciation, *Blagovest*, and therefore called Blagoje.¹ He was born into a devout family, which had had seven generations of priests. The healing of his mother from a severe illness in response to prayers to the wonderworker, St Prohor, at the monastery of Pčinsk, gave him a profound and lasting sense of the reality of the spiritual world. He attended the St Sava seminary in Belgrade, where one of his teachers was Nikolaj Velimirović, later famous bishop of Ohrid, now also glorified. At the outbreak of the First World War, Blagoje joined a student brigade of medical orderlies and went through the horrors of that war and the sufferings of those he tended; this reinforced his longing to become a monk.

In 1916 he was professed a monk by the Serbian metropolitan Dimitrije, and given the name Justin, after Justin the Philosopher, or the Martyr, and was sent by Metropolitan Dimitrije to the Spiritual Academy in Petrograd (as it then was). There he read the Russian thinkers: the Slavophiles, Leont'ev, Solov'ev and Dostoevsky. Seven months later, however, the beginnings of the Communist Revolution cut short his stay in Russia and he went to Oxford instead. There he embarked on a thesis for the B.Litt., the only research degree then available, on the religion of Dostoevsky. The examiners took exception to his sweeping criticism of Catholicism, Protestantism and Western Europe, and advised him to revise his thesis. He refused, and left Oxford without a degree (the thesis was later published in Serbian).

Justin returned to Serbia, now Yugoslavia, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and taught theology at the St Sava Orthodox Seminary in Sremski Karlovci.

¹ For my account of St Justin's life, I am largely reliant on Dame Elizabeth Hill's obituary in *Sobornost*, incorporating *Eastern Churches Review*, 2:1 (1980), 73–9.

He was soon sent to Athens where he completed a doctoral thesis on person and knowledge in St Makarios of Egypt. Returning to Karlovci, he combined his teaching with editing the monthly journal, *Christian Life*; he soon became the main editor. In Karlovci, he came to know and revere Metropolitan Antony Khrapovitsky. His editorials in *Christian Life* became, as Dame Elizabeth Hill put it in her obituary, increasingly trenchant in their criticism of Western European civilization that he felt was being imposed on Serbia. He lamented that ‘never was there less God in man than today, never less God on earth than today’. He lamented the secularization of the schools, arguing for religious education and prayer. He deplored the neglect of St Sava, the patron saint of Serbia: ‘The Turks burned St Sava’s relics—whereas we, his undeserving descendants, burn him today: just as on Vračar his ashes were scattered, so we scatter his ashes by throwing him out of our education and culture.’ In the last issue of *Christian Life* in 1927, he defended the periodical for having been alone in voicing opposition to what he saw as dangerous non-Orthodox innovations proposed at the Pan-Orthodox Congress held in Constantinople in 1923, not least the replacement of the Julian Calendar with the New Revised Julian Calendar (coincident for many centuries with the Gregorian Calendar, used elsewhere in Europe).

After a brief period teaching at Prizren, Fr Justin was reappointed to Karlovci. In 1931 he accompanied Metropolitan Josip Cvijic to Subcarpathian Rus in Czechoslovakia. There he worked with such success among Uniates, bringing them back to Orthodoxy, that he was offered a bishopric. He refused and would rather have become the rector of St Sava’s Seminary in Karlovci, but was not offered that post. Instead he went to the seminary in Bitolj. There he taught, translated the *Lausiac History* into Serbian and began to publish one of his major works, *The Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church: the Orthodox Philosophy of Truth*, the first volume of which was published in 1933. This led to his appointment to the Theological Faculty in Belgrade in 1934. He remained there teaching throughout the Second World War, during the occupation of Belgrade by the Nazis, though he was clear in his condemnation of Nazism. He had enormous influence among his students, encouraging several of them to embrace the monastic state. After the war and the advent of the Communist régime under Tito, he left Belgrade, and after spending time at various Serbian monasteries, settled in 1948 in Čelije, up in the mountains near Valjevo, at a small monastery, founded by King Dragutin (1276–1316) and dedicated

to the archangel Michael. He remained there almost without interruption for the rest of his life. For years the monastery at Čelije had been guarded, empty, by a lone monk; in 1946 the local bishop had sent a few nuns there to rekindle the religious life. Fr Justin became their spiritual father and shared with them an incredibly austere life of poverty, prayer, and work. Much of the monastery had been destroyed. Slowly over the years—decades, really—with the help of local devout peasants, the monastic buildings were restored or rebuilt. Other convents grew from the convent at Čelije. His principal literary work during his years at Čelije was his composition, in twelve volumes, of the *Lives of the Saints* (published between 1972 and 1977), a complement to St Nikolai Velimirović's *Ohrid Prologue*, in the preparation of which Justin had helped St Nikolai. Its importance for St Justin is manifest in the fact that in icons of the saint he is usually depicted holding a volume of the *Lives of the Saints*, although this is an unusual iconographical convention. He also published, while at Čelije, *Svetosavlje as a Philosophy of Life* (that is, St Sava-ism, or Serbian Orthodoxy, as a Philosophy of Life; 1950), *The Life of St Sava and St Symeon* (1962), *Man and Godman: a study in Orthodox theology* (1969), and *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism* (1974). His attitude to ecumenism was uncompromising: the Orthodox Church was the one true Church of Christ; ecumenism was a matter of politics, and unacceptable, Greek and Russian theologians engaged in the ecumenical movement were naively unaware of the dogmatic differences between Christians in the modern world. Various other tasks of publication occupied Fr Justin—translations of the Divine Liturgy, of the small and great *Euchologia*, the Akathist to the Mother of God and other saints, as well as commentaries on the Pauline Epistles, and the Gospels of Matthew and John (the latter unfinished)—only in 1976, with the help of his spiritual son, Bishop Atanasije Jevtić and Mother Glikeriya, the abbess of Čelije, was Fr Justin able to bring his *Dogmatics* to completion with the third volume on the Church and eschatology, published in 1978, the year before he died.

St Justin's influence in Serbia has been, and still is, profound, though in his lifetime he had problems with the church hierarchy, largely owing to his outspokenness. Theology in Serbia today is dominated—so it seems to me, looking from outside, through a language barrier, as my Serbian is very rudimentary—by St Justin and his disciples, especially Amfilokije Radović, Atanasije Jevtić, Artemije Radosavljević, and Irinej Bulović, all bishops (or in the case of Artemije a former bishop). He was

also highly regarded by those of the tradition of the Paris school, such as Fr John Meyendorff, who, in an obituary, listed these characteristics of this theology:

not only his love for the Fathers, not only the severe but enlightened monastic tradition of which he was the spokesman, but also his concern for Orthodoxy as a whole, his openness to and appreciation of both Greek and Russian theological thought and, above all, his ability to see theology as a living philosophy of Truth.²

Placing St Justin

Because we are moving into a somewhat different world in considering St Justin the New, I think it might be useful to reflect on Serbia's history and its place in the Orthodox world, by way of placing St Justin in relation to the history of Orthodox thinking we have pursued so far.

The presence of Slav tribes in the territory of what is now Serbia goes back to the sixth century. Literary evidence for this is found in the work, *De Administrando Imperio*, compiled from Byzantine archival material under the supervision of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos in the tenth century, and supplemented by archaeological evidence. By that time the Serbs, or at least the nobility, had embraced Christianity, probably as a result of the mission of Cyril and Methodius to Moravia and the subsequent conversion of the Bulgarians in the ninth century. The creation of Serb Christian identity is, however, firmly bound up with St Sava, the youngest son of Stefan Nemanjić, who in the twelfth century managed to unite most of the Serbian lands into a single state. Stefan and his son, Stefan the 'First-Crowned', built the monastery of Studenica, the 'mother of all Serbian churches', where Stefan Nemanjić took monastic vows on his abdication in 1196, and where his earthly remains were eventually laid to rest (after returning from Hilandar, on Mt Athos, founded by Stefan and Sava, where he died); there they still lie. St Sava became the first archbishop of Serbia, with his see in Žiža. The importance of St Sava for Serbia's Orthodox identity is difficult to exaggerate. The distinctive nature of Serbian Orthodoxy is referred to

² John Meyendorff, 'In memoriam: Archimandrite Justin Popovich,' *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 23 (1979) 118-119, at 118.

as ‘Svetosavlje’, ‘St Sava-ism’. The great Serbian poet of the last century, Vasco Popa, celebrated St Sava in a sequence of poems:

Hungry and thirsty for holiness
He left the world
His own people and himself...

He lives without years without death
Surrounded by his wolves...

He journeys over the dark land

With his staff he cuts
The dark beyond him into four...

He journeys without a path
And the path is born behind him³

We have already seen something of St Justin’s devotion to St Sava, the neglect of whom he deplored in his journal, *Christian Life*; he also wrote a book, as we have seen, with *Svetosavlje* in the title. The nation, fashioned by the royal line to which St Sava belonged, and the church inspired by St Sava’s austere monastic spirituality, came to form an indissoluble unity. Very soon its sense of Orthodox identity was to undergo a long period of testing. As the Ottoman Turks advanced triumphantly across Europe, Serbia fragmented and the Serbian forces underwent inevitable defeat in the Battle of Kosovo Polje—the blackbirds’ field—in which Prince Lazar died. This defeat became another defining factor in Serbian identity, and Prince Lazar celebrated as a martyr. With the final victory of the Turks over the Byzantine Empire and the fall of Constantinople in 1453, most of Serbia (its heartlands) was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. The Serbs, as Orthodox, found themselves part of the *Rum Millet*, under the immediate jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople; they lost their patriarchate (initially within a decade of the fall of

³ Vasco Popa, *Earth Erect*, translated by Anne Pennington (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1973), 24, 29.

Constantinople, and then after a period of restoration, finally in 1766). The position of the Serbs within the Ottoman Empire was wretched. In the nineteenth century, caught between the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Russian Empire, Serbia embarked on a bloody path to freedom, achieved finally in 1920, with the re-establishment of the Serbian Church and its patriarchate, as part of the new state of Yugoslavia, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, uniting different religious traditions of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam. After the Second World War, Yugoslavia became a communist state under Tito, and with the collapse of communism, Yugoslavia succumbed to civil war between its constituent parts. This recent conflict means that the tensions implicit in standing between, and oppressed by, Catholic Europe and the Muslim Empire of the Ottomans are not simply historical memories, but bitter experiences.

Given such a history, it is hardly surprising that Orthodoxy for the Serbs is a fragile and wonderful thing, something that links them with Russia to the north and Greece to the south, but which is experienced as something quite special to the Serbs, ‘Svetosavlje’, while at the same time they are acutely conscious of the distinctiveness of Orthodoxy in relation both to the Catholicism (and Protestantism) of Europe and to Islam, under the yoke of which they suffered for so many centuries. Also woven into their consciousness is the sense of their Orthodoxy as something to fight for, even to the point of death. The hopeless defeat of the Serbian forces by the Ottomans on the Field of the Blackbirds, and the death of Prince Martyr Lazar, lends the Orthodoxy of the Serbs a profound sense of life or death.

Singing we ride over the field
To encounter the armoured dragons

Our most lovely wolf-shepherd
His flowering staff in his hand
Flies through the air on his white steed

The crazed thirsty weapons
Savage each other alone in the field...⁴

⁴ *Earth Erect*, 36.

This sense of standing between enemies who will destroy the precious heritage of the Serbs, if they are failing in diligence, powerfully informs St Justin's concern to preserve Orthodoxy without compromise.

What is it, however, that threatens to compromise Orthodoxy? St Justin's answer is both simple and complex: simple in its analysis, complex in its ramifications. It is, however, fair to say that St Justin's understanding of what threatens Orthodoxy, and his ways of defending this, can be seen to have a pattern with which we are not unfamiliar. His analysis of the threat to Orthodoxy is fundamentally one that can be traced back to the Slavophiles, whom St Justin read eagerly during his few months in Petrograd before the Revolution; his own theological contribution is to draw his remedy from the well of the Fathers. Right from the beginning, with his thesis written in Athens in the early twenties, we can see Justin reaching back to the Fathers to enable him to deepen his analysis of the threat and develop his remedy, but we can see, too, even in the title the Slavophile roots of his analysis; the thesis (in Greek) was entitled, *The Problem of Person and Knowledge [gnosis] according to St Makarios the Egyptian*. The idea of person and personhood as possessing the key to what Orthodoxy has preserved and the West lost is one we have encountered several times already; it is, indeed, a commonplace.

St Justin charges Western culture with humanism, rationalism, and individualism—precisely the kind of analysis we have found in the Slavophiles and their followers—to that he opposes Godmanhood, integral knowledge, and *sobornost'*. In the rest of this lecture, I want to explore how St Justin does this.

Slavophile inheritance

As we saw in our first lecture, the Slavophiles, Russian thinkers such as Khomiakov and Kireevsky, were concerned to discern what it was that characterized Russian experience over against the influence of Western ideas that had been promoted in Russia from the time of Peter the Great. Tsar Peter the Great, and his successors, notably Catherine the Great, had sought to bring Russia from what they saw as a backward Asianism into the new Europe of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment; the transfer of the capital of Russia from Moscow to the newly built city of St Petersburg was a symbol of this change. Peter the Great wanted a modern Russia, commercially successful, politically powerful. Symbols of Russian difference were

banned—beards, for instance—and the Church itself subordinated to the State on a Lutheran model, the patriarchate abolished, and the Church governed by a misleadingly-called ‘Holy Synod’, a committee supervised by a lay Oberprokurator, appointed by the Tsar. The Slavophiles sought to rediscover the true nature of Russian experience of reality, in contradistinction to the Europeanization or Westernization introduced by the Petrine reforms. Though opposed to the West, they drew on the West, and especially Western Idealist philosophy, as they developed their ideas. This was not difficult, as there were movements in nineteenth-century thought in the West, already distressed by the way in which traditional values were being weakened by industrialization and urbanization: thinkers whom one of the most perceptive writers on the Slavophiles, Andrzej Walicki, dubbed ‘conservative romantics’. What was it, then, that was distinctive about Russian culture and experience? Early on, Khomiakov had argued that no other country, other than the Scots, has ‘such legends and songs as ours’: this, in a century, when, following the Grimm brothers, all the European nations were busily gathering the tales of traditional wisdom! (In making the Scots an exception, Khomiakov simply reveals the popularity of the novels of Sir Walter Scott!) The village, the traditional community, with its organs of self-government: this was idealized by Khomiakov, who developed from it the ideal of *sobornost’*, the sense that it is together, in a traditional community, or in the Church, that we discover the truth about reality, not on our own, as isolated individual thinkers (Descartes, thinking on the warmth of his stove in Sweden!). With Kireevsky, we find other ways of characterizing what it is that makes Russian experience different from that found in Western Europe. From the twelfth century, Europe had developed a system of education culminating in the university, something that Peter the Great was concerned to emulate with his reforms. Kireevsky, in contrast, looked to where the Russians had preserved and developed their learning: in the monasteries, where learning was not pursued for its own sake, but as part of a way of life. From this Kireevsky developed the notion of ‘integral knowledge’: in contrast to the rationalist analysis that came to characterize the learning of the university, Kireevsky set an ideal of learning that involved the whole person, not just the mind, but the imagination, the senses, the heart—a knowledge that demanded initiation into a way of life, an ascetic struggle, the attempt to discover the heart, where all these human faculties are concentrated, where one becomes conscious of God, and discerns a light that illuminates all the powers that make up being human. All of this remained

largely implicit in the Slavophiles themselves who, apparently, never used the abstract expressions that designate these ideas, *sobornost'* and integral knowledge. These were provided by Vladimir Solov'ev, who added a further element implicit in the Slavophiles. For the Slavophiles saw Russian and her experience as fundamentally Christian: made explicit, this means that human experience exists in response to God, more precisely, in response to God's manifestation of himself among human kind as the Godman, *Bogochelovek*. The pursuit of human knowledge, the achievement of *sobornost'* and integral knowledge, is something that takes place as the human moves towards experience of Godmanhood, that union with God and man implicit in, and expressed by, the Incarnation, conceived of as much more than a historical event, but a union between God and man implicit in the creation of the human, and manifest in the historical Incarnation of the Son of God. Among the Slavophiles, including Solov'ev, all of this is expressed in the rather forbidding concepts of German Idealism, which was also attracted to ways of transcending rationalism and achieving an experience of wholeness, all-in-oneness, *Alleinheit*, in Russian *vseedintsvo*.

St Justin's appropriation of Slavophilism

All this was clearly very attractive to St Justin, the terms Godman, integral knowledge, and *sobornost'* (in Serbian, *sabornost*) are encountered frequently in his works. The philosophical background is there, too, but in a very simplified way; for the most part, it seems to me that St Justin uses a rather schematic history of Western European philosophy mostly as a way of developing and justifying his anti-Westernism. For it is indeed very difficult to escape a sharply anti-Western note in his works. In an, as yet unpublished paper, the Serbian thinker Vladimir Cvetković (to whom I owe a great debt in my attempts to understand St Justin) compares St Justin's anti-Westernism with that of the Greek thinker, Christos Yannaras, who recently maintained that the West is not for him an 'other', but something that is part of himself, so that his 'critical stance towards the West is self-criticism'.⁵ I would like to believe that, but I have not encountered much self-criticism in St Justin. Even if it can be claimed that in his concern for Europe, he is convinced, like Yannaras, that

⁵ Christos Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, trans. Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006), ix.

Orthodoxy and the West are not incompatible, but I cannot imagine him referring to his ‘own wholly Western mode of life’.⁶

Frequently St Justin traces a history of the West from the Middle Ages onwards, finding a gradual progress—or rather decline—in humanism, a concentration on the human that ignores or denies God. (In some of his works only available in Serbian, St Justin supports his pessimistic view of Europe by reference to Maurice Maeterlinck and Oswald Spengler, but these I have not been able to consult.⁷) The beginnings are found in the papacy and scholasticism which ‘drained the creative, vital powers of European man’,⁸ and continue with Rousseau, Locke and Hume, who abstract the human from nature and reduce his own nature to the senses; Descartes and Kant suggest another notion of man as no more than intellect; Schopenhauer and others reduce man to his will. Nietzsche and Darwin, ‘Europe was directed towards a search for the new man among inferior creatures in order to, based on the animal kingdom, create man without God’.⁹ Having dispensed with God, Nietzsche proposes man as superman, devoid of pity for one’s neighbour, and pursuing an ‘irresponsible and merciless desire for power’—‘beyond good and evil, beyond truth and error, beyond conscience and responsibility’.¹⁰ In other essays, this culmination of the dehumanization of man, consequent on the rejection of God, St Justin brings into conjunction Nietzsche’s proclamation of the superman and the Pope’s proclamation of infallibility: ‘infallibility of the pope is the Nietzschean assertion—*Ja-sagung*—extended to the entire conception of European humanism’.¹¹ A little later on he affirms that ‘[i]n the history of the human race there have been three principal falls: that of Adam, that of Judas, and that of the pope’.¹² In reading this, one needs to remember how St Justin experienced the beginnings of a dilution, or sidelining, or *Svetosavlje*, in the new united Kingdom of Yugoslavia, with the forced conjunction of

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Mentioned, without references, by Cvetković in his as yet unpublished ‘St Justin Popović’s reception of St Maximus the Confessor’.

⁸ Father Justin Popovich, *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, trans. etc. by Asterios Gerostergios et al. (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1994), 57 (from an essay, ‘Humanistic and Theanthropic Education’).

⁹ Ibid., 58.

¹⁰ Ibid., 59.

¹¹ Ibid., 103 (from an essay, ‘Reflections on the Infallibility of European Man’).

¹² Ibid., 105

Catholic Croats and Slovenes with Orthodox Serbs, accompanied by memories, before that and since, of murderous hostility. His attitude to the papacy underlies his attitude to ecumenism, for, like Khomiakov—for whom ‘all the West knows but one datum, *a*; whether it be preceded by the positive sign +, as with the Romanists, or with the negative –, as with the Protestants, the *a* remains the same’¹³—Protestantism and Catholicism are but different sides of the same coin, so he speaks of ‘Papist–Protestant Ecumenism’.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the points that St Justin makes—that the Orthodox Church is the Church of Christ; that unity is given, not negotiated; that papal claims seem to envisage an understanding of the Church at odds with Orthodox conviction—are shared by virtually all Orthodox, even if not asserted so aggressively. Furthermore, one should not miss his insistence that the attitude of all of us—Orthodox and non-Orthodox—in the presence of Christ, the Godman, can only be one of repentance, and for this reason the councils of the Church made Christology the centre of their declarations: ‘[f]or them Christ the Godman is the unique value of the Church of Christ is all the worlds. Their unending and eternal message is: Give up everything for Christ’; do not give Christ up for anything...’¹⁵

However, it seems to me more profitable to pursue, not the way in which the anti-Westernism of the Slavophiles manifests itself in St Justin’s thought, but rather the way he treats the Slavophiles’ fundamental affirmations in quite a different way from the Slavophiles themselves. As I have already remarked, Khomiakov and Kireevsky—and also Solov’ev—develop the fundamental notions of Godmanhood, integral knowledge and *sobornost’* by drawing on contemporary German idealist philosophy, and in particular Schelling. What we find in St Justin is something quite different, which links him with the other approach we find in the Paris school: the attempt to create a Neopatristic synthesis. For St Justin develops his understanding of these key Slavophile notions by a return to the Fathers. Of course, the Slavophiles themselves were interested in the Fathers, and promoted, in conjunction with the monks of Optina Pustyn’, translations of the works of the Fathers. There is, however, little use of the Fathers in their works, as opposed to enthusiastic utterances about the

¹³ *Russia and the English Church*, vol. 1, ed. W.J. Birkbeck (London: Rivington, Percival & Co., 1895), 67.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 170 (from an essay called ‘Humanistic Ecumenism’).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

Fathers as witnesses to a country which is their homeland, as Kireevsky put it. With St Justin, we find several attempts to develop what seem to be ideas of fundamentally Slavophile origin by drawing on the works of the Fathers. And it is interesting whom he chooses among the Fathers: not the Cappadocian Fathers, or Athanasios or Cyril, but ascetic Fathers (in the *Orthodox Philosophy of Truth*, there is plenty of use of such Fathers, but in a more directly doctrinal context). His thesis, already mentioned, on ‘Personhood and Knowledge in St Makarios the Egyptian’ is a study based on the Macarian Homilies. Later on, he wrote a long essay on ‘The Theory of Knowledge of St Isaac the Syrian’.¹⁶ It is this latter that I want to discuss in more detail.

St Justin begins by exploring a little his idea that in European philosophy, man always appears as a fragmented being: all attempts at self-understanding start either from the intellect, or from his senses, and fail to achieve a sense of man as a whole. In trying to overcome this sense of fragmentation Western philosophy makes conjectures that seek to transcend both man and matter, in idealist philosophy by a leap into the supernatural, which, frustrated, leads man back to scepticism. So man comes to see a great gulf between himself and the truth. The only solution is for the truth itself to cross the gulf and become immanent in man. This can only take place if Truth is a person, the person of the Godman, in whom the gulf is bridged. In Christ, the Godman, ‘transcendent Truth becomes immanent in man. The Godman reveals the truth in and through Himself. He reveals it, not through thought or reason, but by the life that is His. He not only has the truth, He is Himself the Truth. In Him Being and Truth are one. Therefore, He, in his person, not only defines truth but shows the way to it...’¹⁷ Encountering Christ, ‘[m]an’s understanding is not overthrown, but is renewed, purified, sanctified.’ The truth that Christ embodies, St Justin calls ‘integral knowledge’:

In the Godman, absolute Truth has in its entirety been given in a real and personal way. This is why He alone, among those born on earth, both has

¹⁶ The Greek originals are published in Archim. Ioustinos Popovits, *Odos Theognosias* (Athens: Ekdoseis Grigori, 1992). ‘The Theory of Knowledge of St Isaac the Syrian’, trans. (from Serbian) by Mother Maria Rule, is reprinted in *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, 117–68 (originally published in *Sourozh* 15, 16, 17 [1984]).

¹⁷ *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, 119.

integral knowledge of the truth and can pass it on. The man who desires to know the truth has only to be made one with the Godman, to become one flesh with Him, to become a member of his divine and human Body, the Church.

In his experience of the truth, man encounters contradictions, antinomies (a key notion, we have seen, in Florensky and Bulgakov). These, for St Justin, are ‘not irreconcilable opposites; they are simply ruptures caused by the upheaval of original sin in man’.¹⁸ As man unites himself to Christ, he ‘feels in himself a coming-together of fragmented parts, a healing of the intellect, a wholeness and integration that makes him capable of integrated understanding’.¹⁹ So, truth is given, objectively, in the person of Christ, ‘the way in which this becomes subjective—that is, the practical side of the Christian theory of knowledge (the Greek is γνωσιολογία)—was fully developed by the Fathers’. Not surprisingly, it is the ascetic Fathers to whom St Justin turns at this point—in his doctoral thesis to the Macarian Homilies, in the essay we are summarizing to St Isaac the Syrian—for it is these ascetic Fathers that we learn how the human is made whole and the intellect freed to contemplate God.

First, we need to grasp that the human organs of understanding have been damaged by sin—original and actual; they have been weakened and diseased. So St Justin quotes St Isaac: ‘Evil is a sickness of soul’, ‘passions are illnesses of the soul’—they are not natural to the soul, but ‘accidents, adventitious, and intrusive, an unnatural addition to the soul’.²⁰ Nevertheless, their effects on the soul are profound, filling it with confusion and distraction: ‘[a] feeble soul, a diseased intellect, a weakened heart and will—in brief, sick organs of understanding—can only engender, fashion, and produce sick thoughts, sick feelings, sick desires, and sick knowledge’.²¹

St Isaac does not however leave us with a graphic analysis of our fallen, weakened state; he details the remedy, a remedy which amounts to bringing to life our incorporation in Christ the Godman, and this is achieved through the virtues. ‘The acquisition of the virtues is a progressive and organic process:... “Every virtue is the

¹⁸ Ibid., 119–20.

¹⁹ Ibid., 120.

²⁰ Ibid., 121.

²¹ Ibid., 122.

mother of the next.” Among the virtues there is not only an ontological order, but also a chronological one.’²²

The sequence of virtues is faith – prayer – love – humility; this leads to a consideration of grace and freedom, for in the practice of the virtues man is not achieving something of his own, but responding to the grace of God, nonetheless, the acquiring of the virtues is no easy task, but one of unremitting toil. St Justin then follows St Isaac to consider the purification of the intellect:

Perseverance in prayer cleanses the intellect, illumines it, and fills it with the light of truth. The virtues, led by compassion, give the intellect peace and light. The cleansing of the intellect is not a dialectical, discursive and theoretical activity, but an act of grace through experience and is ethical in every respect. The intellect is purified by fasting, vigils, silence, prayer, and other ascetic practices.²³

This leads to a consideration of the mystery of knowledge; the purified intellect passes beyond natural knowledge, which is achieved by ‘examination and experimentation’ and is itself, as St Isaac puts it, ‘a sign of uncertainty about the truth’, and achieves spiritual knowledge, the fruit of ‘simplicity of heart and simplicity of thought’. In the realm of spiritual knowledge, we pass beyond nature and natural knowledge—it is a realm of miracles, such as the miracle of healing St Justin witnessed in his mother, when a child. St Justin discerns in St Isaac three degrees of knowledge: the first concerned with the senses, the second a product of the union of body and soul through the virtues, and the third that of perfection. St Justin comments that in the first degree of knowledge ‘is included virtually the whole of European philosophy, from naïve realism to idealism—and all science from the atomism of Democritus to Einstein’s relativity’.²⁴

Of the third and highest degree of knowledge, that of perfection, St Justin quotes this passage from St Isaac, about how then the intellect can

²² Ibid., 123.

²³ Ibid., 136.

²⁴ Ibid., 145.

take wing and fly to the realm of incorporeal spirits and plumb the depths of the fathomless ocean, pondering on the divine and wondrous things that govern the nature of spiritual and physical beings and penetrating the spiritual mysteries that can only be grasped by a simple and supple mind. Then the inner senses awaken to the work of the spirit in those things that belong to that other realm, immortal and incorruptible. The knowledge has, in a hidden way, here in this world, received already spiritual resurrection so as to bear true witness to the renewal of all things.²⁵

This third degree of knowledge turns into contemplation, which, ‘in the philosophy of the holy fathers, ... has an ontological, ethical and gnoseological significance. It means prayerful concentration of the soul, through the action of grace, on the mysteries that surpass our understanding and are abundantly present not only in the Holy Trinity but in the person of man himself and in the whole of God’s creation’.²⁶ The soul that has acquired contemplation, when it turns towards the created order, is filled with love and compassion. ‘What is a merciful heart?’ asks St Isaac, and he replies in the much-quoted words:

It is a heart burning with love towards the whole of creation: towards men, birds, animals, demons, and every creature. His eyes overflow with tears at the thought and sight of them. For the great and powerful sorrow that constrains his heart and from his great patience, his heart contracts and he cannot bear to hear or see the least harm done to or misfortune suffered by creation. Therefore, he prays with tears incessantly for irrational beasts, for opponents of the truth, and for those who do him harm, that they may be preserved and receive mercy. He also prays for the reptiles with great sorrow, a sorrow that is without measure in his heart and which likens him to God.²⁷

In his conclusion, St Justin remarks that, for St Isaac, ‘the problem of knowledge is fundamentally a religious and an ethical one’.²⁸ Knowledge is bound up with man’s

²⁵ Quoted *ibid.*, 145–6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

²⁷ Quoted *ibid.*, 161–2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.

moral state. St Justin suggests that it goes further than the virtues being simply a condition of true knowledge.

There is no doubt that knowledge progresses through man's virtues and regresses through the passions. Knowledge is like a fabric woven by the virtues on the loom of the human soul. The loom of the soul extends through all the visible and invisible worlds. The virtues are not only powers creating knowledge; they are the principles and sources of knowledge. By transforming the virtues into constituent elements of his being through ascetic endeavour, a man advances from knowledge to knowledge. It could even be possible to say that the virtues are the sense organs of knowledge. Advancing from one virtue to another, a man moves from one form of comprehension to another.²⁹

In this essay, we can see how St Justin fleshes out the themes of Godmanhood and integral knowledge, drawn from the Slavophiles. The theme of *sobornost'* is less clearly developed, though it seems to me implicit in the bonds of compassion that are developed as the soul grows in union with God. What St Justin has found in St Isaac (and he found much the same in the Macarian Homilies, as a glance at the chapter heading of his doctoral thesis reveals) is an understanding of human nature and personality, the fruit of ascetic experience, that enables him to work out in some degree of detail how the human being is transformed and transfigured in responding to the Godman through grace and ascetic endeavour. What St Justin has done can be seen as another way of pursuing the Neoplatonic synthesis. Whereas Lossky and Florovsky looked to the Fathers for notions of personhood, in relation to both Trinitarian theology and anthropology, and also for a sense of the cosmic, St Justin supplements this approach by drawing more directly on the ascetic tradition in the Fathers, both for his understanding of personhood and for his analysis of the fallen human condition and how this is remedied in practice. The approaches of Lossky and Florovsky are by no means absent from St Justin; a glance at his *Orthodox Philosophy of Truth* reveals how much he draws on Fathers such as St Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers and St Maximos the Confessor.

²⁹ Ibid., 163–4.

I have attempted in this lecture to explore a less-well-known region of modern Orthodox theology, less well known partly because of the barriers of language, and the way St Justin's theology is rooted in the experience of Serbian Orthodoxy, and partly because its closest affinities are with the Russians who formed the Synodal Church after the Revolution. There is much that I have not attempted to cover, notably his vast dogmatics, *The Orthodox Philosophy of Truth*. Nevertheless, I think it has become clear, that this rootedness in the experience of a particular people does not at all entail any parochialness in his theology. If St Justin is unusual in drawing to the extent that he does on the ascetic wisdom of Orthodox monasticism (though in this, there are remarkable parallels with Fr Dumitru Stăniloae), he is simply opening up to all Orthodox, and indeed all Christians, treasures that belong to us all.