

‘THE INFINITE DIVERSITY OF PERSONS’

*Individual Personality in the Ascetical Theology
of St Feofan the Recluse (1815-1894)*

by

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For My Family

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ABSTRACT № 1

The teachings of St. Feofan (1815-1894), together with his celebrated Russian translation of the *Philokalia*, played a major role in the spiritual revival of nineteenth century Russia, earning him the reputation of one of the greatest Russian theoreticians of Orthodox mysticism. Yet Feofan also provoked fierce criticism of such eminent Russian thinkers as Nicolas Berdyaev. This study focuses on one of the most significant elements of Feofan's legacy: the notion of legitimacy of spiritual diversity. This idea permeates Feofan's discussions of the striking dissimilarities demonstrated by persons engaged in ascetic and spiritual pursuits. It is highlighted by the fact that Feofan derives his positive attitude to diversity from within the tradition generally perceived as intolerant of dissent and non-conformity.

Based within a wider context of Orthodox mystical tradition, this study examines Feofan's major writings, his work with the texts of the *Philokalia*, and his public and private correspondence. Attention is given to such pivotal concepts as his notions of the spirit and the heart; intimate communion with God; and the cardinal importance of spiritual self-consciousness. The study reveals Feofan's indebtedness to Byzantine ascetic spirituality, as well as his unusual openness to Western thought - reflected in his innovative synthesis of patristic asceticism and German romantic psychology.

This study also addresses the ambivalence of Feofan's inner conflicts: namely, between his passionate belief in spiritual self-determination and his authoritarian teaching

on ‘silent submissiveness’; and between his defence of the legitimacy of spiritual diversity within the realm of ascetic experience and his unwillingness to extend that same principle beyond the limits of his own tradition.

The thesis is not only the first critical account in English of Feofan’s spiritual teaching, but is also an ecumenical exercise in which attitudes toward religious diversity within the Russian monastic tradition are examined by a Russian evangelical.

ABSTRACT № 2

Chapter One. Life and Works of Feofan

p. 8.

In addition to the challenge of political radicals, the ‘philosophical awakening’, and the fierce debates of the Slavophiles, the Russian intellectual and religious scene in the early nineteenth century was characterised by re-emergence of a distinctive type of contemplative monastic spirituality which came to be known as the Hesychast revival. Georgi Govorov (in religion, Feofan) was born into the family of a well-educated rural parish priest in which robust faith and vibrant spirituality coexisted with academic development. At the academy in Kiev, the young Feofan demonstrated his unswerving conviction that the path of ascetic spiritual restoration chartered by the ancient spiritual masters of the Christian East was the only viable antidote to the materialistic utopia of political radicals and the moralistic versions of ‘lighter’ Orthodoxy. (His Palestinian experience – i.e., six years spent in the Orient – deepened Feofan’s understanding of the ethos of Byzantine spirituality.) His remarkable insight into psychology of spiritual warfare was already evident in his first major work *Pis'ma o khristianskoi zhizni*. In some of his later works (e.g., *Chto yest' dukhovnaya zhizn'*) he strove to show the primacy of the faith of the individual in relation to society and dwelt on the intensely subjective nature of religious experiences. His defence of spiritual self-determination and the legitimacy of

spiritual diversity is best revealed in his most popular book, *Put' ko Spaseniyu*. Yet Feofan's outlook was marked by a major contradiction between his passionate belief in the freedom of individual expression in the realm of spiritual experience and his zealous adherence to doctrinal conformity, authoritarianism, and submissiveness to the state. This latter side of Feofan's ambivalent outlook became especially apparent during his academic career in St Petersburg and years of service as bishop, as one can observe in his publicist essays and letters of the period (directed against political radicals, Orthodox liberals, schismatic and fledgling non-orthodox groups).

Chapter Two. Feofan and the Diversity of the Orthodox Tradition.

The 'Dobrotolyubiye'

p. 69.

The fabric of Feofan's tradition is composed of many different strands, schools and personalities. It presents a colourful display of cultural, ethnic, and intellectual diversity spanning almost two millennia. The collection of texts in Feofan's *Dobrotolyubiye* alone covers the period from the forth to the fourteenth centuries, beginning with the early eremitical spirituality of lower Egypt and ending with such medieval Hesychasts as Gregory of Sinai and Gregory Palamas. Feofan's *Dobrotolyubiye* was his personal effort to promote both Eastern ascetic spirituality and monasticism in Russia. While striving to show the universality of spiritual needs and practical relevance of ascetic pursuits, Feofan forewarned his readers that each must work out with God his or her unique path. Feofan's belief in the diversity of religious experiences [*разные проявления духовной жизни*] is apparent in the introduction to *Dobrotolyubiye*, in which he states: 'The mysterious Christian life germinates, develops and attains perfection in a measure unique to each

individual'. The five volumes of Feofan's *Dobrotolyubiye* and his correspondence regarding his work on the anthology serve as a testimony to his thorough knowledge of the diversity of the Eastern ascetic tradition, the level of his scholarly creativity, and his independence.

Feofan's own personalist vision is rooted in the teachings of the Fathers of the *Philokalia*. From the text attributed to St Antony the Great, Feofan takes the concept of the mind [*nous*] and transforms it into a dynamic concept of the spirit [*dyx*]. In Abba Isaiah, Feofan notes the teaching on the unity which dispassion brings about within the tripartite make-up (body, soul and spirit) of the human person. Cassian's emphasis on the cleansing of the heart determines Feofan's organisation of the material within *Dobrotolyubiye*. The 'Ladder' of John Climacus shaped Feofan's understanding of the dynamics of spiritual growth and the degrees of perfection. Diadochus attracted Feofan by his pictorial descriptions of the delicate ways in which grace interacts with the human will, and Maximus the Confessor overwhelmed him by his interpretation of the co-mingling which the human and the divine minds experience in contemplation. In Theodore the Studite, Feofan discovered the ideal of monastic leadership, taking note of Theodore's exhortations to appreciate the individual differences and gifts of each member of the monastic community. In Symeon the New Theologian, Feofan found a clear focus on the personal, conscious experience of God. Yet of all the spiritual writings of the Christian East, Feofan held in highest esteem the *Homilies* of Pseudo-Macarius and Isaac the Syrian, considering them to be the surest guides into the inner sanctuary of the heart.

***Chapter Three. The individual in Ps.-Macarius , Isaac the Syrian
and Feofan the Recluse***

p. 113.

A brief examination of Feofan's selections from Ps.-Macarius for *Dobrotolyubiye* and of his use of the Ps.-Macarian Homilies in his own works reveals Feofan's great indebtedness to this ancient monastic author. Of all the prominent themes of the Ps.-Macarian Homilies, Feofan singles out the dynamics of sanctification (i.e., the 'seven fundamental conditions' of the human person) as the most dominant theme. He was enthralled by the grandeur of the Ps.-Macarian vision of the 'inspiring' of the soul and his multifaceted notion of man's freedom. Nevertheless, despite his reverence for Ps.-Macarius, Feofan read him – especially his statements on the indiscriminating acceptance of all types of people – through the spectacles of the 'complex Russian nationalist mystique'. Yet in his ascetical teaching Feofan shares with Ps.-Macarius ideas on the preservation of personal identity in communion [*'непоглощение лица'*]; attentiveness to the subjectivity and diversity of inward states; recognition of communal propensities of human nature; and emphasis on the primacy of the private experience of God as opposed to corporate worship.

Another Eastern mystic who contemplated the issues of unity and diversity in the realm of divine human communion was Isaac of Nineveh. The compilers of the Greek *Philokalia* did not include Isaac's writings in their anthology. Feofan, by contrast, concludes the second volume of his *Dobrotolyubiye* with his personal selection of Isaac's ascetical exhortations. The most interesting of these passages for our study are those which reveal the contours of Isaac's penetrating vision of the individual. It is Isaac's deep insights into the journey towards God 'inwardly in the heart' that are of the greatest value

in Feofan's view. Analysing Feofan's selection in *Do brotolyubiye* and his references to Isaac in *Put' ko Spaseniyu*, one can observe that he attached importance not only to Isaac's teachings on spiritual freedom and the imitation of divine love but also to Isaac's teaching on divine accommodation of the uniqueness and individuality of the redeemed in this age and in the age to come. Feofan's own teaching on the individuality of the human spirit [*'дух... у всякого проявляет себя своим образом '*] and on personal uniqueness [*'то как протекает процесс обращения зависит от личностей и обстоятельств каждого'*] acquires new depth when considered in the light of his predecessors' work. By his synthesis of the above insights from Ps.-Macarius and Isaac with certain romantic notions of the individual, Feofan gave patristic teaching on the human person his own new articulation.

Chapter Four. The Temptation of Romanticism. The synthesis of the patristic and Schellingian motifs in Feofan's anthropology

p. 144.

Feofan never intended to build a dogmatic or philosophical system. He was first and foremost a teacher of practical spirituality: the spiritual dimension of life was his primary concern. Examination of Feofan's spiritual teaching reveals that he is committed to a holistic definition of personhood in all of his interpretations of the Hesychast tradition of prayer; his insights there present a much more consistent and coherent picture of the human person than some of his isolated statements regarding the human soul in *Nachertaniye*, *Chto yest'* and *Pis'ma*, as well as many of his ambivalent statements on the status of the human body.

The concept of the human spirit as a self-conscious unifying agent and the foundation of man's individuality is central not only to the whole of Feofan's Hesychast teaching on divine-human union, but to his understanding of the dynamic nature of the human composite as well. In *Put'*, *Chto' yest'* and *Nachertaniye*, both the ascetic and the anthropological elements of Feofan's spiritual teaching are inextricably linked. However, Feofan is highly eclectic in developing his teaching on the human spirit. His notion of the human spirit is a synthesis of the Pauline, patristic and Schellingian motifs.

Fascination with German idealist thought was a universal phenomenon in the Russian nineteenth century religious philosophy, yet Feofan's experiments with Schellingian *Naturphilosophie* presented an unusual development in the contemporaneous Russian nineteenth century monastic tradition. While Feofan claimed that Schubert's psychology and *Naturphilosophie* could be comfortably reconciled with the Eastern patristic teaching on the Fall and redemption, he does not substantiate this claim. This synthesis creates a number of problems in Feofan's psychology, introducing an unnecessary tension between his somewhat deterministic concept of the World-Soul and his strong emphasis on human self-determination. He attempts to overcome this tension by adapting the Schellingian idea of the 'transformation' of the 'animal soul' into the 'human inspired soul'. Unfortunately, the concept of transformation, while clarifying the task of the spirit, contributes to the abstruseness of his whole discussion on this subject. Moreover, the distinction between inward spiritual freedom (which Feofan strongly advocated) and external freedom (which he sadly believed to be a phantom) only intensifies the unresolved tension within his ambivalent outlook and heightens the conflict between Feofan the individualistic mystic and Feofan the ideologist. Yet this sharp division

in Feofan's outlook should not blind a student of his writings to the significance of his personalist vision.

Chapter Five. Individual person in communion: The uniqueness of each divine-human encounter **p. 206.**

The concept of the human spirit in Feofan has not only an integrating task within the human composite, but also a relational capacity and intent in reference to divine-human communion. Personhood rooted in such attributes of the human spirit as consciousness and self-determination is an expressly relational category in Feofan. God's Spirit and man's spirit have a special 'kinship', as well as both the desire and capacity for intimate fellowship and mutual 'co-inherence' [*взаимо-вхождение*]. Hence, liberation of the spirit and conscious struggle with the passions of the flesh, which quench the spirit and deprive it of communion with God, are the keys to true personhood. Feofan unfolds this premise fully in an exposition of the central theme of his spiritual teaching – the theme of *Богочеловечие* [divine-human communion]. He understands this mystical union as a highly personal interaction between divine grace and the human capacity for self-determination which responds to the prompting of grace in two major acts of freedom: the act of conscious spiritual awakening or *metanoia*, which leads to genuine self-knowledge, and the act of self-surrender, which leads to acquiring a 'Godlike nature' and living 'in God'. Feofan develops these principles of Hesychast teaching on inter-penetration of the human and the divine in their application to the rich diversity of individual personalities, stressing the crucial importance of the development of individual consciousness in one's unique experience of communion with God.

I. *Communion in the sacraments.* Following Diadochus of Photiki, Feofan attached great significance to the sacraments as the vehicles of grace and the means of deification. In his own creative development of the teaching on the sacraments, he – typically – never lost sight of the individual person. One observes his personalist concerns (with emphasis on conscious and voluntary interplay of grace and freedom) in his insistence on the fragile and contingent nature of the effects of baptism, in his teaching on human initiative in *zobreniye* [preparation for the Eucharist], in his reflections on the intimate inter-penetration of the human person and Christ in the mystery of the Eucharist, and in his descriptions of the gradualness of Christ's *vseleniye* [taking possession] of the human soul.

II. *Acquisition of self-knowledge: the 'first act of freedom'.* Feofan's teaching on self-knowledge further reveals the personalist nature of his Hesychasm. He understood the attainment of self-knowledge as it accords with the *Philokalic* tradition; i.e., as an essential stage in the redemptive process of restoring primal dignity and glory to the human person and as an integral part of divine-human communion. Feofan further elucidates this patristic theme of spiritual growth by combining the teachings of the ancient spiritual masters with his own insights into the psychology of human spiritual development. He insists that self-knowledge is acquired through a gradual, voluntary development of independent spiritual self-consciousness. This expressly psychological approach combined with deep rootedness in the patristic heritage represents one of Feofan's most valuable contributions to Russian nineteenth century Hesychasm. These specific emphases and such wide use of the patristic tradition are not found in either Ignati Bryanchaninov or in the Startsi of Optino.

III. *Ascent to God: The 'second act of freedom'*. More clearly than any of his predecessors or contemporaries in the Russian spiritual tradition, Feofan demonstrates in his writings that in Eastern Orthodox spirituality, communion with God through prayer, partaking of Christ, and conscious realisation of His presence in the soul are the highest degrees of not just spiritual development, but of the overall personal development as well. In *Chto yest' dukhovnaya zhizn'* he states emphatically that 'those who do not have the movements and the actions of the spirit within them have not attained the level of human dignity.' The person praying consciously and contemplating God voluntarily is the person at his or her highest. The notion of personhood and the teaching on prayer and contemplation are thus indissolubly linked. One may even speak of the anthropology of Orthodox prayer in Feofan. Yet, the most remarkable fact is that even in describing the climax of the spiritual journey (the heights of contemplation), Feofan does not lose sight of individual persons in their diversity, their different spiritual capacities, temperaments and mentalities.

Conclusions

p. 263.

Feofan surpassed the startsi of Optino in his articulation of the deeper insights of the Eastern ascetic vision of personhood and in providing a thoroughly patristic theological basis for that vision. He was the first in the Russian Hesychast tradition to demonstrate with unparalleled vividness the legitimacy of spiritual spontaneity and diversity, the uniqueness and highly subjective nature of each religious experience. It is especially significant that Feofan derives these emphases from within the depths of the tradition

generally perceived as intolerant of non-conformity. His willingness to experiment with the synthesis of certain patristic and German romantic concepts in his anthropology testifies to his openness and creativity as well as his indebtedness to his immediate background. As for the paradox of Feofan's disregard for the legitimacy of religious diversity and individual freedom (outside of his tradition) in his apologetic writings and practical views – this only highlights the perennial issue of the breadth of religious and even spiritual horizons and serves as a prophetic warning to all those forms of Russian nationalism which have no regard for the inviolable nature of personal freedom and for the fact that man in himself has an irreducible value.

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INTRODUCTION

The common body of the Church is composed of many different characters and minds, ... [and] it is absolutely necessary that its ruler should be ... as far as possible manifold and varied in his treatment of individuals.

Gregory of Nazianzus, *In Defence of his flight to Pontus*, Or. II, 44.

St. Feofan the Recluse stands as a defining figure in the theological life of nineteenth century Russia. It has been rightly said that ‘We cannot understand Russian Orthodoxy unless we understand the celebrated Recluse’.¹ Most of us do not know Feofan at all. Many of those who do, see him as an ambivalent thinker who championed freedom and diversity within the confines of his own ascetic tradition, while denying it to society as a whole. It is my intention to seek the source of these conflicting aspects of his thought by examining his most significant spiritual writings. A personality not unfamiliar to modern man will emerge from my analysis of this complex thinker: a personality torn by conflicting ideals, but able to reach an inner balance and an acceptable degree of peace.

Let us look, then, at this ‘modern man’ of the 1800s. Where does he stand among his contemporaries? While Feofan was certainly not as popular a *starets* (spiritual director) in nineteenth century Russia as were St. Serafim of Sarov, the

¹ S. Tyszkiewicz, S. J., in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, xvi (1950), p. 412, cited by Bishop Kallistos (Ware) in his Introduction to *The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology*, compiled by

startsi of Optina Hermitage or St. Ioann of Kronstadt, he is widely recognised as one of the most prolific and significant expositors and apologists of Russian Hesychasm. The depth and the multifaceted breadth of his apologetic exposition of the very ethos of Russian spirituality—i.e., the ascetic vision of the human person in intimate divine-human communion, the teaching on the prayer of the heart, and the deeply sacramental nature of the Russian religious consciousness—challenge all other Russian monastic writers of his day.

In his writings, we find a compelling exposition of the patristic roots of the teaching on the ‘acquisition of the Holy Spirit’ shared by St Serafim of Sarov in his famous conversation with Motovilov; a theological basis for the expressly personal approach to spiritual direction evidenced in the life and the letters of the startsi of Optina Hermitage²; and a balanced and more attractive alternative to ‘the somewhat sombre and forbidding picture of Christian living’³ pictured in the writings of Bishop Ignati Bryanchaninov. Yet, despite the unique thrust of his arguments, Feofan remains mysteriously obscure.

Canonised in 1988 in connection with the celebration of the millennium of Christianity in Russia and recognised by Russian scholars as a Doctor of the Russian

Igumen Chariton of Valamo, trans. by E. Kadloubovsky and E.M. Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 14.

² See Macarius, Starets of Optino, *Russian Letters of Direction, 1834-1860*, ed. and tr. by Iulia Beausobre (Westminster: Dacre, 1944), pp. 18-19 and 81-85; see also Father Sergei Hackel, ‘Russian spirituality’ in *The Study of Spirituality* ed. by Cheslyn Jones, *et al* (London: SPCK, 1986), pp. 259- 276, especially p. 271.

³ Bishop Kallistos (Ware), ‘Introduction to the English edition’ of Bishop Ignati Bryanchaninov’s *The Arena: An offering to contemporary monasticism*, trans. by Archimandrite Lazarus (Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1991), p. xiv.

Church,⁴ Feofan still awaits his interpreter. Russian studies on this scholar-saint are scarce and fragmentary⁵ and no single English monograph devoted either to Feofan's spiritual legacy or to his specific concept of the individual person has yet been published. Feofan's teaching on the uniqueness of each individual person stands out as a singular achievement in Russian nineteenth century monastic spiritual literature. He emphasizes the primacy of the faith of the individual in relation to society and family and dwells on the intensely subjective and private nature of religious experiences. We do not find anything comparable to these emphases and their depth of treatment in St Seraphim of Sarov, in the startsi of Optino, or in Ignati Bryanchaninov. Feofan's teaching on the human person also stands in stark contrast to the anthropological teaching of the founder of the Slavophile movement, Aleksei S. Khomiakov, who claims that the seal of the Holy Ghost is not granted to individuals in their solitary subjectivity and insists that the 'church is not a multitude of persons in their separate individuality'.⁶ A staunch defender of the Church himself, Feofan never denied the significance of the communal or *sobornyi* aspect of religious experience, yet in his ascetical writings he was eager to stress the subjectivity, diversity and uniqueness of spiritual conditions and experiences. Repeatedly Feofan insists, 'Humanity or a nation does not consist of one corporate person',⁷ each human being is 'an independent and unique personality' [lit. '*самостоятельная, особная*

⁴ See Hieromonk Georgi Tertyshnikov, 'Bogoslovskoye nasledie episkopa Feofana Zatvornika (1815-1894) in *Bogoslovskie trudy* (Moscow: Moskovskaya Patriarkhiya, 1976), XVI, 202.

⁵ For a brief survey of the existing studies on Feofan see the section *Feofanian research and the influence of Feofan's writings* in chapter I of this thesis.

⁶ A.S.Khomiakov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 8 vols (Moscow: Universitetskaya tip., 1990), II, p. 3.

⁷ *Chto est' dukhovnaya zhizn' I kak na neiye nastroitsya*, 6th edn (Leningrad: RIO "Sankt-Peterburg", 1991), p. 63, see also pp. 36, 43, 91, 268. Hereafter *Chto est' ...*

личность ']⁸, a 'unique and independent person' [lit. 'особое самостоятельное лицо']⁹ and cautions that one has to keep in mind 'the infinite diversity of inward states' [lit. 'многообразное состояние лиц']¹⁰.

In his use of terms and in his emphases he also demonstrates his acute awareness of the major issues in the heated socio-political discussions regarding the individual that were spearheaded as early as 1840 by such Russian radicals as Belinsky and Herzen.¹¹ Feofan rejected populist theories of human progress and appeals for radical political change. He was convinced, rather, that problems lay not in institutions but in individual persons and in their need of spiritual regeneration. In his involvement in the debate with political radicals and Orthodox liberals and reformers and in his impassioned defence of the relevance and potency of the Hesychast vision of personhood, Feofan gave a new expression to the ancient teaching of the Desert Fathers on the eternal value of the human person. By a cruel and ironic twist of fate, the Vysha monastery where Feofan wrote his works on the dignity of the life in the spirit was desecrated by the communists and turned into a psychiatric hospital. Yet it only exposed the bankruptcy of the materialistic collectivist and anti-individualistic utopia.

Yet, Feofan's legacy contains not only the heights of the Hesychast vision of personhood and of Russian monastic spirituality, it equally reflects the inner

⁸ *Sobraniye Pisem Svyatitelya Feofana*, 8 vols (Moscow: Izdaniye Afonskago Russkago Panteleimonova monastyrya, 1898-1901), I, 160. Hereafter *Sobraniye Pisem*.

⁹ *Nachertaniye khristianskago npravoucheniya*, 2nd edn (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr', 1895), p. 14. Hereafter *Nach.*

¹⁰ *Put' ko Spaseniyu*, 8th edn (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr', 1899), p. 265; see also pp. 72, 91, 220, 252.

¹¹ For a helpful survey of the views of Russian thinkers on individual personality and the issues under discussion during the period in question see George L. Kline, 'Changing attitudes toward the individual' in *The transformation of Russian society: Aspects of social change since 1861*, ed. by Cyril E. Black (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1960), pp. 606-624.

unresolved conflicts and the external challenges facing this tradition. Feofan's own outlook was marked by a major contradiction between his passionate belief in the freedom of individual expression in the realm of ascetic spiritual experience and his zealous adherence to the idea of coercion to doctrinal conformity, authoritarianism and the principle of submissiveness to the state. It is as if his mind was a constant battleground between the two opposing ascetic ideals or monastic mindsets: that of the meek, tolerant and compassionate contemplative *zavolzhets* Nil of Sora and the uncompromising and ruthlessly authoritarian social activist Joseph of Volokolamsk. One can hardly do justice to Feofan's ascetical teaching on the uniqueness of each human being, on the infinite depth of every soul, and on the interior freedom with which every human person is endowed, without taking into account the paradoxes of his vision, his practical attitudes and his own personality which left its distinctive mark on everything he wrote. It is, therefore, essential not only to determine what specific concepts constitute Feofan's notion of individual personality¹², but also to assess how Feofan's teaching on inward freedom expressed in his spiritual writings relates to his views on external freedom and to his practical attitudes to Christians of other traditions.

¹² The issue of individual personality in Russian theology is touched upon indirectly in some studies in connection with the notion of *sobornost'* [*catholicity*] and mostly in reference to Russian 20th century theologians who lived and worked outside of Russia, but no one has analysed the evolution of Russian nineteenth century monastic anthropology. The nineteenth century was a crucial, formative period for Russian theology; it was characterised by a reaction to westernisation, a search for genuinely Russian cultural identity and a return to the real roots of Russian Christianity. While the works of such 20th century émigré Russian theologians as S.Bulgakov, V.Lossky and G.Florovsky are gradually reaching Russian intellectuals (with the cautious approval of the conservative ecclesiastical hierarchy), in the Orthodox seminaries and academies in today's Russia the ascetical writings of Feofan and Ignati Bryanchaninov and the Dogmatic Theologies of Makary Bulgakov and Silvester Malevansky are still regarded as standard authoritative expositions of

While the aim of this study is to determine Feofan's stance on the nature of the individual person and individual freedom, I opt to approach the subject from the standpoint of the Orthodox patristic tradition which Feofan expounded, and in the light of some significant trends in the development of Russian 19th century ecclesiastical life. It involves, as well, an exposition of the key concepts and issues in Feofan's teaching on the salvation of man. For the purposes of our study the most relevant of his works are *Put' ko spaseniyu* [The Way to Salvation], *Chto est' dukhovnaya zhizn i kak na nee nastroitsya* [What is Spiritual Life and How to Begin it], *Nachertaniye khristinaskago nrovoucheniya* [Outlines of the Christian Moral Teaching], *Tolkovanie poslaniya sv. Apostola Pavla k Rimlyanam* [Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans], *O pravoslavii s predosterezheniyami ot pogreshenii protiv nego* [On Orthodoxy with a Warning about Sinning Against It] and *Sobraniye Pisem* [The Collected Letters].

Finally, I must mention that I adhere to Feofan's usage, when I use the phrase 'individual person' or 'the individual' in this study: I always mean a single human being as opposed to a group [*'особое, самостоятельное лицо'*]¹³ with no specific reference to Vladimir Lossky's distinction between 'person' and 'individual'. Feofan was not aware of this distinction in the form in which it is found in Lossky's writings and it would be inadmissible to try to fit Feofan's teaching into the categories of this twentieth century theologian.¹⁴

Orthodox beliefs. For the titles of the writings of the above mentioned authors and other details see Bibliography.

¹³ *Nach.*, p. 14.

¹⁴ Nevertheless, it is important to note at this point that Lossky's concern to disassociate the definition of the human person from human nature and its attributes by contrasting such terms as

‘person’ and ‘individual’ should not lead one to conclude that he perceived all human beings created in God’s image to be identical and impersonal. Quite to the contrary he distinguished between ‘natural’ individuality as a ‘particular configuration of repeatable natural features’ and ‘uniqueness’ of each person’s relationship to God which has its foundation in the divine image and its attribute of self-determination. It is rather unfortunate that Lossky’s distinction between ‘person’ and ‘individual’ has led some to the perception that the very notion of individuality as uniqueness and distinctiveness is suspect and sinful. Lossky indeed was against those interpretations in which persons are determined and governed by their nature consisting of repeatable and definable elements or features. (See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991, pp. 121-122.) Yet he emphasised that the image of God (as a divine seal imprinted on the human nature) facilitates a distinctively personal relationship to God which is unique to each human being. (See *ibid.*, p. 127.) Thus, one may speak of kenotic individuality or spiritual individuality where each experience of self-giving is highly personal and unique. For a thorough and stimulating discussion of Lossky’s views on the human person see Rowan D. Williams, ‘The theology of Vladimir Nikolaievich Lossky: an exposition and critique’, unpublished D. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1976.

CHAPTER I

THE LIFE AND WORK OF ST FEOFAN THE RECLUSE

'Feofan virtually negates Christianity as a religion of liberty. He is still in a religion of adolescence ... Feofan is possessed by fear of temptations; he is in panic of peril threatening the immature... . In a tsar, a governor, a father or a master he sees a hierarchical rank to which absolute submission is obligatory... . It is a consistent system of submission and fear; there is no place in it for liberty and love.'

N. Berdyaev, *Smysl tvorchestva*, reprint (Moscow, 1994), pp. 328-329, footnote 7.

There is certain universal daring in Feofan's outlook, a great spiritual freedom and suppleness; freedom from conventionality.... One can hardly label Feofan's religious ideal as conventional. His design cannot be discerned in the applied comments on the 'relative obligations' of Christians of various stations. Above all his ideal is that of spiritual life... Feofan's theme is always about the soul as it stands before God in contrition and in repentance or in prayer.

G. Florovsky, *Puti russkago bogosloviya* (Paris, 1983), pp. 396, 399.

Cited above are two statements, two notable attempts to describe the essence of Feofan's religious thinking. Why would he provoke such equally passionate, yet diametrically opposite appraisals? Was one of the above quoted eminent authors totally mistaken? Could both of them be true or does the truth lie somewhere in the middle? Can the details of Feofan's biography and his immediate background throw light on his controversial heritage and on the central issue of our study: Feofan's notion of the individual? The hypothesis which I would like to offer in this thesis is

that there was a sharp division in Feofan's highly eclectic outlook and personality: he was both an individualistic Hesychast mystic enthralled by the ideas of spiritual freedom and diversity, and a zealous ideologue of traditionalist Orthodoxy and tsarist autocracy. He paradoxically combined in his personality the best of Nil of Sora and the worst of Joseph of Volokolamsk and only in moments of genuine spiritual calm was he able to resolve the inner conflict between his passion for spiritual freedom and his authoritarian zeal. We are fortunate that all of his works both published and unpublished and a wealthy collection of his private and public correspondence have been preserved. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief summary of the major events of Feofan's life and to examine at some length those details of his biography and those influences on his personality which are of relevance to the object of our study.

Childhood and education

Georgi Vasiliyevich Govorov, in religion Feofan, was born 10 January 1815 in the village of Chernavskoye near the ancient town of Yelets in the province of Orel, one of the seven children of the rector of Chernavskoye and rural dean, Vasili Timofeyevich Govorov and his wife Tatyana Ivanovna.¹ The personal piety of his parents and the solid education with which both of them were endowed account for the wholesome upbringing which Georgi received in his early years at home and at the village church, which in his early childhood had become his second home. According to his biographer Smirnov, the lively and playful Georgi, who often accompanied his

father to evensong and assisted him in the sanctuary, was not averse to ringing the church bells. Once, after vespers, he was locked up in the bell-tower by a guard who failed to notice him there. Trying to avoid trouble, the boy unhesitatingly climbed down the rope which was tied to the clapper.² Learning of the incident his father Vasili exclaimed rather prophetically: “Well, Yegorushka, you will become a bell-ringer or a bishop!”³

According to Smirnov, Georgi inherited from his father a brilliant mind and from his mother an open and cheerful disposition, as well as his outward appearance.⁴ On the surviving portraits, made two or three years before Feofan’s death, we see a venerable ascetic with a long handsome face, broad open forehead, and on some portraits a peaceful - yet on other pictures, stern look in his deep-set eyes. His relatives and close friends remembered him as full of life, high-spirited, kind-hearted and impressionable. There was a certain gentleness about him and something distinctively feminine in his nature.⁵ He had a soft voice and in his student years was reticent to speak in public, but his outstanding gift for writing already attracted the attention of his teachers and classmates at the Academy in Kiev.⁶ Whatever he set out to write, he wrote with passion, sincerity and brilliance. It is in this mode, i.e., in his own writings (treatises, sermons, articles and private letters) that we see the other

¹ For a brief overview of the available nineteenth century and twentieth century biographical sources and monographs on Feofan, see the last section of this chapter.

² P.A.Smirnov, *Zhizn' i Ucheniye Preosvyashchennago Feofana, Vyshenskago Zatvornika* (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr', 1915), pp. 12-13. Hereafter Smirnov.

³ See I.A.Krutikov, *Svyatitel' Feofan, zatvornik i podvizhnik Vyshenskoj pustyni*, 2nd edn (Moscow: [n.pub.], 1905), p. 8. Hereafter Krutikov.

⁴ P.A.Smirnov, pp. 11-13.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁶ G. Tertyshnikov, *Zhizn' i Deyatel'nost' Feofana Zatvornika, Episkopa Vladimirskago i Suzdal'skago* (Thessalonica: Pravoslavny Pchel'nik, 1994), pp. 4-6, 11. Hereafter Tertyshnikov.

side of Feofan, that side which is not directly brought to our attention in his official biographies and Lives: we see Feofan the austere traditionalist, the passionate controversialist and an implacable defender and zealot of Eastern Orthodox asceticism.

In his formal education the young Georgi clearly benefited from the better side of the ‘pre-Reform’ ecclesiastical schools under Nicholas I, where he was able, despite all the shortcomings of that educational system, to cultivate his strong interest in philosophy and psychology. (He initially studied these disciplines at the seminary in Orel under Professor Yevfimi A. Ostromyslensky.⁷) His mentors also observed Georgi’s keen interest in the ascetic views which many monastic spiritual directors in the first half of the nineteenth century began to channel to seminary students. Even in his early seminary years in Orel (1829-1837) he was attracted to the spirituality of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk. On one occasion, still in his student days, he walked more than 60 miles to Zadonsk in order to worship at St Tikhon’s tomb. Tikhon’s highly personalist, Christ-centred spirituality, his withdrawal from episcopal office and reclusion in a little monastery – all these became Feofan’s ideal. Yet, Smolitsch rightly points out that while in his ethical teaching Feofan owes much to the influence of St Tikhon of Zadonsk, his style is distinctively different from Tikhon’s as the two

⁷ Yevfimi Andreyevich Ostromyslensky (1803-87), ecclesiastical writer, the admirer and biographer of the remarkable missionary Makari Glukharev (1792-1847). See *Entsiklopedichesky Slovar’*, ed. by I.B.Andreyevsky and others, 54 vols (St Petersburg: F.A. Brokgauz, 1890), XLIII, 366. Hereafter *Entsiklopedichesky Slovar’*; also Tertyshnikov, p.7.

authors are separated by a century.⁸ There were, in addition, other influences characteristic of the Russian nineteenth century religious and intellectual scene which account for the rich complexity of Feofan's religious outlook.

The Kiev Theological Academy, which Georgi entered in 1837 was experiencing the best period of its history. Some of the most significant trends and developments in the Russian theology of the early decades of the century were represented there: the development of Biblical studies, the 'philosophical awakening' and the revival of patristic and historical studies.⁹ Feofan was fortunate enough to study dogmatics under a notable theologian of the time, Archbishop Dimitry Muretov (1806-1883).¹⁰ Dimitry had a great influence on the students and Feofan was no exception. Many years later, in his reclusion at the monastery of Vysha, Feofan spoke of Muretov as 'the most intellectually gifted, thoroughly educated and morally upright' of his teachers.¹¹ His theology was primarily of a philosophical nature, yet amidst the heavy influence of modern German metaphysics prevailing in the Russian seminaries at the time, he possessed genuine creative independence. In his lectures he stressed the importance of understanding the spiritual roots of each dogmatic

⁸ I.K.Smolitsch, *Russkoye Monashestvo 988-1917. Zhizn' i uchenie startsev* (Moscow: "Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya", 1997), p. 433.

⁹ See G. Florovsky, *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, 3rd edn (Paris: YMCA Press, 1983), pp. 230-233. Hereafter *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*.

¹⁰ On Archbishop Dimitry see M.F.Yastrebov, 'Pamyati vysokopreosvyashchennykh Dimitriya (Muretova) i Makariya (Bulgakova)' and G.Bulashev, 'K biografii Dimitriya, A. Khersonskago' both in *Trudy Kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii*, 1884, VI. Most of Dimitry's works were published in Moscow, see *Slova, besedy i rechi Dimitriya, A.[rkhiepiskopa] Khersonskago*, 5 vols, 2nd edn (Moscow: [n. pub.], 1897).

¹¹ P.A.Smirnov, p. 19.

conception, the primacy of the spiritual experience.¹² Feofan was very receptive to the spiritual insights and the creative method of Dimitry¹³. In fact, the stress on the primacy of the spiritual experience of the individual person, which was so valuable in Dimitry's lectures, became one of the central motifs of Feofan's own ascetical writings.

Another notable individual who made a lasting impression on Feofan was the professor of homiletics and his townsman, Yakov K. Amfiteatrov (1802-1848).¹⁴ A striking similarity exists between the religious outlooks and political loyalties of Feofan and Amfiteatrov. The latter was a strict ascetic and a passionate opponent of the radical political circle of V. Belinsky. He authored the first Russian Orthodox textbook on the art of preaching: his course represented a departure from French homiletical models and a return to the style of the patristic sermon.¹⁵ (Feofan later cultivated this distinctive style in his own sermons through the rigorous study of Chrysostom.) In his *Pis'ma o Khristianskoi Zhizni*, Feofan, reminiscing about his days as a student, mentions his memorable discussions with Amfiteatrov from his student days about the reality of the spiritual realm, the meaning of suffering and the purpose of the ascetical life.¹⁶ Yet a deep commitment to ascetic spirituality and the influence of such renowned anti-western traditionalists as Amfiteatrov did not preclude

¹² See G. Florovsky, *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, pp. 219-20. Florovsky also points out that in his inquisitiveness and the power and lucidity of his thought Muretov was similar to Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov), see *ibid.*.

¹³ In contradistinction to Metropolitan Makary Bulgakov (1816-1882) who studied dogmatics under the same teacher.

¹⁴ See Yepiskop Feofan, *Pis'ma o Khristianskoi Zhizni*, 3rd edn (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr', 1908), pp. 123-24. Hereafter *Pis'ma o Khristianskoi Zhizni*. See also: Smirnov, pp. 19-20.

¹⁵ See his *Chteniye o Tserkovnoi Slovesnosti ili Gomiletika* (Kiev: [n.pub.], 1846). See also Smirnov, p. 19 and *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, p. 199.

Feofan's growing interest in the novel and highly attractive ideas of the early German romantics. And Feofan had no need to travel far to avail himself of the teachings of Schelling and his disciples.

One truly remarkable proponent of the ideas of German romantic thinkers at the Kiev Academy was 'the meek philosopher' Petr S. Avsenev (in religion the Archimandrite Feofan). His lectures in psychology presented a real counterbalance to the rationalistic tendencies in the curriculum. He was a man of great erudition and wide theological and philosophical horizons. Psychology for him was not an experimental science in the modern sense of the word, it was, rather, a romantic-theosophic theory of 'inward contemplation' of the human soul along with some elements of philosophical anthropology, what came to be described as a philosophy of the spirit.¹⁷

In his mystical approach to psychology Avsenev combined insights from the Schellingians and Baader with Eastern patristic asceticism, most notably that of Ps.-Macarius and Isaac the Syrian. He also drew on Plato and Plotinus.¹⁸ Feofan's view of man, especially in its speculative side (e.g. the concept of the 'inspired soul'), owes

¹⁶ *Pis'ma o Khristianskoi Zhizni*, pp.123-24.

¹⁷ Avsenev's fascination with German metaphysics was not an isolated incident. The first half of the nineteenth century was marked by four distinctive dominant influences in Russian intellectual life. German idealist thought (represented by such names as Hegel, Schelling, Fichte and Friedrich Schlegel) was one such pervasive 'stimulant'. It penetrated universities and spiritual academies in Kiev, Moscow and St. Petersburg almost at the same time with the Hesychast revival associated with the earlier publication in 1793 and the growing popularity of Paisi Velichkovsky's Slavonic translation of the Greek *Philokalia*. The other two major influences were the Slavophile movement on the right, which epitomised the Russian search for spiritual and historical identity, and the revolutionary movement of political radicals on the left. Yet quite interestingly, as Isaiah Berlin correctly observed, German metaphysics made an equally profound impact among Slavophiles, political radicals, and Orthodox theologians. See Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 136.

much to the influence of certain Romantic ideas expounded by his teacher Avsenev (such as for instance the teaching on the soul and spirit as different ‘degrees’ of development of ‘one and the same spiritual reality’), yet there are significant differences between Avsenev’s and Feofan’s anthropologies conditioned by Feofan’s rootedness in the Philokalic tradition. In chapter IV of this thesis we shall look more closely at the nature and the extent of this influence.

The nineteenth century was also an age of the great revival of monasticism in Russia. The ideal of the learned monk had been promoted by such men as Metropolitan Platon Levshin (1737-1811) who was determined to raise the standing of monks in society.¹⁹ We have already mentioned the wide influence of the Slavonic translation of the Greek *Philokalia*, yet one should also note the living example set in the previous century by its translator - Starets Paisi Velichkovsky - and his model of an integration of learning and monastic asceticism which Feofan so fruitfully emulated in his life. Feofan also took very close to heart Paisi’s candid revelations about his futile attempts to find an ideal spiritual guide. These confessions of Paisi, as Feofan would later admit, confirmed his own earlier intuitions about the importance of stressing the need to develop one’s own mature spiritual discernment.²⁰

¹⁸ See D. Pospekhov’s ‘Biograficheskaya zametka’ in Feofan Avsenev, ‘Iz Zapisok po Psikhologii’, in *Sbornik iz lektsii byvshikh professorov Kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii* (Kiev: [n.pub.], 1869), pp. III-XVI. Hereafter ‘Iz Zapisok’. Also *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, pp. 241, 399.

¹⁹ See Sergius Bolshakoff, *Russian Mystics* in Cistercian Studies Series No. 26 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1976) p. 99. Hereafter *Russian Mystics*. See also: *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, pp. 109-10.

²⁰ We find him writing in *Put’*, p. 47: ‘Man becomes a complete person when he attains self-knowledge [*приходит к самопознанию*] and reasonable independence, when he becomes an absolute master and manager of his thoughts and actions [*становится полным владыкою и распорядителем своих мыслей и дел*] and holds certain thoughts not because others shared them

The Kiev Academy with its rigorous academic programme and the nearby presence of the Pecherskaya Lavra with its relics and the caves of many Russian ascetics had a great impact on the young and mystically inclined Georgi. He developed a strong friendship with Starets Partheni, the confessor of the Kiev Metropolitan and of the Lavra, and it was this spiritual director who was the first to point out to Georgi the essence of Hesychast spirituality: the unceasing prayer of the ‘mind kept in the heart’. Partheni’s vision was inspiring. Yet there were certain issues which anguished Georgi, led him to earnest searching for solutions and could have deterred him from monastic life. He witnessed the growing rift in Russian ecclesiastical society: the ‘tragic schism’ between the learned monks (from whose midst were selected the candidates for episcopacy) and the uneducated monks in the monasteries. And he saw, as well, the wall of misunderstanding and antagonism between the privileged class of the ‘black’ ruling clergy and the ‘white’ married parish clergy to which Georgi’s father Vasili belonged.²¹

In his fourth year in the Academy, Georgi’s internal struggles and intensive search for his own spiritual path had led him to a mature determination to commit himself to a monastic life, a decision which was also influenced, to some degree, by the sad news coming from home: in 1838 his mother died and the following year, his father. In October of 1840 on the Orthodox Feast of the Protecting Veil of the Most Holy Mother of God, Georgi wrote in his petition which he submitted to the Academy

with him but because he himself finds them to be true. ... It is man’s honour not to be a blind confessor [*не слепым исповедником быть есть честь человеку*].

²¹ On the inner problems of nineteenth century monasticism in Russia see Arkhimandrit Feodor (Bukharev), *O dukhovnykh potrebnostyakh zhizni* (Moscow: Stolitsa, 1991); see also *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, pp. 339-349, 391- 394.

Rector: 'Being constantly possessed by zeal for theological studies and for a solitary life and in order to unite the two in my future service to the Church, I made a commitment to devote my life to the monastic vocation.'²² This terse, bold statement indicates that Georgi did not view the solitary life in itself as his ultimate goal, that he was convinced that he had a mission to accomplish and that he saw learned monasticism as the most fitting avenue for the fulfilment of his mission. Did he foresee that the path of obedience which he was about to enter would include many public tasks and heavy administrative duties which he would find distracting and cumbersome? Regardless of any apprehensions he may have harboured, in February of 1841 at the age of 26 he was admitted to monastic vows with the name Feofan.

The pilgrimage

The first eighteen years of his ecclesiastical career were for the most part devoted to work in the sphere of education, interrupted only by Feofan's service in the Russian Orthodox missions in Palestine and Constantinople. During this period Feofan experienced all levels and all types of the Orthodox educational system. Besides carrying on a fruitful teaching career and involving himself in intense literary activity, he held various administrative posts, from the headmastership of the parochial school to the rectorship of one of the few academies. He was reassigned in December of 1842 from the position of the inspector at the Kievo-Sofiisky school to the Novgorod seminary where he would provide academic supervision and teach logic and psychology. After two years he was transferred to St. Petersburg Academy as the

²² Cited in V.P.Rybinsky, 'Pamyati preosvyashchennago Feofana, episkopa Vladimirskago i

head of the faculty of moral theology; in 1855 he was appointed rector of the seminary in Olonetsk and in June of 1857 Feofan was inaugurated to the rectorship of St. Petersburg Academy - the highest post of the Russian Orthodox educational establishment.

During the period between 1844 and 1847, while holding the chair of Moral and Pastoral Theology at St. Petersburg Academy, Feofan wrote his own course of lectures on spiritual development according to the Eastern ascetic tradition.²³ He could not possibly have used the existing textbooks on Christian Ethics by Platon Fiveisky and P.F. Soliarsky, written according to the liberal moralistic Protestant models from Germany such as the popular Richard Rothe's *Theologische Ethik* (1845-1848). Feofan envisioned his task as counteracting the secularised and westernised 'adapted' Christianity, which was at the time fashionable among the upper strata of society and was promoted by such prominent ecclesiastical figures as Gerasim Pavsky, the religious instructor to the crown prince Alexander Nikolaevich, and Ioann Yanyshchev, the confessor to the Russian Emperor. Feofan's new course on Christian Ethics formed the basis of one of his most significant books, *Put' ko Spaseniyu*.²⁴ It was a novel approach to the subject of Christian Ethics, having nothing to do with either medieval Catholic propositional systems of ethics or the

Suzdal'skago' in *Trudy Kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii* (Kiev: [n.pub.], 1894), I, p. 422.

²³ The course was an immediate success and received the approval of the notable teacher of Orthodox ascetic spirituality Bishop Ignati Bryanchaninov. See *Sobraniye pisem Svyatitelya Feofana*, 8 vols (Moscow: Izdaniye Afonskago Russkago Panteleimono monastyrja, 1898-1901), I, 222. Hereafter *Sobraniye Pisem*.

²⁴ The first edition appeared in Moscow in 1868 at the expense of the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon on Mount Athos. It was to be reissued seven times in Feofan's lifetime alone.

‘optimistic’ Russian renditions of German textbooks on natural morality which had become the staple diet in Russian seminaries in the second half of the nineteenth century. In *Put’ ko Spaseniyu* Feofan demonstrates his mastery of the ancient ascetic teachings of the Desert Fathers on the human person and his ability to give those teachings a new, compelling and highly personal expression. He prefaced the book with a largely autobiographical chapter on the spiritual formation of children and young people in which, in response to the challenges of the times, he stresses the importance of the integration of faith and learning.²⁵ Throughout the book he makes numerous references to and provides direct citations from a large number of Byzantine and Russian Orthodox authorities on spiritual life.²⁶ Yet, Feofan’s approach to Christian Ethics is characterised not only by his strict adherence to the Eastern ascetical tradition and the wide use of the patristic and later Hesychast sources. What is of primary significance for our present study is that it is characterised by his highly personalist stance and his expressed attention to and recognition of the great diversity of religious experiences. His key terms in *Put’ ko Spaseniyu* are: *дух человека*, *внутри-пребывание*, *пробуждение духа*, conscious communion with God through the engagement of one’s consciousness [*сознание*] and freedom [*свобода*] (as the attributes of the human spirit), and one of his central concepts is the fundamental importance of the development of individual consciousness and mature self-

²⁵ See *Put’ ko Spaseniyu*, 8th edn (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr’, 1899), pp. 9-68. Hereafter *Put’*.

²⁶ He uses extensively the writings of Chrysostom, Ps.-Macarius, Diadochus of Photiki, John Climacus, Isaac the Syrian, and Gregory of Sinai and makes reference to the works attributed to Anthony the Great as well as the works of Cassian, Basil of Caesarea, Ephrem the Syrian, Hesychius the Priest, Barsanuphius, Abba Dorotheus, Andrew of Crete, Symeon the New Theologian, Nicephorus of Mt. Athos, Nil of Sora, Paisi Velichkovsky and Tikhon of Zadonsk. Of the Western

determination. He captivates the reader by his portrayal of the infinite diversity of persons engaged in ascetic pursuits and by the kaleidoscope of their uniquely individual reactions and approaches to the spiritual warfare. One is struck by the boldness, astuteness and thoroughness with which he approaches the most delicate and complex issues. It is in *Put' ko Spaseniyu* that he pronounces that 'each individual is the best inventor of the rules of strife for himself' ['лучший изобретатель брани – каждое лицо само для себя. '] and insists that the experience of the individual believer is of greater educational value than even his own writings and the teachings of the spiritual masters. Yet it is important to mention here that this strong emphasis on individual experience in the spiritual teaching in *Put'* has a corresponding opposite pole in Feofan's apologetic writings and in his practical views and attitudes expressed in his private and public correspondence. There is a tension in his outlook between the personal and the collective, a conflict between his stress on the primacy of the experience of the individual believer and his insistence on the 'preponderance of the communality of confession' or the primacy of tradition as the expression of conciliar consciousness. This appears to be a characteristic tension between Feofan the individualistic Hesychast mystic and scholar and Feofan the guardian and the apologist of the Orthodox tradition. I shall discuss at greater length the implications of this antinomy and Feofan's attempts at its reconciliation in chapters IV and V of this thesis.

During his years in St. Petersburg Feofan also published some of his first articles in *Khristianskoye chteniye* and *Mayak*. Yet his literary activity and his

contemplative life were seriously hampered by the intensive programme of events at the Academy coupled with various administrative responsibilities. He found it difficult to bear the formalism and the ostentatious lifestyle of the Academy administration, it was rather alien and wearisome to his spirit. He confided his thoughts of dissatisfaction to his spiritual father Bishop Ieremiya (Solovyev):

For God's sake forgive me. I keep annoying your Grace with my follies or perhaps haughty undertakings. I am saying 'perhaps' for they are not yet well thought through. I keep them in my soul but they disturb me and wear me out; they do not abate, but keep growing and growing. Yet, O Lord, by the ways Thou knowest Thyself alone, order my going aright. My academic position is becoming an unbearable burden. I would rather go to church and remain there...²⁷

In August of 1847 Feofan was presented with an opportunity to be relieved from the pressures of the life at the Academy. The Synod favourably considered his request to join the Russian Orthodox Mission which was being established under the supervision of the famous orientalist and archaeologist Porfiry Uspensky. The journey to Palestine was a major shaping event in Theophan's life, it presented him with a rare opportunity to gain first hand knowledge of all aspects of the life of the Orthodox Church in the Orient. The very possibility of such an experience was all the more significant for Feofan in view of that fact that in his religious and political outlook (and in the Russian mind religion and politics were always closely intertwined) the Orthodox East with its spiritual heritage played a very important role. Together with the majority of the Russian intelligentsia and prominent learned clergy he was caught up in the controversy between the Slavophiles and the Westernisers concerning the vocation of

extensively uses St. Paul.

Russia. The journey across Russia added much more realism to his understanding of the Russian predicament, yet it also filled him with a bitter sense of disappointment and powerlessness. In the autumn of 1847 in Odessa on his way to Jerusalem as a member of the team of the Russian Spiritual Mission, Feofan wrote to his friend S.O.Burachek, editor of the newspaper "Mayak" in St.Petersburg:

To this point the journey was good... I have also seen much of that which deserves taking a good note of, and that I have done... How vast is mother Rus', - and how great are the territories of the Holy Church. Yet how it grieves and saddens me when I realise that almost all of it is in drowsiness and only now and then you hear a snorting sound. What do we lack and what are we not fit for? Yet the damned one has crossed our path and everything has gone wrong... Our priests are in a terribly poor shape. Another evil is the separation from the East, or from the Greek Church. Darkness is coming from the West, yet the light from the East we are not willing to accept... Do not praise the present Russia. Write to it a stern rebuke for taking the wrong path from the time of its acquaintance with the West.²⁸

Feofan's idealised view of the Greek Church and his rather categorical appraisal of the consequences of Russia's relations with the West were, as we shall see, to undergo a considerable modification in the future.

The first Russian Mission in Palestine was commissioned to conduct a thorough study of the state of Orthodoxy in that part of the world and to lay the foundation for a permanent Russian Palestinian mission. Porfiry's voluminous diary, *Kniga bytiya moego*, which was later published by the Russian Imperial Academy and which reads like a modern thriller, contains starkly candid descriptions of all the intrigues at the court and the Synod: obstacles, courageous acts and shady

²⁷ See 'Pis'mo ieromonakha Feofana (Govorova) k Ieremii, episkopu Nizhegorodskomu' in *Chteniya v Obshchestve lyubitelei dukhovnago prosveshcheniya*, issue I, 31-32, cited in Tertyshnikov, p. 19.

²⁸ See 'Patriotism episkopa Feofana', *Tserkovnye vedomosti*, 1895, t.1, pp. 18-20.

undertakings connected with the establishment and the operation of the mission.²⁹ At the same time, it constitutes a valuable resource for the students of Orthodoxy in nineteenth century Palestine.

Initially, Porfiry did not find Feofan easy to deal with and they confronted one another in a fiery argument. Himself a learned monk, Porfiry nevertheless disdained monasticism. As a result, in the first few weeks he and Feofan were together they had heated discussions about the roots and the virtues of monasticism. Feofan was so deeply offended by Porfiry's insistence that 'at the time of the apostles there was not even a trace of monasticism' that he was determined to leave the mission and to return to Russia 'under the pretext' that he was 'not fit for missionary and scholarly activity'.³⁰ Porfiry intensified their mutual anger by repeating sarcastic remarks made by the Archbishop Innokentii Borisov (1800-1857). The latter had instructed Porfiry, on the eve of their departure from St. Petersburg, to keep a close watch on Feofan's spiritual life 'so that he would not be taken in by some dreaminess'. Innokentii had been informed that 'at times Feofan calls some monks from the Lavra to sanctify the water, and asks them to sprinkle more thoroughly those corners in which the evil spirits made their nests.'³¹ As a rationalistic pragmatic Porfiry was impressed by Feofan's erudition, but baffled by his mysticism. Yet, despite Innokentii's admonitions and their own early bickering and ongoing differences, the two young men managed finally to make peace and to work out a way of maintaining an immensely fruitful co-operation.

²⁹ See Bishop Porfiry (Uspensky), *Kniga bytiya moego*, ed. by P.A.Syrku, 7 vols (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaya Akademiya Nauk, 1894-1901). Hereafter *Kniga bytiya moego*.

³⁰ *Kniga bytiya moego*, III, pp. 356-357.

During the six years spent in Palestine (1847-1853), Feofan mastered French for diplomatic use, perfected his knowledge of ancient Greek, acquired fluency in modern Greek and found time for the study of Hebrew and Arabic. He was struck by the poverty of the Orthodox Church in Palestine, the haughty spirit and slack morals of the local clergy, the lamentable state of the monasteries and the libraries (which contained priceless ancient manuscripts) and the humiliation which the Church suffered as a consequence of its subjection to Moslem rule. Visiting the libraries of Orthodox monasteries in Syria, Egypt and Sinai he was able to study and collect a whole library of ancient manuscripts of early ascetic writers which he later took with him to Russia. It was there in Palestine that he translated into Russian and prepared for publication the 'Anthology of ascetical writings extracted from the 'Lives' at Saint Sabbas monastery near Jerusalem'.³² The Palestinian experience deepened Feofan's understanding of the ethos of Middle Eastern spirituality and ascetic practices and it also immensely widened his cultural and theological horizon. Through his personal contacts with Catholic and Protestant clergy stationed in Jerusalem, he became better acquainted with those Christian traditions. He had many occasions to speak there in defence of the Orthodox faith against the active 'Catholic and Protestant propaganda' in that part of the world and to develop and sharpen apologetic skills which he would

³¹ *ibid.*, II, p. 153.

³² See A.S.Klyucharev, 'Preosvyashchenny Feofan Zatvornik i ego pastyrskaya deyatel'nost'', *Pravoslavny sobesednik*, October (1904), p.646, see also *Sbornik asketicheskikh pisanii, izvlechennykh iz paterikov obiteli Savvy Osvyashchennago, chto bliz Ierusalima* (Moscow: [n.pub.], 1891). Klyucharev was mistaken in his assertion that Feofan also translated there another collection of texts which Feofan later published under the common heading *Materikon. Sobraniye nastavlenii avvy Isaii vsechestnoi inokine Feodore*; Tertyshnikov repeats that assertion, see Tertyshnikov, p. 24. Yet as it is obvious from Feofan's own letter to V.V.Sh., he began working on the translation of that text as late as June 1888. See Letter №1026, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VI, 179.

later use extensively in Russia.³³

Because of the Crimean war, the members of the mission had to travel through Italy on their way back to Russia in 1853. While in Rome, they were received by the Pope, Pius IX, who complained to them bitterly about the Russian Emperor Nicholas I, who was subjecting Catholic clergy to unjust treatment and transferring them wherever he pleased, regardless of the views of Rome. The Pope complained that such dealings were unheard of not only in Europe, but everywhere in the world. Yet this memorable encounter with the Roman pontiff did not seem to have effected any positive change in Feofan's own attitude to the Roman Catholic Church and to its head, the Bishop of Rome. It would have been a blasphemy for Feofan to even consider viewing the differences with the Latin West as an expression of religious, cultural and ethnic diversity. He was very harsh in all of his public statements on Roman Catholicism (describing the papacy as '*легкое со струнами или загнленное*'³⁴) and in his apologetic sermons openly charging the Roman church with apostasy:

Слыхали вы про индульгенции папы римского? Вот это и есть льготы и поблажки, какие он дает наперекор закону Христову. – И что же? От них развратился в вере и жизни весь Запад... И теперь гниет в неверии и вольностях жизни с своими индульгенциями. Папа изменил многие догматы, все таинства перепортил, разслабил правила церковного руководства и исправления нравов, и все пошло не по намерению Господа – хуже и хуже...³⁵

³³ See Smirnov, p.64; see also: V.N.Khitrov, *Pravoslaviye v Svyatoi Zemle. Pravoslavnyy palestinsky sbornik*, 1st edn (St. Petersburg: [n.pub.], 1881), I, 75-76.

³⁴ See *O Pravoslavii* (Moscow, 1893), p. 33 cited in *Sobraniye Pisem*, V, p. 63, end of footnote *).

³⁵ (ET): 'Have you heard of the indulgences by the Pope of Rome? These are privileges and pampering, which he dispenses in defiance of Christ's law. And what came of it? From this stems the corruption of faith and life in the entire West... Now it rots in unbelief, and in pursuit of undue liberty with their indulgences. The Pope changed many dogmas, spoiled all the sacraments, weakened the rules of church government which were intended to amend morals, and everything

In fact, it is only in one of his private letters to Yelagin that we find him cautiously expressing a somewhat tolerant attitude towards the Catholic church:

Мы с вами – частные лица; и в мнениях своих должны сообразоваться с решением православной церкви... Кажется, св. Церковь наша снисходительна к католикам, – и признает силу не только крещения католического и прочих таинств, но и священства, что очень значительно. ... Одно только держать следует, что переходить к католикам не следует, ибо у них некия части в строе исповедания и церковного чина повреждены, или изменены с отступлением от древнейшаго.³⁶

The restraint of the above statement is an exception. Feofan detested the success of the Catholic missionaries in Russia as well as the attention and respect the Pope received world-wide. Two years before his death in December of 1891, Feofan was still belligerent, urging the editor of *Tserkovnyye Vedomosti* to prepare literature for counteracting Catholic influence.³⁷

In his journeys to the East, Feofan confronted first hand not only the drama of the confrontation between Catholics and Orthodox on the issue of proselytism, but

went from bad to worse, certainly not according to God's plan....', *O Pravoslavii* (Moscow, 1893), pp. 92-93 cited in *Sobraniye Pisem*, V, p. 63 footnote *).

³⁶ (ET): We are private persons; and our opinions should conform to the decisions of the Orthodox Church... It seems that our holy Church is lenient towards the Catholics and acknowledges not only the efficacy of Catholic baptism and other sacraments, but also the priesthood, which is very significant... One thing we must be certain of, and that is that no-one should cross over to Catholicism, for there are parts in the framework of their teaching as well as within their rite, which are either corrupted or compromised through apostatising from the most ancient principles.' See S.P., VII, 202.

³⁷ "Мне сдается, [Feofan wrote to the editor – M.K.] что нам следует подготовляться к борьбе с папистами. Папешство стало походить на паполатрию. Все дары от папы и весь почет ему... А у нас нет книжки, которую имея в руках, православный мог бы отражать бредни патеров. ... Подговорите кого либо, чтобы извлек из всех [anti-Catholic books already in existence – M.K.] самое рельефное, легко читаемое и победоносное." (ET): 'I think [Feofan wrote to the editor – M.K.], that we must be ready for a fight with papists. Papacy now became alike papolatria. All the graces are coming from the Pope and all homage is rendered to him... And we even have not prepared a small book, which having in his hands an orthodox believer could parry ravings of

also the problems stemming from the highly complex relations between the churches of the Orthodox East. During his first stay in the Orient (1847-1853) and in the course of the year spent later in Constantinople (1856-1857) as the prior of the Russian Embassy church, Feofan witnessed the gradual decomposition of the ancient Patriarchate of Constantinople (brought about by the decline of Turkish power in the Balkans) and the emergence of the national churches. He found himself caught up in the conflict between the Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Church, which was clamouring for independence. Feofan was sympathetic to these aspirations of the Bulgarians for independence. He developed a close friendship with prince Borodi of Samosad.³⁸ When he returned to Russia, he followed with great interest the developments in the Balkans for some years, and on the eve of the war between Russia and Turkey (1877-1878), full of imperial ambitions, he publicly defended the idea of the liberation of the southern Slavs in his *Three Letters* published in the influential *Pravoslavnoe Obozreniye*.³⁹ Feofan's twelve months of service at the Russian Embassy church in Constantinople had indirectly paid other important dividends. His acquaintance in Constantinople with the chief procurator of the Holy Synod, Count A.P. Tolstoy, who was 'the man of Optina Orthodoxy'⁴⁰ and a great admirer of Greek Orthodoxy, turned out to be crucial for Feofan's later ecclesiastical career.⁴¹ His correspondence with the Countess P.S. Lukomskaya, which began at the time of Feofan's stay in

catholic clergy... . Instigate someone to extract from all (anti-Catholic books already in existence – M.K.) that, which is most prominent, easy to read and triumphant. See *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 255.

³⁸ See F.I. Titov, *Makary (Bulgakov), Mitropolit Moskovsky i Kolomensky: Biografichesky ocherk*, 2 vols (Kiev: [n.pub.], 1895-1897), I, pp. 52-53.

³⁹ See Episkop Feofan, 'Tri pis'ma ... po vostochnomu voprosu', *Pravoslavnoye obozreniye*, 3 (1877).

⁴⁰ Monastic ascetic Orthodoxy embodied in the lives and the teachings of the Startsi of Optina Hermitage in nineteenth century Russia.

Constantinople, resulted in the publication (in 1860) of his seminal *Letters on the Christian Life*⁴² which he later reworked and published under the title *Nachertanie khristianskago nravoucheniya*.

If the very form and style of *Put' ko Spaseniyu* genuinely reflect all the dynamism of the Eastern ascetical 'call' to personal holiness which was so characteristic for the ancient monastic writers, the final version of *Nachertanie* by contrast represents an attempt to construct an Orthodox system of personal and social ethics expressed in the language of duty. Feofan was concerned that the epistolary genre of the initial version of the *Letters on the Christian Life* was preventing the readers from seeing his ethical teaching in its totality. Consequently, he decided to abandon the form of letters and to arrange the material under appropriate subheadings. The result was a format comparable to that of the popular textbooks of the Austrian theologian Joseph A. Stapf (1785-1844) and the Danish Lutheran writer Hans L. Martensen (1808-1884) yet with many unique features and sections of Feofan's own devising. In *Nachertanie*, Feofan further develops the theme of inner spiritual freedom (expounded in such earlier works as *Put' ko Spaseniyu* and *Chto est' dukhovnaya zhizn'*) and provides an intriguing analysis of the dynamics of the inter-relationship between the constituent elements within the trichotomist whole of the human person. He emphasises the unique role of *самосознание* [*self-knowledge*] in the process of spiritual reintegration and insists that 'свобода состоит в том чтобы располагать действиями без всякого насилия и увлечения со вне или из

⁴¹ See Tertyshnikov, p. 35 and *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, p. 349.

⁴² *Pis'ma o khristianskoy zhizni*, 3rd edn (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr', 1908); see also Tertyshnikov, p. 35.

нутри, прямо от лица. Отличительный его признак – независимость и непринужденность.⁴³ Yet, when one attempts to relate the dominant themes and central concepts of Feofan's *Outline* [*Nachertanie*] to each other, one cannot but be puzzled by the dissonance between this forcefully articulated theme of inner spiritual individual freedom and Feofan's simultaneous endorsement of the concept of different rights on the basis of social class and his reiterated reminders about the duty of silent submissiveness [*‘молчаливой покорности’*] in the realm of one's external existence – submissiveness to all those in authority from the smallest local official to the emperor as the one who ‘utters the will of God’.⁴⁴ In his theological justification of Russia's political autocracy, Feofan seems to echo the ‘Constantinian parallelism’ between the political organisation of the state and the structure of the Church⁴⁵ as voiced by St Joseph of Volokolamsk, rather than to follow Theodore the Studite in the latter's insistence on the ‘otherworldliness’ of the Church and one moral code for all.⁴⁶ This polarity in *Nachertanie* between the stress on individual freedom (in one's spiritual life) and the emphasis on submissiveness (in the social and the political spheres) raises the issue of the tension in Feofan's theological commitments and his ideological loyalties – an issue to which we shall be returning more than once in the course of this study.

Feofan's appointment as the Rector of St. Petersburg Theological Academy in 1857 marks the beginning of his wide activity as a publicist and preacher. In his

⁴³ *Nach.*, p. 207.

⁴⁴ *Nach.*, p. 515.

⁴⁵ See J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical trends and doctrinal themes* (New York: Fordham, 1974), p. 57.

⁴⁶ *Nach.*, pp. 513-519.

numerous articles and sermons of the period Feofan addresses such vital issues of public life as the meaning of progress and the correlation of spiritual and material dimensions in the life of society. At the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties these topics had been widely discussed by the radical-populists and their opponents in such Russian journals as *Sovremennik*, *Otechestvennyye Zapiski* and *Russky Vestnik*. In such conservative apologetic addresses as the ‘Letter from a Spiritual Father to a Disciple Confused by the Speeches of Free-thinkers’, ‘On Rebirth’ and ‘On Progress’⁴⁷, Feofan argues that the modern ‘spirit of this world’ which undermines the spiritual foundations of society is nothing but ‘the spirit of enmity against God’ and the spirit of coolness in human relations. While cautiously recognising the need for some reforms in the social and economic spheres of Russian life he insisted that genuine progress first and foremost entails spiritual and moral regeneration in accordance with the ‘unchangeable truths’ of the Orthodox faith.⁴⁸ Feofan published most of his works of this period in the Academy’s monthly journal *Khristianskoe chtenie*. His rectorship was not long, the Synod decided that his zeal and energy could be effectively used elsewhere.

In May 1859 Feofan was consecrated as bishop and appointed to the diocese of Tambov. In 1863 he was transferred to the ancient and much larger diocese of Vladimir. Acutely sensing the turbulent times and knowing well the maladies of

⁴⁷ These articles formed the basis of Feofan’s book *Predosterezheniye ot uvlecheniya dukhom nastoyashego vremeni* (St. Petersburg: [n.pub.], 1858).

⁴⁸ See *Slova Rektora S.-Peterburgskoi dukhovnoi Akademii arkhimandrita Feofana* (St. Petersburg: [n.pub.], 1859), pp. 30-42. See also Smirnov, p. 58. As for Feofan’s position regarding other faiths during this period of his ecclesiastical career, it is interesting to observe that not all of his colleagues approved of his public denunciation of Protestantism, see A.V. Gorsky’s note to Metropolitan Filaret cited in Tertyshnikov, p. 39.

society and his environment Feofan was not overly enthusiastic about his new appointments. Some of the remarks in his nomination speech in Tambov reveal his concern and uneasiness:

The frequent and unexpected changes in my ministry... have taught me to be quietly submissive regarding any appointment, like a balloon that without bursting floats back and forth in the directions in which it is struck. Nor has God denied me His aid. Though the vagueness surrounding the new future position and service more than bothers me today, yet now as well as in the future, everything will be ruled by the same Right Hand which mercifully preserved me in the past.⁴⁹

Feofan's elevation to the episcopacy coincided with the beginning of such large-scale fundamental reforms of Alexander II as the emancipation of the serfs, reform of local government, review of the judiciary (including attempts to reform the ecclesiastical judiciary), and a certain liberalisation in education and censorship. It was during this period that Feofan engaged in intensive efforts to promote spiritual education. He opened diocesan schools for women in Tambov and Vladimir, as well as a number of parochial schools for the poor throughout the Tambov region. His sermons and 'addresses' of this period (published in the *Diocesan Record*, established upon his initiative) cover an impressive range of such widely discussed issues as the moral renewal of life, problems of public education, the responsibilities of *zemtsi*⁵⁰, and long-lasting fires in the region as signs of common guilt. In his 'addresses' (1863-1866) to the parishes of the Vladimir diocese, Feofan called upon the people to

⁴⁹ In I.N.Korsunsky, 'Preosvyashchenny episkop Feofan (Govorov), byvshii Vladimirsky i Suzdal'sky', *Chteniya v Obshchestve lyubitelei dukhovnago prosveshcheniya*, issues 5-11 (St. Petersburg: [n.pub., 1894), issue 7, 487. English translation is cited with some corrections from Vedernikov, 'A Great Teacher of Christian Morality', *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, 1988, XII, 63.

support the reforms of the Emperor, but only with the proviso that the primordial foundations of Russian life be preserved.⁵¹ Though Feofan enjoyed great respect and deep affection in the diocese, not all in his flock in the diocese of Vladimir appreciated his outspoken traditionalist stance, a fact he himself admits in one of his sermons: ‘A word has reached me, that you find my exhortations too strict, apparently supposing that nowadays one can no longer think the way I do, no longer live this way and, consequently, no longer teach this way since the times are different!’⁵² He was deeply grieved by the fact that the intelligentsia were drifting further and further away from the Church, which he desired to see as the ‘spiritual lungs of society’. He also sensed the inertia of the Church and its inability to communicate the riches of her tradition in the language of the new times and to provide adequate answers to the new issues and challenges: ‘Следовало бы завести целое общество апологетов, - и писать, и писать...’⁵³

Closer toward the end of his service in Vladimir he was becoming increasingly possessed by the determination to withdraw from the episcopal office, to devote himself entirely to communion with God in solitude and to unfold the secret treasures of ascetic spiritual life through the medium of the written word. Although he was by now, in fact, actually spending a great deal more time in writing, he often had to perform official duties which were alien and disquieting to his spirit: to care for the preservation and the increase of the diocesan financial resources, mediate and resolve

⁵⁰ Members of *zemstva* (from *zemlya*, the Russian word for *soil*), elective district councils in Russia in the period between 1864-1917.

⁵¹ See Episkop Feofan, *Slova k Vladimirskoi pastve* (Vladimir: [n.pub.], 1869).

⁵² *O pravoslavii s predosterezheniyami ot pogreshenii protiv nego* (Moscow: Izdatel'skii otdel Moskovskogo Patriarkhata, 1991), p. 47. Hereafter *O pravoslavii*.

vexatious litigations, and administer discipline to offenders. In his letter to a friend in St. Petersburg we read:

‘It is not that I cannot manage the work [in the diocese], but my soul is not in it. I am occupying myself with that which is close to my heart, yet the endless distractions keep me from accomplishing anything of what I would have liked to do. I expect the cloister to bring me the fulfilment of desired accomplishments.’⁵⁴

Feofan already contemplated seclusion in the specific monastery of Vysha. Yet he struggled and hesitated for some time before he finally made up his mind. In May of 1865 he shared his indecision with Bishop Ignati Bryanchaninov: ‘At times I am almost ready to take a pen and start writing the request, yet something within me goes against it.’⁵⁵ Knowing how productive and influential Feofan was in his current position, Bryanchaninov advised him to postpone his plans. Feofan’s desire to be discharged from his office also surprised both Metropolitans in Moscow and St. Petersburg and provoked many false rumours. Yet closer toward the end of 1865 there was nothing that could keep him any longer from fulfilling the most compelling desire of his heart. ‘Ваш Преосвященный ... спит и видит Вышу’ – we read in one of his letters written in December of 1865.⁵⁶ Finally, on 17 July 1866, Feofan resigned the Vladimir diocese and eleven days later, on 28 July 1866, he entered the monastery of Vysha (*Вышенская пустынь*).

⁵³ Cited in *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, p. 398.

⁵⁴ Cited in I. Krutikov, pp. 99, 119.

⁵⁵ *Pis'mo preosvyashchennogo Feofana k episkopu Ignatiyu (Bryanchaninovu)*, Appendix to the master’s thesis of hieromonk Mark (Lozinsky), ‘Dukhovnaya zhisn’ miryanina i monakha po tvoreniyam i pis'mam episkopa Ignatiya (Bryanchaninova)’ in *Polnoe sobraniye pisem episkopa Ignatiya (Bryanchaninova)*, (Zagorsk:MDA, 1967), typescript, pp. 48, 50; Cited in Tertysnikov, p. 66.

⁵⁶ Cited in Tertysnikov, p. 68

The eloquence of Hesychia

Vysha monastery lies at a distance of about 120 miles north east of Tambov in central Russia, far away from the noise and stress of city life. Surrounded by beautiful pine forests and two rivers—the Tsna and the Vysha—it provided an ideal environment for contemplative life. Initially Feofan was appointed as the prior of the Vysha monastery, but that appointment did not last long. Feofan quickly realised that the many responsibilities of the prior would be a major hindrance to his contemplative life and literary plans. He rejoiced when the Synod granted his request to be discharged from the office.⁵⁷ Three months after his arrival Feofan wrote to N.V. Yelagin:

I feel really well here. They live according to truly monastic rules. Some among the brothers here are fierce ascetics. One eighty year old brother would never sit for a moment during the liturgy and grumbles at others if they do it. The total length of all the services here would amount to 8 or 10 hours a day. The earliest begins at 3 o'clock in the morning and the last one at 7 in the evening. They follow the Sarov style of singing.⁵⁸

Since his student years he had cultivated a desire for solitude and a special devotion to the spiritual life: 'One thing have I prayed for and sought since early years - that no one would prevent me from constantly dwelling with God', - wrote Feofan to one of his friends.⁵⁹ Finally that long-awaited solitude had come. The remaining twenty-eight years of his life were spent in seclusion at Vysha, where after the first six years he completely withdrew into his cell, primarily, as he liked to emphasise, for the purpose of accomplishing his major literary undertakings.⁶⁰ There were many agonising moments, especially during the first six years of reclusion. Because of his

⁵⁷ See Tertyshnikov, p. 75.

⁵⁸ *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letter to Yelagin № 1065, VII, 28.

⁵⁹ In Smirnov, p. 11.

highly sociable nature and the drive for all manner of accomplishments and pastoral involvement, at one point he almost accepted the invitation to return to episcopal office.⁶¹

One of his best biographers, P.A.Smirnov, who worked under the close supervision of the prior of the monastery of Vysha, Archimandrite Arkady, provides a detailed description of the monastery. Feofan's quarters and his cloister were located in a two-storey outbuilding. Wooden walls and simple, heavily used furniture comprised the interior. The lower floor, according to Smirnov, housed two monastic cells and the room where the communion bread was prepared. Feofan occupied all the rooms on the upper floor. The largest room in the outbuilding was the drawing room in which Feofan arranged his private chapel by dividing off the sanctuary part by a simple curtain in place of an iconostasis. The other room was Feofan's workshop with two boxes of instruments for carpentry, woodcarving and metalwork, a joiner's bench, English bookbinding tools and tools for fretwork. It also contained the instruments for scientific experiments and artwork: a telescope, a microscope, a palette with oil paints and brushes and a camera. There were many icons on the walls, yet books predominated everywhere, not only in his study and the library, but in all the adjacent rooms as well.⁶² Besides the many hand-written manuscripts of patristic texts brought from the Orient, Feofan's private library at Vysha consisted of a vast collection of books on diverse subjects in Russian, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, French and English. The approximate list provided by Tertyshnikov illustrates the

⁶⁰ See *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, p. 395.

⁶¹ *Sobraniye pisem*, Letters to Yelagin №№ 1073, 1074, VII, 39-40; see also: Smirnov, p. 150.

⁶² See Smirnov, pp.105-106.

scope of Feofan's interests:

'The primary treasures of his library were the books of a spiritual nature: on Biblical Studies (up to 280 titles); on Dogmatic, Moral and 'Denunciatory' Theology (up to 140) titles; on Christian apologetics (up to 90 titles); on Patrology (up to 80 titles). There were also works of the holy fathers of the Universal Church (Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Isaac the Syrian and others⁶³) and Russian writers (Nilus of Sora, Dimitry of Rostov, Tikhon of Zadonsk and others), works on the history of Western confessions (up to 40 titles), on Russian church history (up to 50 titles), on Homiletics (up to 80 titles), and almost all spiritual journals. But there were also secular books on various subjects: historical (for example the *Universal History* by Schlosser, *The History of Russia* by S. Solovyev and others⁶⁴), philosophical (works of Kant, Hegel, J.G.Fichte, Ulrici, Jacobi, V.D. Kudryavtsev and others), scientific (textbooks on physics by N.A.Lyubimov and Pisarev; works of Darwin, K. Vogt, A. Humboldt and others), medical books (mainly on homeopathy), anatomy, hygiene, pharmacology, and also fiction (works of Shakespeare, Pushkin, Griboedov and others.)'.⁶⁵

Hardly any other Russian ascetic author could compare with Feofan in his wide scope of interests, his learning and his thorough knowledge of the Eastern and (what was especially rare) Western theological tradition. Feofan possessed almost inexhaustible reserves of creative energy and an insatiable thirst for knowledge. In 1885 he remarked: 'On the 10th of January I was 70 years old. I could lie down now and go into a deep sleep. But I could hardly restrain myself - I still want to bury myself in my books. . . .And how many puzzles there are!!'⁶⁶ Having retired into reclusion, Feofan mapped out for himself a whole system of literary projects. His writings – 505 bibliographical entries in total – include works on Christian morality, apologetic treatises, translations of patristic ascetic writings (including his celebrated translation

⁶³ Feofan actually had in his possession both *Patrologia Graeca* and *Patrologia Latina* of J.P.Migne.

⁶⁴ He also had the complete collection of the *Russky Arkhiv*, see *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 99.

⁶⁵ Tertyshnikov, pp. 89-90. Regarding the fate of Feofan's collection, see Smirnov, pp. 106, 407-08.

into Russian of the Greek *Philokalia* [*Dobrotol^yubiy^xe*] in 5 volumes⁶⁷) and the *Unseen Warfare*⁶⁸. His ability to integrate intensive literary activity into a genuinely monastic, spiritually invigorating lifestyle was dazzling.

According to Tertyshnikov, Feofan's daily schedule was simple. Each evening, his only 'lay brother' [келейник] Evlampy, prepared sacramental breads, wine and vestments for him. Feofan would rise early in the morning and go to the chapel for his private prayer [келейное правило] and the liturgy, at which times he was alone with God. After the liturgy Feofan would return to his cell and for quite some time would remain there in prayer. (After Feofan's death, many lists of requests for prayers were found in the cloth bags hanging by the Table of Oblation.) Following his breakfast, which consisted of one glass of tea and two slices of bread, Feofan devoted himself to intensive writing till two o'clock in the afternoon. 'The dinner which Feofan was served on the days of the fasts was strictly in accordance with the Church's rule; on the other days of the week during the last years of his life Feofan had one egg and a glass of milk.'⁶⁹ According to the tradition of the ancient Eastern ascetics, Feofan used to rest in the afternoon by sitting on a chair and busying himself with handcrafts. He had tea at four o'clock in the afternoon and then Vespers in his private chapel.

⁶⁶ *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letter to Yelagin № 1167, VII, 183.

⁶⁷ For a brief, yet important evaluation of the method used by Feofan in compiling his version of *The Philokalia* see the article by Bishop Kallistos Ware, 'Philocalie' in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique*, XII, col. 1344-46. Hereafter *DS*.

⁶⁸ The Greek adaptation of the work on prayer originally written by the Catholic priest Lorenzo Scupoli. Feofan's revised version of the Greek adaptation under the title *Nevidimaya bran'*, *blazhennoi pamyati startsa Nikodima Svyatogortsa* was printed in Moscow in 1886; it is also available in English, see *Unseen Warfare being the Spiritual Combat and Path to Paradise of Lorenzo Scupoli as edited by Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and revised by Theophan the Recluse* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952).

⁶⁹ Tertyshnikov, p. 87.

He liked to spend his evenings reading books and various scholarly journals and studying and gathering material for his works.⁷⁰

Feofan devoted more than 15 years to the work on his *Dobrotolyubiye*, which to this day continues to exert great influence in the Orthodox world. In order to see this gargantuan project through to its completion, he had to subject himself to strict discipline. During his work on the fifth and last volume, he even temporarily stopped his subscription to all scholarly journals and considerably limited his correspondence. He complained in his letters that he was struggling with the vice of laziness, that on some days he agonised, being able to produce only a line or two. Yet he never retreated from his initial decision to surpass the original *Philokalia* in the number of ascetic writers covered in his anthology. He introduced into his own translation of *Dobrotolyubiye* authors who were completely absent from the Greek collection; e.g., Ephrem the Syrian, John Climacus, Barsanuphius, Abba Dorotheus, Isaac the Syrian, Abba Zosimus the Palestinian (with his kenotic teaching on self-forgetfulness and true Christian philanthropy) and Theodore the Studite (this ‘champion of monasticism’ especially revered by the Russian ascetics for his emphasis on the ideals of active ascetic virtues). Through all his additions and reductions he was determined ‘to give prominence to the ascetic side of the *Philokalia* and to de-emphasize the speculative and the mystical side’,⁷¹ as he himself admits in the introductory notes.⁷² When compared with the much more exact translation into Slavonic by Paisi Velichkovsky⁷³,

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-88, also 163.

⁷¹ Bishop Kallistos, *DSp*, tome XII, col. 1346.

⁷² See *Dobrotolyubiye*, vol. I, p. V, vol. 2, p. III, vol. III, p. 133, vol. 5, p. 3.

⁷³ *Dobrotolyubiye*, 3 parts (Moscow: [n.pub.], 1793).

Feofan's Russian *Dobrotolubiye* is a freer rendition of the original texts.⁷⁴ While creatively advancing the work began by Paisi Velichkovsky, Feofan was even more eager to break new ground in yet another sphere of theological activity.

None of Feofan's precursors in Russia dared to write their own commentaries to more or less substantial portions of the Scriptures. Feofan opened a new chapter in Russian Biblical studies by producing an impressive series of homiletic commentaries on all of the Pauline epistles in the evangelical historical tradition of the school of Antioch. However, he also walked cautiously and relied heavily on such early exegetes as Chrysostom, Theodoret, Severian of Gabala, Oecumenius, and such later Eastern authors as Photius and Theophylact of Ochrida. It took Feofan seven years to complete this project (1875 – 1882), but he was repaid for his labours by the success of his work. The commentaries were reprinted three times in Feofan's life-time alone.

Yet, if the field of the Russian New Testament studies has been thus enriched by Feofan's much appreciated contribution, his 'involvement' in the translation of the Old Testament into the Russian language considerably irritated advocates of the non-ideological, purely linguistic approach to translation.

Feofan was one of the most outspoken opponents of the translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew text, which in his opinion was 'damaged and changed by the Massoretes'.⁷⁵ The major reason for this opposition was his fear that the

⁷⁴ See Bishop Kallistos, *DSp*, tome XII, col. 1345; see also 'Introduction' by G.E.H. Palmer, et. al. in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, tr. from the Greek and ed. by G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware, 5 vols (London: Faber and Faber, 1979-), I, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁵ *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 68, also 131.

preference for the Hebrew text ‘which has never been in the Church’s use’ would inevitably cast doubt on the *Septuagint* and on the traditional patristic interpretation, thus inspiring certain ‘Protestant attitudes’:

I cannot fathom any benefit from the translation of the Bible [from the Hebrew text]. In fact it is very harmful. Our principle is to turn to the holy fathers for the understanding of God’s Word. The holy fathers interpreted the Scriptures as they are in the translation of the LXX. The new translation therefore deprives us of the aid to understand God’s Word in the Orthodox way; for it gives us a text which is different from the one which was used by the holy fathers. The new translation displaces us from the foundations. New thoughts, new church, new era: this is what comes from the translation!⁷⁶

Feofan did acknowledge the need for a Russian translation of the Old Testament Scriptures,⁷⁷ but only from the *Septuagint* (which he believed to be ‘the closest and the most faithful’ translation of ‘the original words of the Spirit’) and strictly for private use at home. His categorical setting of the Hebrew text against the LXX was adamantly and openly contested in the periodicals of the time.⁷⁸ Feofan was involved not only in the debates on such issues as Bible translation, he also led in the traditionalist advance against the political radicals in such a conservative weekly paper as *Domashnyaya Beseda*, edited, ironically enough, by the famous publisher V.I. Askochensky who had a hidden aversion for monasticism and ascetics.⁷⁹ Yet being an avid controversialist Askochensky appreciated the force of Feofan’s articles.

⁷⁶ Feofan’s article ‘Otvety na mneniya preosvyashchennogo Agafangela’ in *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 75.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, VII, 77

⁷⁸ See the critical response to Feofan’s article by P. Gorsky-Platonov, ‘Neskol’ko slov o stat’ye preosv. episkopa Feofana’ in *Pravoslavnoye Obozreniye*, 1875, October issue; see also Florovsky, *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, pp. 351-352.

⁷⁹ See *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, pp. 344-346.

In the period between 1868 and 1877, Feofan regularly contributed to *Domashnyaya Beseda*. Three among his articles of this period are especially significant: *True freedom*⁸⁰, *The realm which excludes progress*⁸¹, and the ethical essay *Human wisdom and the simplicity of the Gospel*⁸². His collections of aphoristic sayings initially published in this journal were later published as a separate book: *Thoughts for every day of the year*⁸³. (In its genre this collection anticipated Leo Tolstoy's *Krug Chteniya*.) To this day it is widely circulated among the devout Orthodox in Russia.

In his seclusion Feofan maintained an extensive correspondence. The steady flow of his letters to the furthest corners of Russia terminated only one month before his death at the monastery of Vysha on 6 January 1894 (the day when Christians celebrate Epiphany, the Baptism of Jesus and His manifestation to the Gentiles). Several of his books, such as *What is spiritual life and how to attune oneself to it* and *Letters on the Christian Life*⁸⁴, grew out of this correspondence. The style of these books preserves his epistolary intimate tone, artistic simplicity and vivid imagery. They deal with a

⁸⁰ See 'Istinnaya svoboda', *Domashnyaya beseda dlya narodnago chteniya*, weekly, issue №12 (1870), p. 386. Hereafter *Domashnyaya Beseda*.

⁸¹ See 'Oblast', isklyuchayushchaya progress', *Domashnyaya Beseda*, issue №6 (1872), pp. 144-145.

⁸² See 'Mudrost' chelovecheskaya i prostota Yevangel'skaya', *Domashnyaya Beseda*, № 49 (1875), pp. 1278-1279. It is noteworthy that Florovsky admits that not all in the conservative camp appreciated the approach of *Domashnyaya Beseda*: '«Домашняя Беседа» многим представлялась горьким и грубым противоядием против «радикальной» журналистики...'. See *Puti Russkogo Bogosloviya*, p. 345.

⁸³ Moscow, *Mysli na kazhdy den' goda po tserkovnym chteniyam iz slova Bozhiya*, 2nd edn (Moscow: [n.pub.], 1890).

⁸⁴ *Chto est' dukhovnaya zhizn' i kak na neye nastroit'sya*, 6th edn (Leningrad: RIO "Sankt-Peterburg, 1991), hereafter *Chto est'...*; and *Pis'ma o khristianskoi zhizni*, 3rd edn (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr', 1908).

wide range of themes such as personal spirituality, human creativeness and the issues of social life – yet all are imbued with a single concern: the salvation of the human person, the awakening and the restoration of the human spirit. It is the first of these two books that contains Feofan's highly significant insights into the nature of and the inter-relationship between the attributes of human personality, as well as his teaching on self-consciousness and the spiritual freedom of the individual⁸⁵. It is in *Chto est' dukhovnaya zhizn'* that we find him saying that the spirit 'у всякого проявляет себя своим образом' ['in each individual manifests itself in a unique way']⁸⁶. Yet a paradox lies in the fact that Feofan wrote this very book, in which he recognises the diversity of spiritual experiences, in order to counteract the Protestant influence of Lord Radstock and Pashkov!⁸⁷

N.V.Yelagin: Feofan's mouthpiece in the capital

Nothing can provide a better insight into the paradoxes and extremes of Feofan's outlook than his revealing correspondence with a certain St.Petersburg *chinovnik*. (This correspondence caused embarrassment to publishers of Feofan's collection of letters who had to omit a number of strong expressions,⁸⁸ and to his hagiographers who chose to leave it largely untouched.) Within his immensely rich and contradictory

⁸⁵ It is there that he makes his powerful claim about the spiritual sovereignty of the individual: 'Сам Бог не входит во святилище души могуществом Своим, а благоволительно просит входа.' See *Chto est'...*, p. 91.

⁸⁶ *Chto est'...*, p.36.

⁸⁷ In his letter to Fr. Arseny, who assisted him in preparing the book for publication he directly states: 'книга... направлена вся против Редстока, сколько он мне известен. Редсток все толкует о духе жизни криво. Вот тут объяснено, что есть духовная жизнь, и как ее достигнуть, и о Редстоке помянуто только в одном письме... будто мимоходом.' See *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 102.

⁸⁸ See for instance *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 131-132, 161.

personality, Feofan combined such opposites as boldness and caution; great personal creative freedom and a strong conviction of the benefits of censorship⁸⁹; a heightened sense of the sacredness and uniqueness of the individual along with a definite authoritarianism and belief in the principle of political autocracy. It is in the light of these inconsistencies that one has to view Feofan's friendship and extensive correspondence with Nikolai Yelagin – a high ranking St.Petersburg official and an ardent defender of traditional Orthodoxy and monasticism. The letters to Yelagin (150 in total) fill most of the seventh volume in the eight-volume collection of Feofan's letters. The correspondence covers a period of 35 years, from 1856 – the year during which Feofan was stationed in Constantinople – till Yelagin's death in 1891. The letters deal with a diverse range of issues: from the need of a better translation of the liturgical books to 'the need' to counteract the new non-Orthodox religious movements⁹⁰. The correspondence with Yelagin is significant for our study in that it sheds light on Feofan's complex views regarding such issues as freedom of conscience, freedom of private theological enquiry and the limits of religious toleration.

Nikolai Vasilevich Yelagin (1817-1891), a native of the province of Kostroma, was a government censor and a writer on ecclesiastical subjects (truly, a rare combination of vocations!). Educated at the 1st School of Cadets, Yelagin was

⁸⁹ Yet he disliked the idea that the censors could ban the publication of his own *Evangel'skaya Istoriya* if they wished. See *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 179. He realised that censorship was highly subjective and imperfect ('Тамбовским отношения наши хороши!' ... 'Ну что там спит цензура?! ... Взял бы палку и ну дуть всех!' page 181 in *ibid.*), yet believed that Providence would overrule.

appointed in 1857 as an official for special commissions at the Chief Directorate of Censorship in St. Petersburg. In literary circles he was known for his authoritarian policies on censorship and controversial books⁹¹. He had close connections with officials in the highest spheres of the Holy Synod and took an active part in the literary and the social life of the capital. Feofan was not put off by the reputation which Yelagin earned among the writers of the capital and used the friendship to his advantage. It was often through Yelagin that Feofan, in ^{his} solitary seclusion at Vysha, received information about prominent events in the life of the Church and the nation. On many occasions it was again through Yelagin that Feofan exerted his influence on those events.

While he was in the East, Feofan shared his concern about the lack of Orthodox schools in Constantinople and his dreams of establishing a foundation for the development of such schools in the Orthodox East in his letters to Yelagin. Of all the persons with whom Feofan corresponded, Yelagin seems to have been most in his confidence. The majority of his letters to other persons contain chiefly spiritual guidance, but Feofan's letters to Yelagin are informal and candid and at times businesslike, written briskly to a friend and colleague. Yelagin was instrumental in obtaining for Feofan the originals of rare patristic texts and the latest foreign exegetical tools. And, as we shall see further in this chapter, it was through the mediation of Yelagin that Feofan fought against the influence of Lord Radstock,

⁹⁰ Smirnov describes them as 'противоцерковные секты' [anti-church sects], see Smirnov, p. 308. This demonstrates the established vantage point which from the outset excludes the very possibility of viewing religious diversity as a positive phenomenon.

⁹¹ See the article 'Yelagin (Nikolai Vasil'evich 1817-1891)' in F.A. Brokgauz and I. A. Yefron, *Entsiklopedichesky slovar'*, vols I-LXXX (St. Petersburg: [n.pub.], 1890-1904).

Pashkov, the Shtundists and Leo Tolstoy's religious writings. Moreover, Feofan shares with Yelagin his deepest insights into the meaning and nature of the prayer of the heart. He insists that in the genuine experience of prayer there is no place for 'images of the mind'. Yet he cautions that in a popular book on prayer for ordinary people, the subject of images should be avoided in order to avoid confusion with the readers' attitude toward icons and, therefore, their subsequent disappointment.⁹²

Feofan respected Yelagin for his zeal, yet he clearly did not share Yelagin's excessive wariness and narrowness of view, and at times was rather amused by them. At one point in their relationship Feofan learned that Yelagin was doubting the orthodoxy of his trichotomist anthropological teaching (in which the soul is subordinate to the spirit - the highest element in man) and suspecting that Feofan was coming close to Darwinism by maintaining that the human soul is similar to the souls of animals.⁹³

Feofan did not always approve Yelagin's literary endeavours either. This was certainly the case when Yelagin announced his intention to write an official defence of monasticism. Feofan feared that the proposed project would only aggravate the situation.⁹⁴ 'You will write on monasticism according to its importance – which is great indeed – and nobody repudiates that. But the assailants attack us – as utterly

⁹² See *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letter № 1063, VII, 24-25.

⁹³ See Feofan's letter to Fr Arseni № 107 in *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 101-102; see also his letter to Yelagin № 1121, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 109-10.

⁹⁴ See Letter № 1067, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 31. Regarding criticism of monasticism, see also books anonymously published by D.I. Rostislavov, *O belom i chernom dukhovenstve*, 2 vols ([n.p.], [n.pub.], 1858); *Ob ustroistve dukhovnykh uchilishch v Rossii*, 2 vols ([n.p.] : Litsei, 1862); cf. his articles 'O Russkom uchenom monashestve' and 'Istoricheskoye issledovaniye' in *Tserkovno-Obshchestvenny Vestnik*, (1880); and, also anonymously published, Priest I.S. Bellustin's *Opisaniye sel'skago dukhovenstva v Rossii*, Russky Zagranichny Sbornik (Berlin: M.I. Pogodin, 1859).

foolish monks.’⁹⁵ He has not forgotten his debates with Porfiry Uspensky and has acquired a much more subtle and realistic vision of this many-sided issue. ‘O

монашестве ... уж не помолчать ли лучше...’,⁹⁶ – he advised Yelagin.

Nevertheless, Yelagin refused to listen to his friend’s advice. Although Yelagin was finally only the publisher and not the actual author of two publicistic books on monasticism – *The Spirit and the Merits of Monasticism for the Church and the State*⁹⁷ and *The White Clergy and their Interests* – he caused a theological stir. Both books were written by an anonymous writer whose views on monasticism as the highest stage of moral perfection Yelagin largely shared. For Feofan monasticism was only one of the ‘paths’ which lead to the life in harmony with the ‘spirit of Christ’. His was a grand vision of bringing the whole of life into the Church: ‘To depart from the world does not mean to flee from married life or from society’.⁹⁸ On two occasions Feofan kept Yelagin himself from taking monastic vows.

The project of immense significance for Russian monasticism in which Yelagin assisted Feofan, by acquiring rare manuscripts and materials and providing moral support, was the work on *Dobrotolyubiye*. At one point when Feofan felt overwhelmed by the project they discussed the possibility of joining efforts with the monks of Optina.⁹⁹

Florovsky describes the movement as ‘Protestantism of the Eastern Rite’ in *Puti Russkago Bogoslaviya*, pp. 339-40. For a list of other sources, see *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, p. 558.

⁹⁵ *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 36.

⁹⁶ *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 36.

⁹⁷ (St.Petersburg: [n.p.], 1874).

⁹⁸ *Put’*, 251.

⁹⁹ *Sobranie Pisem*, VII, 35.

Feofan and the startsi of Optina Pustyn': ascetic values and ideological convictions

Perhaps, it would be helpful to clarify here that Feofan was not in direct contact with the famous spiritual directors (*startsy*) of the Optina hermitage near Kozel'sk, such as Leonid, Makari and Amvrosy, and did not take part in the translation work that was conducted at that unique centre of Russian spirituality. Of all the Optina *startsy*, it was *starets* Makari [Ivanov] (1788-1860) who played the leading role in the translation and publication of the works of the Desert Fathers of the East. The fruitful collaboration between Fr. Makari and the family of the Slavophil philosopher Ivan V. Kireyevsky (1806-1856) and the resulting numerous publications took place during the period between 1845 and 1856.¹⁰⁰ As for Feofan, it was only in 1868 that he began his work of translating ascetical writings.¹⁰¹ By that time both *starets* Makari and Ivan Kireyevsky had died. However surprising it might seem to us now, Feofan had not been very well acquainted with everything that had been published at Optina Pustyn'. In 1882, when working with the texts by Abba Isaiah, Feofan wrote to the Optina Father Superior: 'I beg your pardon, I didn't know at all about your publication of Abba Isaiah.... And only now have I got hold of it.'¹⁰² (By that time Feofan had already acquired a copy of the original text in the Greek.) 'I see that your translation as well as mine has been made from the Latin. They are very close to each other, . . . Yet both are far away from the original... Not only the expressions, but also

¹⁰⁰ For a brief, yet comprehensive survey of the literary activity at Optina, see I.M.Kontsevich, *Optina Pustyn' i yeye vremya*, ed. by E.Kontsevich and G.Podmoshenskii (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1970), pp. 177-82; see also Macarius, *Starets of Optino, Russian Letters of Direction, 1834-1860*, ed. and tr. by Julia de Beausobre (Westminster: Dacre, 1944).

¹⁰¹ See *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 35-36.

the thoughts are in considerable disagreement with the original Greek.’¹⁰³ The years spent in the Orient, excellent knowledge of the Greek language and ability to get original texts directly from the monastic libraries in the Orthodox East gave Feofan a definite advantage. Nonetheless, Feofan had respect for the translation work at Optina and a special admiration for *starets* Makari (Ivanov’s) ascetical writings. He particularly valued Makari’s stress on humility.¹⁰⁴ Feofan surpassed the elders of Optina in his academic erudition and penetration into the theory of Hesychast asceticism, but in his ideological orientations he shared with them a number of common prejudices. In certain statements of the elders of Optina one observes the same clash of ascetic values and ideological convictions which one finds so puzzling in Feofan’s outlook. Feofan was very close to the *startsi* of Optina in his negative almost visceral attitude to the idea of religious tolerance and in his anti-Semitic sentiments. The *startsi* Amvrosi (Grenkov) and Makari (Ivanov) could not fathom any benefit whatsoever from granting freedom to religious and ethnic minorities in Russia, neither for the Russian people themselves nor for the minorities in question:

... принесла ли пользу веротерпимость в России в отношении иноземных наций: немцев, французов и других, не говоря о [е]вреях, которые как народ Богом отверженный всеми презираются, и нигде не имеют никакого значения? ... В круг[у] образованных людей веротерпимость сия произвела великое влияние на нравственность и на самый домашний быт. ... Порча нравов, которая на Западе распространялась тысячу лет, в России достигла этой меры во сто лет...
... Итак, если без великого нравственного вреда не обошлось от веротерпимости в отношении и иноземных наций, которые особое имеют вероисповедание и особые в этом обычаи и никого не хотят свращать с пути Православия, то какого добра ожидать от того если допустить полную свободу раскольникам [Old Believers – М.К.] – людям

¹⁰² Letter № 1446 (1 June 1882) to Father Superior of Optina in *Sobraniye Pisem*, VIII, 179.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 179.

¹⁰⁴ See *Sobraniye Pisem*, IV, 211.

единоплеменным простому православному народу, и повсюду между ним рассеяным и одними и теми же делами с ним занимающимся? Вред от сего должен произойти невероятный...¹⁰⁵

Feofan, in contradistinction to the *startsi* of Optina, was willing to allow for some degree of toleration toward certain Russian sects of local origin (such as Molokans and Old Believers) as we shall see later in this chapter, yet his attitude to the Jews, as one can gather from his letters to Yelagin, was that of utter resentment and ruthlessness:

Now [June 1881 – M.K.] everybody is for the Jews... The Moscow *vладыка* even blurted out a sermon. It was so unpleasant to read it. In those places where the Yids [sic !] were battered they are mercilessly sucking blood from the people. Seeing that the government is not standing up for them they decided to settle with the offenders on their own. It is being said that the people have acted badly, but they are not taking notice of the fact that the people have been offended. Now they have found the guilty ones, - but the Yids are holy. It is true that the peasants had to be punished, but the Yids should be subjected to strict surveillance and should be hanged for every prank. May be then they will become quieter.¹⁰⁶

Feofan could not have been further from the truth in characterising the social and political climate of the summer of 1881 as favourable towards the Jews. It was a

¹⁰⁵ (ET): ‘... had there been any benefit to us from religious tolerance in Russia relative to foreign nationalities; such as German, French and others, not to mention the Jews, who (as a nation rejected by God) are despised by all, and regarded everywhere as insignificant?... Religious tolerance made a great impact on morality and the way of life in general among the educated people... Deterioration of morals, that was gaining ground in the West for a thousand years, in Russia reached the same level within a mere one hundred years...

... If we could not avoid the great moral damage from the religious tolerance toward foreign nations which have their particular religions and their distinctive religious practices, and which do not want to divert anyone from the path of Orthodoxy, then can we expect anything good if we allow full freedom to dissenters [Old Believers - M.K.], people, in kinship with the common Orthodox folk, dispersed here and there and leading one and the same life with them. This certainly will cause incredible harm...’ Amvrosi (Grenkov) and Makari (Ivanov), *Veroterpimost’*, mss. f. 213 from the archive of Optina Pustyn’ at the Manuscript Section of the Russian State Library in Moscow, k. 42, e/x 2, published in *Tserkovno-obshchestvenny vestnik* No. 16, a supplement to *La Pensée Russe*, 22 May, 1997, No. 4175, p. 6.

period of great social unrest. The assassination of the Emperor Alexander II in 1881 and the ensuing political reaction in reference to the Jews was marked by a series of pogroms (more than 200 in 1881 alone) in the southwestern provinces of Russia, and the subsequent issuing of the restrictive decrees of 1882 and 1891. Feofan clearly shows sympathy for the pogromists, accepting the official explanation of ‘Jewish exploitation’ as the cause for the pogroms. As for his advocating of the use of gallows for the execution of rebellious Jews, is not this the same endorsement of coercion and violence, the same nationalism and the same old idea of the integration of Church and State which the Non-Possessors in medieval Russia denounced in the ruthless and politically active Josephites? And is not this also that ‘nature’s proclivity to aberration’ which Feofan himself described in his *Pis'ma o khristianskoi zhizni* :

Сердце так и кипит – и готово на нож за правду, на языке только и речи, что правда, забытая, нарушенная другим. ... Но так ли в существе дела? В существе дела всегда оказывается, что в основе подобного чувства нарушенной правды всегда лежит чувство оскорбленного самолюбия, унижение нашего достоинства, или неотдание ему должного почтения, или должной цены. ... Замечаете ли, что крик за правду только снаружи, а в середине – война за себя?! ... Душа наша - вещь мудреная. В хорошем ли она состоянии или в худом, это свидетельствуется миром или смятением. Когда есть смущение на душе, чего бы оно не касалось, не верьте душе в ту пору: все врет, что ни говорит.¹⁰⁷

Yet even though Feofan upheld the crucial importance of the virtue of humility in his political outlook he never espoused pacifist ideals and showed contempt for Leo

¹⁰⁶ In Feofan’s letter to Yelagin, dated 9 June 1881 in *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 147.

¹⁰⁷ (ET): ‘The heart is boiling over – and is ready to die for truth. One talks of nothing but the truth which was forgotten and betrayed by someone else... . But is it really the case? In reality, as it turns out, at the very core of one’s concern for violated truth, there always lies the feeling of injured pride, and bruised dignity - the self which was not honoured and showed due appreciation. Have you noticed that the cry for truth is only on the outside, on the inside however rages the battle for self?!... The soul of ours is a complex thing. Peace reigning within or the state of disarray are the best indicators if the soul is in a good or bad

Tolstoy's teaching of '*непротивление злу насилием*' [passive resistance].¹⁰⁸

Tolstovshchina: deviation or a healthy expression of religious diversity?

Feofan was genuinely dismayed by Leo Tolstoy's ferociously destructive criticism of Orthodox dogmatic theology and his challenge to the authority of the Orthodox Church. In his letter of September 1885 to N.V. Yelagin, Feofan wrote: 'The desperado Leo Tolstoy has smashed my head'.¹⁰⁹ He went to great lengths to get hold of copies of Tolstoy's major anti-Orthodox works and struggled for a period of time as to whether he should get involved in an open polemic with Tolstoy. This is clear from Feofan's letters to Yelagin and to some other persons: 'It is so disgusting to enter into an argument! And besides one gets furious and might be tempted to strike with a thunderbolt of big words [*махнуть крупною речью*]'.¹¹⁰ 'I lack many things to write in a weighty manner. One has to dig in. . . . I wish I hadn't heard anything about this'.¹¹¹ Feofan correctly sensed that it would not be possible to fit Tolstoy's views on religion into some familiar, neatly constructed system¹¹² which one could then easily expose as falsehood on the basis of rational arguments: 'It is beyond my powers to contend with Tolstoy as he is too crafty or foolish'.¹¹³

Both men had great zeal for preaching, both were endowed with the powers of

condition. When the soul is in a state of confusion, whatever it is in regards of, do not trust it, - whatever it says - is a lie.' *Pis'ma o khrist. zhisni*, pp. 91-92.

¹⁰⁸ *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 185-186.

¹⁰⁹ *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letter № 1171, VII, 188.

¹¹⁰ *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letter № 1171, VII, 189.

¹¹¹ *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letter № 1170 (August 1885), VII, 188.

¹¹² In letter № 282 to M.D. Feofan wrote: 'I am thinking of writing something against [Leo Tolstoy] but cannot quite figure out what he is as far as his system is concerned.' *Sobraniye Pisem*, II, 134.

¹¹³ *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letter № 284 to M.D., II, 136.

keen observation, yet they were essentially different from one another. It is sufficient to compare Tolstoy's *Suratskaya kofeinaya* or *Lyubite drug druga* with Feofan's *Pis'ma o dukhovnoi zhizni*. Feofan was a mystic with the exceptionally rare gift of perceiving the reality of the spiritual realm, whereas Tolstoy was a 'very matter of fact' realist who doubted and questioned everything. They lived and thought on different planes – Feofan was all in the life of the spirit,¹¹⁴ while for Tolstoy the reign of the sceptical reason divorced from any metaphysic was supreme.¹¹⁵

In private letters to a number of his spiritual children Feofan did not in fact resist the temptation to 'strike with a thunderbolt' when condemning Leo Tolstoy¹¹⁶, although he never engaged in a public denunciation of his views. Nevertheless, Feofan made every effort to stir the ecclesiastical and state authorities into counteracting Tolstoy's influence. In his letter to N.V. Yelagin dated 14 May, 1885, he wrote: 'Make a special visit to the Oberprokuror and report on this matter. I have in mind to send him shortly the second volume of *Dobrotolyubie* and to make a mention of it too'.¹¹⁷; and again in a letter to N.N. dated 27 May 1885, and later published in the St. Petersburg *Dukhovny Vestnik*, Feofan pleads: 'please, be good enough to declaim against this, attracting the attention of those known to you who are vested with

¹¹⁴ See *Sobraniye Pisem*, II, 136

¹¹⁵ For, perhaps, one of the best short studies on Tolstoy in English see Isaiah Berlin's essay 'The Hedgehog and the Fox' in *Russian Thinkers*, ed. by Henry Hardy and Aileen Kelley (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 22-81. Of the Russian studies on Tolstoy one of the most important works is B.M.Eikhenbaum's *Lev Tolstoy*, 2 vols (Leningrad, 1928, 1931); specifically on Tolstoy's religious views see D.S.Merezhkovsky, *Tolstoy i Dostoevsky*, esp. vol. II. parts 1 and 2, 4th edn (Moscow: Put', 1912).

¹¹⁶ See 'Otzyv pochivshago svyatitelya zatvornika Feofana o grafe L've Tolstom', *Sobranie Pisem*, II, 40-43.

¹¹⁷ *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 185.

power'.¹¹⁸

While some could argue that in view of Tolstoy's outright rejection of the Orthodox dogmas of the Trinity, the incarnation and the virgin birth of Christ and his offensive description of the sacraments¹¹⁹, Feofan's 'righteous indignation' was fully justifiable, yet by denying Tolstoy the right to hold and to share his own religious convictions, Feofan falls sadly short of the broad vision of the freedom of the individual in the realm of the spiritual which he himself advocated in his writings.¹²⁰

The challenge of heterodoxy

It is patently difficult to reconcile Feofan's acute sense of the sacredness of spiritual freedom with his frequently undisguised antagonism and intolerance towards people of non-Orthodox convictions, as evidenced in his private correspondence, apologetic articles and tracts. In his spiritual writings he displays profound insight into the mysteries of human nature and a keen understanding of the delicate manner in which God deals with each individual person out of respect for their freedom. Yet in real life, Feofan was largely unable to recognise the validity of the religious experience of those of other faiths. He was seized by an uncompromising idealistic zeal to achieve the triumph of Orthodox ascetic spirituality in a society which was at the time

¹¹⁸ *Sobraniye Pisem*, V, 78. Five years later, upon the insistence of Oberprokuror K.P.Pobedonostsev and with the agreement of Nicholas II, Tolstoy was excommunicated from the Orthodox Church. *Opredeleniye svyateishego sinoda* was issued 20-22 February 1901. (See 'Primechaniye' in the collection of Tolstoy's essays, *Ne mogu molchat* (Moscow: Sovetskaya Rossiya, 1985), p. 517. Hereafter Tolstoy.

¹¹⁹ See his 'Otvét na opredeleniye sinoda' [Response to the Decision of the Synod] in Tolstoy, pp. 436-40.

¹²⁰ See Episkop Feofan, *Chto est' dukhovnaya zhizn' i kak na neye nastroytsya?*, 6th edn (Leningrad: RIO 'Sankt-Peterburg', 1991), pp. 43, 74, 91. Hereafter *Chto est'...*. Also Put', pp.

experiencing a deep spiritual crisis. He saw, on one hand, the immense potential of the tradition of his Church and on the other, the lethargic inactivity of the clergy. In addition, he could not imagine the future of the Orthodox Church without the tsarist autocracy. Orthodoxy and the Russian nation were for him inseparable. He was witnessing the decomposition of the very fabric of the social and religious order; and, on top of all this, he deplored the new wave of Protestant preaching which in the mid-1870s swept through Russian high society.

Feofan was deeply perplexed by the wide influence of the Radstockist-Pashkovite movement¹²¹. 'Pashkov has eaten away my soul', complained Feofan in a letter to Yelagin in January of 1880.¹²² Still, he had to acknowledge some mitigating factors. Feofan was aware that Radstock and Pashkov were not stealing the faithful 'sheep' from the Orthodox fold, but were preaching to those who previously had been indifferent to the spiritual life. This is clearly apparent from a very revealing letter written by a friend, Madame Naryshkina,¹²³ to Feofan:

Is this great Protestant influence on our society a good thing? You will say - no. But the fact of the matter is that in formerly empty people a strong Christian spirit has been formed. This influence of Radstock has changed the whole order of their lives. If it wasn't for him, they would sleep to this day submerged in worldly emptiness. The clergy as an influence are non-existent here. ... Poor Russia! It has to seek spiritual nourishment from this stranger

47, 284-85, 307, and the important statement on individual liberty in *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letter to N.N. № 334 (16 May 1876), II, 205.

¹²¹ For an evaluation of the Protestant movement of the English evangelical lay preacher Lord Granville Radstock (1833-1913) and his leading Russian disciple Colonel V.A. Pashkov, and the scope of its influence on the Russian society, see James Y. Muckle, *Nikolai Leskov and the 'Spirit of Protestantism'* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1978) Birmingham Slavonic Monographs, №4, pp. 61-76; cf. Terletsky, *Sekta Pashkovtsev* (St. Petersburg: [n.pub.], 1891).

¹²² *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 123.

¹²³ The wife of the rich St. Petersburg nobleman and influential philanthropist Emmanuil Naryshkin and the sister of Vasily Chicherin, the counsellor of the French Embassy in St. Petersburg. See Feofan's Letter to Yelagin №1114 (8 July, 1877), *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 102-104.

Radstock... Will there not arise a voice in the Orthodox Church?!¹²⁴

From his seclusion in Vysha, Feofan, for his part, vigilantly followed every move of Radstock and Pashkov. He instructed various people in St. Petersburg to record the sermons of the new preachers and to collect their literature for him.¹²⁵ He wrote numerous letters and tracts against the teachings of the new movement, among them the *Seven letters to St. Petersburg* (later published in the collection *Letters to Various Persons on Various Subjects of Faith and Life*.) Most strongly Feofan attacked the 'Protestant' notion of salvation by faith which in his view ignores the role of the Holy Spirit in the communication of grace and negates the sacraments, the Church, the priesthood and Orthodox prayers.¹²⁶ Yet the movement continued to grow and gain momentum. The messages coming to him from St. Petersburg were very disquieting: 'The best and the highest families have joined the [Radstock's] circle.'¹²⁷ 'Your letter is powerless to restrain. Dogmatic pronouncements that the Orthodox faith is the true faith and that the English do not possess the Spirit will not stop anybody. What is needed is a word of mouth, but it is hopeless to expect it from our clergy.'¹²⁸ That Feofan himself shared this pessimistic view regarding many of the St. Petersburg clergy is clear from his very candid letter to Archpriest N.I. Florinsky in

¹²⁴ From the letter of Naryshkina-Chicherina to Feofan, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 120.

¹²⁵ In his letter to Yelagin, dated 1 May 1880 Feofan requested: 'If possible, collect the books printed by the Pashkovites and copies of the Holy Scripture with their notes and underlined texts. On their basis it will be possible to get more surely at this corrupter of souls.' *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 130.

¹²⁶ See 'Vtoroye pis'mo v SP.b.' in *Pis'ma k Raznym Litsam o Raznykh Predmetakh Very i Zhizni* (Moscow: Svyato-Troitskaya Sergiyeva Lavra, 1892), pp. 129-57. Hereafter *Pis'ma k raznym*. Also Letter to Mrs. N.N (18 June 1880), *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 18.

¹²⁷ From Naryshkina's letter to Feofan, *Sobraniye Pisem*, II, 121.

¹²⁸ From the second letter of Naryshkina to Feofan, published in *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 122.

Kiev: 'There are fellows among the priests in Piter whom it is shameful to listen to'.¹²⁹

It is significant that Feofan was personally asked to consider a tolerant attitude to the new movement:

I cannot but admit that in this circle [Radstock's followers] there is more Christian spirit than among our sanctimonious religious ladies. I would join this circle myself. . . . Yet I cannot accept the Protestant forms and prayers without the cross, and I feel as if I am betraying my Church. We do not have anywhere such an Orthodox centre. Taken as a whole it is something very positively Christian, but not in our Orthodox spirit. (But maybe this does not make any difference as long as they know Christ and serve him.) What if one wise priest or member of the higher orders – if he had a burning desire – would start going to these meetings where people are already gathering, and quietly, without judging anybody would direct all this crowd to the right path.¹³⁰

Thus it cannot be assumed that Feofan was unaware of or had never encountered the ideas of religious toleration, of respect for freedom of conscience in matters of faith and the possibility of co-operation between Christians of various persuasions. There were, after all, numerous newspaper articles with appeals for toleration towards the movement.¹³¹ As early as 1877 Nikolai Leskov had published in St. Petersburg his *Velikosvetsky Raskol* to 'recall Russian Church and society to a sense of proportion'.¹³² In fact Feofan copied the two letters from Naryshkina cited above (which contained a suggestion to adopt a tolerant attitude) and sent them to Yelagin.

Receiving more disturbing signals from St. Petersburg, he became increasingly impatient. Finally, in his utter frustration, he resorted to highly unbecoming methods of discrediting the new movement. He was determined to apply all possible pressure

¹²⁹ *Sobraniye Pisem*, II, 18.

¹³⁰ From Naryshkina's second letter to Feofan in *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 122-23.

¹³¹ See N.S. Leskov, 'Moleniya v Pashkovskom soglasii', in *Novoye vremya*, 1881, cited in James Y. Muckle, *Nikolai Leskov and the 'Spirit of Protestantism'* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1978) Birmingham Slavonic Monographs, № 4, p. 72

on the ecclesiastical and state authorities to bring about the arrest of Pashkov and his followers. 'Radstock and the Apostolic Church of Edward Irving¹³³ are one and the same porridge!' he fumed. He went so far as to devise humiliating labels intended to antagonise the Radstockists-Pashkovites and stir up social protests against them. In some of his letters, we find stinging ridicule and mockery of the movement.¹³⁴

Yet Feofan's views on the 'sects' and Protestant denominations are clearly not all uniform. Thus in Feofan's letter to M.R.Koryakin we read: 'But the Molokans¹³⁵ are high above the pagans in matters of faith. Your repugnance towards them is not good. We must feel sorry for them and pray for them.'¹³⁶ In his popular book *Pis'ma o dukhovnoi zhizni*, published in 1871, he acknowledges at least the partial presence of divine grace in the Lutheran tradition.¹³⁷ Should one take into account the general radicalism of the century, the absence of a strong tradition of toleration in society, the possible difference (even conflict) between a personal, private understanding of a certain issue and the position maintained or confessed in public? It is clear that Feofan's concern to save people from the 'nonfreedom' and 'the grip' of 'sectarian

¹³² See Nikolai Leskov, *Schism in High Society*, trans. by James Y. Muckle (Nottingham: Bramcote Press, 1995).

¹³³ Edward Irving (1792-1834), an evangelical Church of Scotland minister who advocated reintroduction of the charismatic dimension to Protestantism and became the first major popularizer of nineteenth century premillennialism.

¹³⁴ *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 131-32, 161.

¹³⁵ Russian rationalistic anti-ritualist and anti-sacramental sect which placed a heavy emphasis on the reading of the Scriptures, an offshoot of the Dukhobor sect, founded by Semen Uklein in the second half of the eighteenth century in Tambov region.

¹³⁶ *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 224.

¹³⁷ *Pis'ma o dukhovnoi zhizni*, 3rd edn (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr', 1897), p. 108, footnote № 1: 'Сперанский пишет к лютеранину о лютеранской церкви. В какой мере благодать Божия присуща этой церкви, - не наше дело судить. Может быть, здесь приложимо слово Господа: *по вере вашей буди вам*. На сколько веруют, на столько и получают. Но что говорится об удобствах причащаться в этой церкви, то надобно бы выразить так: «и ваша церковь представляет удобства. В нашей православной Церкви есть все удобства, но и ваша не лишена их вовсе.»'

views' and eagerness that they taste the 'freedom of the wholeness of the Orthodox faith' justified for him intolerance and ruthlessness in the struggle against 'sects'. It cannot be forgotten that Feofan viewed Russian society and the Russian people as the divinely foreordained historical possession of the Orthodox Church.¹³⁸

Ironically enough, the Oberprokuror of the Holy Synod, Pobedonostsev, of whom Feofan had high hopes¹³⁹, was frightened by Feofan's charisma.¹⁴⁰ Feofan was constantly challenging his Church with unusual boldness and breadth of vision. He advocated freedom for the Old Believers to establish their own seminaries and theological academies, being convinced that the Schism persisted largely due to ignorance.¹⁴¹ He was deeply concerned about the loss of the public image of the Church: 'The whole trouble is in the silent priests,' he lamented to Yelagin.¹⁴² 'I wonder if the Lord has not given up [Orthodox Russia]?'¹⁴³ '[I]n a generation or two our Orthodoxy will run dry'.¹⁴⁴ To prevent this theological drought, he advocated a thorough revision and renewal of the liturgical books:

The church books should be corrected and elucidated... the Greeks, as you know, are constantly revising the Liturgical books. I collate them. Indeed the Greeks have very many new things Some of our liturgies are such that it is not possible to make anything out of them. There is a 'Book of Short Exhortations from the Holy Fathers' – a splendid book. The works of all the

¹³⁸ See *Chto est'...*, p.247.

¹³⁹ 'Well, God-willing, the new Oberprokuror will give new stimulus. He is very Orthodox and full of zeal', observed Feofan in one of his private letters. See *Sobraniye Pisem*, II, 21. Yet as it turned out Pobedonostsev's 'zeal' and 'Orthodoxy' were rather different in spirit from that of Feofan's. Florovsky speaks of Pobedonostsev as 'the chief retrograde' and of his name as 'the symbol of the epoch'. See *Puti Russkago Bogoslaviya*, p. 410.

¹⁴⁰ See *Puti Russkago Bogoslaviya*, p. 412.

¹⁴¹ *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 92.

¹⁴² *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 119.

¹⁴³ *Sobraniye Pisem*, III, 48.

¹⁴⁴ *Pis'ma o Khristianskoi Zhizni*, p. 78. Cf. Leskov's *Soboryane* or *Chayaniye dvizheniya vody* which was also written out of concern for the state of the church.

Fathers cited in it are already translated into Russian. But in church they are still read in the old and highly obscure Slavonic translation. And it would surely be not so difficult to correct and revise these two books?!¹⁴⁵

Indeed Florovsky was right when he remarked that ‘in Feofan’s views there is a certain universal boldness, a great spiritual freedom and flexibility, freedom from conventionality.’¹⁴⁶ This ‘universal boldness’ was also manifested in Feofan’s unusual openness to the Western religious tradition, yet again not without some contradictions.

There is an ambivalence in Feofan’s attitude toward the theologians of the Western confessions which in fact was typical of many Russian theologians. In his letter to Mikhail Kheraskov – an archpriest of Suzdal – Feofan remarked: ‘Keep working. We have not yet touched the Holy Scriptures. The foreign exegetes are absolutely worthless.’¹⁴⁷ But in one of his letters to Yelagin we find him expressing a rather different view:

In the West not all heads are fractured, you know. There are many humble hardworking authors [*мичак*], not only among Catholics, but also among Protestants. They expound well the truths common to all Christians. And they can be used for this purpose, yet nevertheless, not with a bandage over one’s eyes.¹⁴⁸

Here Feofan had in mind not the representatives of the Tübingen school such as F.C.Baur and D.F.Strauss (whose works were read and discussed at Russian theological academies in the second part of the nineteenth century¹⁴⁹), but certain

¹⁴⁵ *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 182.

¹⁴⁶ *Puti Russkago Bogoslaviya*, p. 396.

¹⁴⁷ *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 129.

¹⁴⁸ *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 209.

¹⁴⁹ See K.K. Arsenev, ‘David Fridrikh Shtraus. Biografichesky ocherk’, *Vestnik Evropy*, 9,10 (1878). See also: *Puti Russkago Bogoslaviya*, pp. 211, 223-24 and pp. 353-54.

English theologians. This fact becomes clear from his other letter:

I sense a desperate need in the English *exegetes of the Scriptures* and *church historians*. I think they are more staid and God-fearing than the Germans and more profound than the French.¹⁵⁰

Although he nowhere mentions specific names it is most likely that it was such Cambridge New Testament scholars as J.B.Lightfoot (1828-1889) and B.F.Westcott (1825-1901) and such Oxford tractarians as J.H.Newman, E.B.Pusey and John Keble who had earned Feofan's admiration and respect. The famous New Testament commentaries of Westcott¹⁵¹ and Lightfoot were valued for their spiritual insight and the application of patristic exegesis. The tractarians' high regard for the patristic heritage and their stress on personal and corporate holiness were known in Russia through the activities of William Palmer.¹⁵²

The same realism and unpretentiousness which Feofan displayed in his attitude to Western theologians, when he was not possessed by his ideological traditionalist zeal, he expressed in regards to the whole issue of his reclusion which was often idealised by many of his admirers: 'Из моего запора сделали затвор. Ничего тут затворнического нет. Я заперся, чтобы не мешали, но не в видах строжайшего подвижничества, а в видах беспрепятственного книжничества.'¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 21.

¹⁵¹ See a short biographical entry and bibliography in *Khristianstvo: Entsiklopedichesky Slovar'*, ed. by Sergei S. Averintsev and others, 3 vols (Moscow: Bol'shaya Rossiiskaya Entsiklopediya, 1993-95), 3 (1993), p. 71. Hereafter *Khristianstvo*. Feofan's work on his commentaries to the Pauline epistles stimulated his interest in New Testament studies in the West.

¹⁵² See *Pravoslavnoye Obozreniye*, № 2 (1866) and № 3 (1869) and *Russky Arkhiv* (1881, 1892 and 1894). See also *Notes of a visit to the Russian Church, by the late W. Palmer* (London, [n.pub.], 1882).

¹⁵³ Cited in *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, p. 395.

Feofanian research and the influence of Feofan's writings

The existing literature on Feofan can be roughly divided into three major categories; i.e., biographies or rather hagiographies of Feofan; separate chapters on Feofan in general surveys of Russian monasticism; and the few monographs (none in English) devoted to specific aspects of Feofan's spiritual teaching. As a background for our study, a brief chronological survey of the existing literature is appropriate.

Of the lives of Feofan which appeared in Russia during the last seven years of the nineteenth century (following Feofan's death on 6 January, 1894), we must mention the works by Korsunsky¹⁵⁴ and Rybinsky¹⁵⁵ and the two biographies by Krotkov¹⁵⁶ and Krutikov¹⁵⁷, of which Krutikov's is the more helpful. Among the Orthodox scholars of this period who were directly influenced by Feofan was Sergi Stragorodsky (1867-1944), the future Patriarch of Moscow. In his well-known comparative study of 1895 devoted to the 'ethical and subjective aspects' of the Orthodox doctrine of salvation, he consistently turns to Feofan for verification of his interpretation of the teachings of the fathers on the interior aspects of salvation, thus acknowledging Feofan as an authority on the patristic tradition.¹⁵⁸

Of the general biographical studies of Feofan which appeared in the first half of

¹⁵⁴ See I.N.Korsunsky, *Preosvyashchenny episkop Feofan (Govorov), byvshii Vladimirsky i Suzdal'sky* (Moscow: [n.pub.], 1895). Hereafter Korsunsky.

¹⁵⁵ V.P.Rybinsky, 'Pamyati preosvyashchennago Feofana, episkopa Vladimirskago i Suzdal'skago' in *Trudy Kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii* ([n.p.], [n.pub.], 1894), I, III.

¹⁵⁶ A.Krotkov, *Svyatitel' Feofan zatvornik i nravouchitel'nyye izrecheniya iz ego tvorenii* (Moscow: [n.pub.], 1899).

¹⁵⁷ See foot-note № 2.

¹⁵⁸ See Arkhimandrit Sergi (Stragorodsky), *Pravoslavnoe uchenie o spasenii: Opyt raskrytiya nravstvenno-sub'yektivnoi storony spaseniya na osnovanii sv. Pisaniya i tvorenii svyato-otecheskikh*, 2nd edn (Kazan': Imperatorsky Universitet, 1898).

the twentieth century we must cite the works by Khitrov¹⁵⁹ and Smirnov¹⁶⁰, the important article by Titlinov with valuable bibliographical material¹⁶¹, a survey of Feofan's pastoral ministry by Klyucharev¹⁶² and the brief biographical sketch published by I. Smolitsch¹⁶³ in Vienna in 1936. The most extensive, thorough and informed of the above works is Smirnov's general introduction to the spiritual thinking of Feofan, which was published as early as 1905. Smirnov boldly stated that future historians of the period would undoubtedly name Feofan as the most complete representative of the Russian spiritual tradition in the second half of the nineteenth century and observed that he was already compared in the style of his writing to St Tikhon of Zadonsk and in the manner of his exposition of the Scriptures to Chrysostom.

We find the first strictly theological evaluation of the work of Feofan in Zarin's highly significant introduction to Eastern Orthodox asceticism, which was published in 1907.¹⁶⁴ While recognising the pre-eminent position of Feofan among the interpreters of the Eastern ascetic tradition and referring to him continually throughout the work (he does not mention Ignati Bryanchaninov even once), Zarin makes some insightful critical remarks regarding Feofan's use of such important ascetic terms as *nous* and

¹⁵⁹ See M.I.Khitrov, *Preosvyashchenny Feofan Zatvornik Vyshensky*, 2nd edn (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr', 1905).

¹⁶⁰ P.A.Smirnov, *Zhizn' i ucheniye preosvyashchennago Feofana, vyshenskago Zatvornika* (Moscow: Afonsky monastyr', 1915). The first edition was published in Shatsk in 1905.

¹⁶¹ See B.Titlinov, 'Feofan (v mire Georgii Vasil'yevich Govorov)' in *Russkii biografichesky slovar'* (St. Petersburg: Russkoye Istoricheskoye Obshchestvo, 1913). XXV, pp.386-394.

¹⁶² A.S.Klyucharev, 'Preosvyashchennyi Feofan Zatvornik i ego pastyrskaya deyatel'nost'', *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, 1904, October issue.

¹⁶³ I.K.Smolitsch, *Leben und Lehre der Starzen* (Vienna: [n. pub.], 1936, pp. 110-127.

¹⁶⁴ See S.M.Zarin, *Asketizm po pravoslavno-khristianskomu ucheniyu*, 2 vols (St. Petersburg: V.F.Kirshbaum, 1907), I, pp. 5, 20, 26, 30; II, see references to Feofan throughout the work and esp. pp. 229, 220-239.

kardia. Yet, more significantly, Zarin relies on Feofan when he (i.e., Zarin) portrays the human spirit as the ‘principle of personal spiritual individuality’.

Berdyayev’s *Smysl Tvorchestva*, published in 1916, contains a highly critical, negative evaluation of Feofan’s ascetic anthropology and especially of Feofan’s interpretation of the patristic teaching on inward freedom.¹⁶⁵ Berdyayev’s negative evaluation was later (1936) challenged by Florovsky and dismissed as a departure from ‘historic Christianity’ into the ‘esoterica of speculative mysticism’.¹⁶⁶

Florovsky’s own insightful appraisal of the theology and position of Feofan¹⁶⁷ deepened the earlier tendency toward a positive evaluation, which was evidenced in the works of Stragorodsky and Krutikov. While reaffirming Feofan as a ‘faithful and typical successor of the patristic tradition in ascetics and in theology’, Florovsky perceptively observed that in his teaching Feofan combined patristic concepts with romantic psychology and *Naturphilosophie*.¹⁶⁸ Another valuable contribution to the study of Feofan’s writings which appeared in the same year was the anthology *Umnost delaniye. O molitve Iisusovoi* compiled by Igumen Khariton, the superior of the monastic community of Valamo.¹⁶⁹ The significance of this anthology (which is largely comprised of Feofan’s texts on the Hesychast tradition of inner, mystical

¹⁶⁵ See N.A. Berdyayev, *Smysl tvorchestva. Opyt opravdaniya cheloveka* (Moscow: G.A. Leman i S.I. Sakharov, 1916).

¹⁶⁶ See *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, p. 492.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 394-400.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 399.

¹⁶⁹ published at the Monastery of Valamo in Finland, in 1936.

prayer) is substantiated by the fact that an English translation was published three decades later in 1966.¹⁷⁰

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Russian monastic tradition – and Feofan as one of its chief proponents – have attracted several scholars of different confessional backgrounds and nationalities. In 1951 the Jesuit scholar Stanislaw Tyszkiewicz published in Rome his general study of the works of the major Russian teachers of Orthodox ethics entitled *Moralistes de Russie*, with a special section devoted to Feofan's moral teaching.¹⁷¹ H.A. Hodges' important introduction to the English translation of Feofan's variant of the 'Unseen Warfare' appeared in 1952.¹⁷² It was a concise, yet informed comparative study of Eastern and Western ways of prayer. It was also the first study which demonstrated that Feofan's substantial additions to Nicodemus' version of the work and his revisions of it provide a much clearer exposition of the Eastern patristic discipline of pure prayer than the one found in the version of Nicodemus. Hodges correctly noted the combination of 'understanding' and 'spiritual feeling' in Feofan's teaching on prayer, yet he did not attempt to identify the specific influences on Feofan and he was mistaken in his assumption that Feofan was not aware of the Latin origin of the work he was handling.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ See *The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology*, compiled by Igumen Chariton of Valamo, tr. by E.Kadloubovsky and E.M.Palmer, ed. with an Intro. by Timothy Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1966).

¹⁷¹ S.Tyszkiewicz, *Moralistes de Russie*, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 1949-1951 (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1951), pp.110-127.

¹⁷² See H.A.Hodges, 'Introduction' in *Unseen Warfare being the Spiritual Combat and Path to Paradise of Lorenzo Scupoli as edited by Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and revised by Theophan the Recluse* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), p. 60. Hereafter Hodges.

¹⁷³ See *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letters №№ 985, 986, VI, 115, 117.

Madame E. Kadloubovsky and G.E.H. Palmer, two fine Orthodox translators, played an important part in making the fruits of the 18th century Hesychast revival (especially the texts of the *Philokalia*) known in the English-speaking world. The text which they used in their English translation of the *Philokalia* was, in fact, the Russian edition of Feofan's *Dobrotolubiye*. It was regarded as having a 'value of its own, justifying its translation into English, owing to the spiritual understanding of Theophan and of the period in which he lived'.¹⁷⁴ Kadloubovsky and Palmer published their translation in two volumes: the first, *Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart* appeared in 1951 (reprinted 10 times), and the second, *Early Fathers from the Philokalia* in 1954 (reprinted 7 times). At that time the study of the Greek texts of the *Philokalia* was in its very early stages and the work on the English translation of Feofan's *Dobrotolubiye* was the essential training, the spiritual and linguistic 'guide' to the original.

The first work entirely devoted to Feofan's teaching on prayer is T.F. Bossuyt's study published in Rome in 1959 and entitled *Theophane le Reclus: Sa doctrine sur l'oraison*. Another noteworthy work of the period is Bolshakoff's pioneering popular outline of the history of Russian mysticism with its excellent overview of the Russian nineteenth-century monasticism and separate chapters devoted to St Seraphim of Sarov, Bishop Ignati Bryanchaninov, and the Startsy of Optina and Feofan.¹⁷⁵ In this study published in 1962, Bolshakoff presents Feofan as a unique theoretician of

¹⁷⁴ See 'Foreword' in *Writings from the Philokalia on the prayer of the heart* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p. 6.

¹⁷⁵ See S.Bolšakov, *I mistici russi* (Turin: [n. pub.], 1962), also his own revised translation under the title *Russian Mystics* in Cistercian Studies Series No. 26 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1976).

mysticism and the greatest Russian writer on mystical subjects not only in the nineteenth century, but throughout Russian history. Yet, Bolshakoff's sketches are rather brief and general. No special attention is given to Feofan's anthropology. He realised the inadequacy of his efforts and lamented the fact that the 'serious study of Russian mysticism has hardly begun' and that 'there is not even a critical edition of the *Tales of the Russian Pilgrim*' (p. 274).

The most significant work from this period is T. Špidlík's thorough analysis of the spiritual teaching of Feofan, which was published in 1965.¹⁷⁶ This study evaluates Feofan's teaching on the basis of his anthropology and demonstrates the cardinal importance of Feofan's concepts of the 'spirit' and the 'heart' for his whole spiritual teaching. Highly valuable also is the article by Bishop (Kallistos) Ware on the editions and translations of the *Philokalia* in the twelfth volume of *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (1984). It contains a detailed and very helpful comparative analysis of Feofan's *Dobrotolubiye* with the original Greek collection of Sts Macarius Notaras of Corinth and Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain.

Of the works of modern Russian scholars we should mention the extensive studies by Archimandrite Georgy Tertyshnikov¹⁷⁷ and the important article by A.

¹⁷⁶ T. Špidlík, *La Doctrine Spirituelle de Theophan^e le Reclus: Le Coeur et l'Esprit*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1965).

¹⁷⁷ His collection of 422 Feofan's letters (many of them unpublished) which were not included in *Sobraniye Pisem* is found in 'Prilozhenie k kandidatskomu sochineniyu' *Gomiletichesky element v epistolyarnom nasledii episkopa Feofana Zatvornika*, TSL, MDA, 1973; for the complete bibliography of Feofan's works see Tertyshnikov, *Bogoslovskoye naslediyepiskopa Feofana* in 'Bogoslovskiy Trudy', XVI (Moscow: Moskovskaya Patriarkhiya, 1976), 202-222; also G. Tertyshnikov, *Auf dem Wege zu Gott. Leben und Lehre des Starzen Theophan. Mit einer Einfuhrung von G. Schroder* (Leipzig: [n. pub.], 1978. Tertyshnikov's unpublished master's thesis *Svyatitel' Feofan Zatvornik i ego uchenie o spasenii* (MDA, 1989) while lacking in the area of historical and theological assessment, contains immensely extensive, valuable manuscript material including Feofan's private correspondence, unfinished works, sermons, addresses, translations and

Vedernikov: *A Great Teacher of Christian Morality* published in 1988 in the twelfth issue of the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* in connection with Feofan's canonisation in the same year. Yet neither of these two authors employed a critical approach in their studies of Feofan or paid special attention to Feofan's stress on human diversity and the sovereignty of the spiritual freedom of the individual. The most recent *Life* of Feofan in the English language, written by Robin Amis and with a brief anthology of his works translated by Esther Williams, was published in 1992. It is a popular introduction to Feofan's teaching on the prayer of the heart, yet it should be used with caution since the compiler had no direct access to the sources in the original language. It also errs on the side of uncritical laudation and contains some factual errors, such as the assertion that Feofan was 'tonsured as a monk' in 1837¹⁷⁸ whereas according to all of Feofan's Russian biographers, including Smirnov, Feofan was admitted to monastic vows 15 February 1841.¹⁷⁹

There is, thus, still a need for a study which examines Feofan's theology and spirituality primarily on the basis of his understanding of man. The following chapters of the thesis represent an attempt to respond to this need. They have been written with the conviction that Feofan's vision of personhood (particularly his stress on the infinite diversity of persons and their spiritual states, and his notion of the human

biographical material. For the review of the thesis see P.Grezin, 'Magisterial Disputation' in *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, №11, 1990, 43-44. Tertyshnikov's *Life of Feofan* published in 1994 is a helpful general introduction to Feofan and his spiritual teaching for modern Russian readers. For further details about books mentioned on this and the previous two pages, see Bibliography.

¹⁷⁸ See *The Heart of Salvation: The Life and Teachings of Russia's Saint Theophan the Recluse*, tr. by Esther Williams, ed. with comm. by Robin Amis, introd. by George A. Maloney, S.J. (Newbury, Mass.: Praxis Institute Press, [n.d., but 1992]), p. 12.

¹⁷⁹ See Smirnov, p. 22.

spirit as *consciousness* and *self-determination* which lies at the basis of that stress) provides not only a key to the understanding of his theology and his Hesychast spirituality, but by the same token presents an ethical criterion for the evaluation of his own practical positions on the issues of external freedom.¹⁸⁰ This is confirmed by his own statement: ‘Человек всегда свободен. Свобода дана ему вместе с самосознанием, и вместе с ним составляет существо духа и норму человечности. Погасите самосознание и свободу, - вы погасите дух, и человек стал не человек.’¹⁸¹

In order to assess Feofan’s own achievement in the articulation of the Hesychast vision of the individual person and to evaluate the originality and inner coherence of his stance I choose to concentrate on those aspects of his anthropological teaching which are especially apt to demonstrate his creativity and contribution. Such an examination must naturally be conducted within the broader context of the Eastern ascetical tradition, due to Feofan’s indebtedness to that tradition. Hence, my purpose in the next two chapters is first, to review the highlights of Feofan’s own study of his tradition and second, to compare the treatment of the theme of human individuality and diversity in Feofan with the handling of the same theme in the writings of two particular monastic authors, Pseudo-Macarius and Isaac the Syrian (both of whom Feofan held in high esteem for their spiritual and psychological insights), in order to determine the extent of Feofan’s dependence on the above authors and to discover the distinctive features of his own position.

¹⁸⁰ Which are just as relevant in today’s Russia as they were in Feofan’s day.

¹⁸¹ *Chto est’...*, p. 43.

CHAPTER II

FEOFAN AND THE DIVERSITY OF THE ORTHODOX TRADITION

THE *DOBROTOLYUBIYE*.

The fabric of Feofan's tradition is composed of many different strands, names and personalities. It presents a colourful palette of cultural, ethnic and intellectual diversity which spans almost two millennia. The collection of the texts in the Greek *Philokalia* alone covers the period from the fourth to the fourteenth centuries. Feofan also had at his disposal and knew well the collections of early monastic lore: the *Lausiac History* of Palladius [known in Russia as 'Лавсаик'], *The Spiritual Meadow* (*Pratum Spirituale*) by John Moschos ['Лимонарь '], the *Religious History* (*A History of the Monks of Syria*) by Theodoret of Cyrhus ['История Боголюбцев '] and the collections of *Apophthegmata Patrum*.

Among the writings of the early church fathers he appreciated the *Hexaemeron* of St Basil, the *Theological Orations* of St Gregory the Theologian and especially valued the *Homilies* of St John Chrysostom. Feofan appreciated the unique insights and recognised the subjectivity of the vantage points of each particular spiritual writer be it an early church father, such as St Chrysostom or his contemporary such as M.M.Speransky:

‘Критиковать мысли о духовных предметах очень неудобно [wrote Feofan in his *Letters on the Spiritual Life*]. Состояния духовныя похожи на прохождение по комнатам, полным разнообразных предметов, которые

неодинаково видятся с неодинаковых точек зрения. Проходящий одно видит, а другое не видит, потому что оно заслонено чемнибудь; и что видит, то видит со стороны к нему обращенной, которая может иметь черты, не похожие на черты противоположной стороны, видимой другим зрителем. И даже общий обзор может быть неодинаков при разности мест, с которых смотрят; а тут свет и тени, своя сила зрения, и взаимное соотношение предметов оказывают влияние на понятия зрителя. Все это приложимо и к пишущим о духовных предметах. Когда пишущий пишет с своего опыта, надобно принять то, как он свидетельствует. Несправедливо и подозревать его в неискренности и мерять своею меркою. Только теоретики, редко попадающие на истину в своих умозрениях, подлежат суду – и суду не умозрения, а опыта.¹

In those instances when he was convinced that the doctrinal and organisational unity of the Church was not at stake he boldly defended the legitimacy of diversity of vantage points within his tradition. Yet he was frightened when he observed the disintegration of the Russian political autocracy, the inner discord within the Church and the loss of its public influence as it continued leaning for support on the failing Empire. In his apologetic sermons *On Orthodoxy* he relies on the *Commonitoria* of St Vincent of Lérins and brands all alternative approaches to traditional Orthodox ascetic spirituality as ‘dissent’ [‘разномыслие’] which in his writings becomes an antonym to positive diversity [‘многообразие’] in unity. What nevertheless commands respect

¹ (ET): ‘It is most unfitting to criticise the thoughts of others regarding spiritual matters [wrote Feofan in his *Letters on the Spiritual Life*]. Anyone’s spiritual state of being is like walking from room to room full of various objects, which come into view differently from different vantage-points. As one passes through, one might observe one object and yet, totally miss another, because it might be hidden by something. And what he sees, he sees from the side facing him, which might have lines that are not like those viewed from the other side by another onlooker. Even the general view may not be the same due to different points from which the scene is viewed. And then there might be light here and shadow there, one’s quality of eyesight might too play a role, plus the alignment of objects themselves influences the understanding of the beholder. All of the above is applicable to those who write on spiritual matters. When a writer is writing from his personal experience, we must accept it as it is presented. It is unfair to question his sincerity and to apply one’s own yardstick. Only theoreticians, who rarely come upon the truth in their speculations are subject to critical judgement, and even then, not to the judgement of the speculative sort, but that of experience.’ See *Pis’mā o dukhovnoi zhizni*. 3rd edn (Moscow: Tipo-Litografiya I. Efimova, 1897) p. 8. Incidentally, in *Pis’mā o dukhovnoi Zhizni* (pp. 6-7) Feofan treats with greater toleration and

in Feofan's approach is his focus on the most vibrant and pure streams within the Eastern ascetical tradition, such as for instance the heritage of St John Chrysostom - the 'golden-mouthed' preacher of the early church.

The influence of Chrysostom

Feofan valued Chrysostom's insight into the interior life of the spirit and his stress on the importance of acquiring personal experience of communion with God. Feofan's interest in Chrysostom evidenced itself in his first published work *Pis'ma o khristianskoi zhizni*, which came out in 1860:

For God's sake do not forget to read and re-read St Chrysostom. Whichever book of his you lay your hands on. He wrote with directness of style without any preliminary preparations, exactly as he saw it with his spirit and as the thoughts formed in his heart. Many things in his writings at first sight seem to be insignificant, yet continue further and you will find a treasure, which is beyond your expectations. Some say that St Chrysostom portrayed the general order of the Christian life. That is largely true, yet not completely so. Almost in every one of his homilies you will find sayings depicting the most intimate life of the spirit. That is what you should study and treasure in your heart, to draw on in the times of need and crisis.²

At the end of the 80s Feofan began his campaign for the preparation of a complete edition of Chrysostom's writings. In one of his letters written in 1879 Feofan urged Yelagin to convince the powers that be at St Petersburg's Academy³ of the need for a complete edition of the works of Chrysostom. He argued that the existing translations need revision and that he personally would love to take part in that work, yet it never

respect Speransky's interpretation of Eastern Orthodox asceticism than, for instance, Florovsky in his *Puti russkago bogoslovie*, see e.g. pp. 138-140.

² *Pis'ma o khristianskoi zhizni*, Letter No. 75, p. 101.

³ Where many of Chrysostom's writings have previously been translated and published separately in the Academy's journal *Khristianskoye Chteniye*.

came to be.⁴ The new translation was accomplished by a team of scholars at St Petersburg Theological Academy shortly after Feofan's death in the period between 1898-1906.⁵

Chrysostom truly inspired Feofan with his spiritual vision of the human person. In *Put' ko Spaseniyu* Feofan models the section on the spiritual development of children and young people on the homilies and exhortations of Chrysostom.⁶ He also supplements *Put' ko Spaseniyu* with extensive excerpts from Chrysostom's *Concerning the Education of Children*, the *Homily to the Believing Father* and *Homily XXI* from the commentary on Ephesians.⁷ Feofan saw timeless relevance in Chrysostom's instructions to fathers on the essence of the proper upbringing of children:

There is no need for him [a child] to become a monk [writes Chrysostom]. Raise him as a Christian. Lay people need to heed the teachings contained in the Scriptures just as much, and especially children, as at their age they still are not aware of many things.⁸

Feofan also valued Chrysostom's stress on the need to encourage children to develop their own independent Christian perception of earthly existence and included in *Put'* Chrysostom's exhortation to that effect:

Let us educate our children so that they would be able to withstand any adversity and to act properly in misfortune... and we shall be greatly rewarded. Truly indeed if those people who are engaged in creating images of kings and paint their portraits are enjoying great honour and recognition; why should not

⁴ See Letter No. 1126, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 116.

⁵ On the basis of J.P.Migne, Petit-Montrouge, 1859-1863.

⁶ See *Put'*, pp. 17-48 on the spiritual development in childhood and pp. 49-68 on the period of youth, cf. excerpts from Chrysostom's writings at the end of *Put'*, pp. 315-346.

⁷ See *Put'*, pp. 315- 346. Feofan cites the Russian translation of Chrysostom's homily in *Khristianskoye Chteniye*, 1838, part IV, pp. 242-253.

⁸ Cited in *Put'*, p. 321 from Chrysostom's *Homily XXI* on St Paul's Epistle to Ephesians.

we, who are decorating the image of the Heavenly king (for a human person is the image of God) enjoy much greater blessings for restoring divine the likeness?⁹

He likewise noted Chrysostom's emphasis on the freedom of the will. This is particularly demonstrated by his excerpts from Chrysostom in *Put'* on p. 332:

If the evil in human persons was from nature, then every one, and justly so, would resort to excuses. Yet since we commit immorality or maintain chastity according to our own free will, what decent justification can be produced by the one who permitted his son (loved by him more than anything else) to fall into immorality and profanity?¹⁰

Feofan at the same time attached importance to Chrysostom's statements regarding the inability of young people to arrive at mature decisions and concerning the crucial role of a positive nurturing atmosphere in the home. In *Put'* he gives the following citation from Chrysostom:

A young man of himself does not have enough strength to do deeds of virtue. Even if he does something good that good, very soon, before it takes root and reaches maturity will die from the heavy rain of your [father's] words.¹¹

We shall see in the following chapters that there are many parallels to these exhortations in Feofan's writings and in his private letters, such as the following where Feofan writes about the causes of the estrangement of children from parents:

The estrangement of children is startling. Yet, try to see, perhaps it is your own fault. If you are always busy reading or engaged in crafts and hardly have time for the children and they do not receive any tenderness from you [*так что они не видят от вас ласки*] ... then why is it so surprising that they are estranged from you?¹²

⁹ Cited in *Put'*, pp. 326-327.

¹⁰ Cited from Chrysostom's *Exhortations to the Believing Father* in *Khristianskoye Chteniye*, vol. 3, p. 145.

¹¹ Cited in *Put'*, p. 334.

¹² Letter to N.I.K., No. 1247, dated June 25, 1877, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VIII, 23.

Chrysostom's homilies thus played a significant part in enriching Feofan's insights into the 'deep interior' of the human person. In chapter V we shall consider at length Feofan's reflections in *Put'* on the importance of early positive spiritual influences on the child (inspired by Chrysostom) and on the gradual and fragile nature of the development of individual spiritual consciousness. Yet, Feofan's expressly psychological approach to spirituality and his emphasis on the stages of progression in one's spiritual experience were also inspired by other influences, such as the monastic spirituality of the writers of the Greek anthology which became known in Russia as *Dobrotolyubiye* due to the efforts of Paisi Velichkovsky and Feofan himself.

The spirituality of the writers of Dobrotolyubiye

Feofan's patristic anthology *Dobrotolyubiye* was his highly personal and passionate effort to promote Eastern ascetic spirituality and monasticism in Russia. While striving to show through the selected texts the universality of spiritual needs and the practical relevance of ascetic pursuits, Feofan was also concerned to forewarn his readers that each is to work out with God his or her own unique path. Feofan's emphasis on the 'diversity of religious experiences' [*разные проявления духовной жизни*'] is already evident in the very beginning of his introduction to the first volume of *Dobrotolyubiye*, where he states: 'the mysterious Christian life germinates, develops and attains perfection in a measure unique to each individual' [*сокровенная ... христианская жизнь зачинается, раскрывается и к совершенству восходит*

в своей для каждого мере’].¹³ As I hope to demonstrate in this chapter, the five volumes of Feofan’s *Dobrotolyubiye* provide the best testimony to his conscious awareness of the diversity of approaches and insights found within the Eastern ascetic tradition itself. I also intend to indicate which specific themes in the texts of *Dobrotolyubiye* find further development in Feofan’s own writings. Thus, the present chapter will provide the necessary background for further examination of some of the roots of Feofan’s own personalist spiritual teaching.

As has been briefly mentioned earlier (in the first chapter of the present work), Feofan was not interested in an exact reproduction in Russian of the Greek *Philokalia* compiled by Nikodemus and Macarius or in copying the Slavonic edition of Paisi Velichkovski. Rather, he was determined from the start to surpass the original Greek collection by adding other important patristic texts. The manner in which he approached and executed this formidable task testifies to the level of his scholarly creativity and independence. In contrast with the Greek compilers and Paisi, he presumed to approach each author selectively, omitting that which he felt could confuse some uninitiated readers¹⁴ or was not directly related to ascetic practice, and arranging the material according to a system which would reflect most closely the nature, progression and needs of ascetical life. As we shall see, Feofan also felt free to paraphrase certain passages in some of the texts of the original edition and to rewrite all the introductory notes.

¹³ *Dobrotolyubiye* I, p. III.

¹⁴ Such as certain passages on the physical method of practising the Prayer of the Heart. See the discussion of Feofan’s work with volume five of *Dobrotolyubiye* in this chapter.

Feofan shared in detail his plans regarding *Dobrotolyubiye* and his progress with Yelagin in St Petersburg and with the Athonite hieromonk Fr. Arseny in Moscow. His letters show that his original plan considerably differed from the final outcome. Initially he planned to include in the collection all the ancient monastic rules; e.g., the rules of Pachomius, Basil of Caesarea, Cassian and even the Western rule of Saint Benedict of Nursia. Feofan's letters also indicate that at the outset he had no specific criteria of selection and was not clear regarding the principle which should govern the internal arrangement of the texts by each author. The choice of the theme of the struggle with passions as a central one seemed to him to be the most logical. Thus in his update sent to Fr. Arseny on February 24, 1875 he writes:

I am rushing to inform you about the future *Dobrotolyubiye*... Here are the fathers whom I have prepared: Antony the Great, Macarius the Egyptian, Mark the Ascetic, Isaiah the Solitary and Evagrius. This is all that is ready and should be included in the first volume...

The second part [that is the second volume – M.K.] contains Pachomius the Great with other cenobitics. Here we will have all the rules: that of Pachomius, Basil the Great, Cassian, St Benedict and some smaller rules preserved in collections. Yet *Dobrotolyubiye* will not end with that. It will go on further... Which particular order will be followed I do not know as yet. St Nilus, Climacus, Barsanuphius and John, Dorotheus, Ephrem the Syrian and Isaac the Syrian.

A selection will be made of all of them according to some system. Perhaps on the theme of overcoming passions or some other topic. This will take at least two volumes if not more. And yet, we would also need to add Philotheos of Sinai, Theodore of Edessa, John of Corinth [meaning St John of Karpathos - M.K.], Diadochus, Maximus the Confessor and the like. So that makes another volume. Theodore the Studite's *Catechesis* must be translated – that is another volume; Symeon the New Theologian will make quite a volume. This is the breadth of the coverage that I am aiming at. Yet, as for when I will be able to accomplish all this I cannot even say.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 86-87.

Although the task seemed daunting he was nevertheless determined all along that his anthology should ‘fill the gaps’ of the original Greek collection and should definitely contain the valuable texts of such sixth and seventh century spiritual masters as Barsanuphius, Dorotheus and Isaac the Syrian. He was also eager not to bypass the texts containing precious practical advice of those fathers whose writings were represented in Russian current translations; such as, for instance, the works of Ephrem and Chrysostom. He was not satisfied with the existing translations of Chrysostom’s works (as we have observed earlier) and the translation of the *Ladder* by John Climacus and contemplated making a new translation. Yelagin closely followed Feofan’s progress from St Petersburg, prompting him to make haste and asking Feofan to provide details of his plans regarding the new anthology. On August 11, 1875, Feofan sent to Yelagin a letter, which allows us to trace further the evolution of his initial plans:

You ask regarding *Dobrotolyubiye*, and of what it will be comprised: everything that is in the present *Dobrotolyubie* with the addition of the omitted patristic writings on asceticism... Of those fathers already translated I intend to make selections on the subject of their theory of asceticism. Thus, for instance, to take from St Ephrem, Isaac the Syrian, from Barsanuphius, from St Chrysostom, from Nilus. To translate the *Ladder* anew, with the addition of all the commentaries. And the ascetic writings of Maximos the Confessor, Theodore the Studite, Symeon the New Theologian... All this will in all probability amount to ten volumes. One is already set in motion, the other one is ready to hand – the rules of St Pachomius, St Basil and St Benedict are already translated. Cassian’s rule is under translation. All of that will comprise one thick volume or perhaps two moderately thick ones.¹⁶

However, the startsi of the monastery of St Panteleimon, at whose expense Feofan’s *Dobrotolyubiye* was being printed, found it more appropriate to publish Feofan’s

¹⁶ Letter No. 1090, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 63-64.

collection of the ancient monastic rules as a separate book after his completion of the work on *Dobrotolyubiye* proper.¹⁷ Feofan's co-operation with the Athonite monks had not been entirely smooth. One detects in Feofan's correspondence some degree of displeasure with their decision to leave out the rules. In the same letter (quoted above), Feofan discloses to Yelagin his determination to defend his original plan.¹⁸ But as we learn from Feofan's letter dated March 26, 1891, (which was actually Feofan's last letter to Yelagin before Yelagin's death later in that year) it was only seventeen years later that Feofan was able to publish his collection of rules:

Remember that for the second volume of *Dobrotolyubiye* the monastic rules were promised... I have prepared them. Yet, as we decided not to include them in *Dobrotolyubiye* until now they lay awaiting their turn. I feel that it is timely now to shake off the dust from them... to revise them and to publish. This is what I am doing now, that is revising. The Athonites will publish them. I have already been in correspondence with the powers that be. The completed rules are those of Pachomius the Great, Basil the Great, John Cassian, and St Benedict.¹⁹

This was the first such collection in Russian with Feofan's own extensive prolegomena to each rule. It formed a valuable addition to *Dobrotolyubiye*.²⁰ The previous seventeen years (1875-1892), however, had been filled with intensive work on the *Dobrotolyubiye* anthology itself. Despite the fact that by 1875 a fair amount of

¹⁷ See Feofan's introductory note to his *Drevniye inocheskiye ustavy* (Moscow: Izdaniye Afonskago Russkago Panteleimonova monastyrya, 1892), p. XV.

¹⁸ 'Я было сказал Арсению [Feofan related to Yelagin - M.K.]: печатай, как знаешь, но теперь скажу, что не отстану от своего плана. Да пусть печатают первую часть. До второй дойдет, мы их тут и прижмем... Лукавство!! Да что сделать с лукавыми.' See *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 64. Feofan's further correspondence with Arseny himself seems to indicate that two years later Feofan abandoned of his own volition the plan of including monastic rules in the second volume, see his Letter No. 102, to Fr. Arseny, dated October 23, 1877, *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 92-93.

¹⁹ Letter No. 1200, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 232-233.

²⁰ Cf. *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 58-59.

material for the first volume had already been prepared,²¹ it took an additional twenty-four months to see the work on the first volume through to publication.

BOOK ONE: THE MASTERS OF THE DESERT

The first volume included such authors as Pseudo-Antony, Pseudo-Macarius, Abba Isaiah, Mark the Ascetic and Evagrius. These writers (with the exception of Evagrius) were highly important for Feofan's own spiritual development. '[В]се пустыnnики' ['desert monks'] as Feofan himself described them.²² The selected texts of the first volume, together with Feofan's own introductory notes, form a practical guide to the eremitical spirituality of lower Egypt (exemplified in the life of St Antony); classic examples of the desert spirituality at Sketis (Isaiah the Solitary); and the more learned semi-anchoritic monasticism at Nitria and Kellia (Evagrius Ponticus). Each strand possessed a treasury of spiritual guidance and provided a unique nurturing atmosphere which Feofan affectionately described as a 'spiritual greenhouse' [*теплица духовная*].

²¹ Tertyshnikov was inaccurate when he wrote that Feofan began his work of translating patristic writings in 1873 and commenced the work on *Dobrotolyubiye* proper in 1875. See Tertyshnikov, pp. 104, 106. Feofan in fact began the work of preparing materials for his anthology as early as September 1866 as one can see from his own letter to Yelagin. On September 14, 1866 Feofan reported to Yelagin: 'Переводить начал *Добролюбие* – с греческаго.' Letter No. 1066, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 29.

²² *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 59.

The Example of St Antony and Pseudo-Antonian texts

Feofan was profoundly influenced by the record of the hermit life of Antony of Egypt [*Vita Antonii*] – traditionally attributed to Athanasius. He studied the writings ascribed to St Antony with the *pietas* inspired by the reading of *Vita*. As is demonstrated in Chapters IV and V of this thesis, Feofan reflected on the text *On the Character of Men* when he was formulating his own views on the human person and utilised for his anthropological model several concepts found in this text. Besides the work *On the Character of Men*, which St. Nikodemus as well as Feofan believed to be a genuine work by St Antony, Feofan included in the first volume extracts from four other texts traditionally attributed to St Antony, but regarded by scholars today as spurious: the 20 *Epistles* and 20 *Sermons*, the ‘so called’ *Rule of St Antony*, sayings attributed to St Antony and recollections of him. Feofan mentions in the introduction that his translations are based on the texts found in the volume 40 of *Patrologia Graeca* and that he also gleaned material from *Apophthegmata* and the Slavonic alphabetical collection.²³ From Feofan’s correspondence with Yelagin we learn that he also had access to some early Latin versions of the above texts and found these Latin translations to be of rather poor quality:

²³ For the critical edition of the *Vita Antonii* (PG 26. 835-978) see G.J.M.Bartelink, SC 400, 1994. For the Slavonic alphabetical collection see *Drevnii Paterik izlozhennyi po glavam*, 2nd edn (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr’, 1891), the two Latin collections of *Apophthegmata Patrum* which Feofan had in his library are referred to in English as the *Latin Systematic Collection* found in PL 73. 855-1022 as *Vitae Patrum*, bks. 5 and 6 (for a list of variant readings, see O. Chadwick, *Western Asceticism* (London, 1958), pp. 338-360) and the *Latin Collection of Paschasius of Dumium*, received text in PL 73. 1025-1062. For the critical edition of this latter collection see *A Versao Latina por Pascasio de Dume dos Apophthegmata Patrum*, ed. J.G.Freire, 2 vols (Coimbra, 1971). For Feofan’s translations of the texts attributed to St Antony the Great, see *Dobrotolyubiye*, I, pp. 9- 138.

The Latins have found many writings of St Antony the Great... [Feofan explained to Yelagin - M.K.] They are translated from the Arabic. In their style they resemble those already known to us... yet the obscurity of the translation is terrible... I have been rummaging over it endlessly. Now I have set St Antony aside for a time to rest and I am translating the fathers who follow him in the Greek *Philokalia*... such as Abba Isaiah. This one again has a whole book besides that which is in the *Philokalia*. As for Cassian's writings, just his own – will comprise a big volume comparable to the size of the volumes of *Philokalia*... and there is no end. This is where one feels that the spirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak. I approach the desk with the determination to translate the whole of St Antony the Great. Then I work here a little, there a little – yet at the end I have translated just a dozen lines... and have already become exhausted... and I leave the desk to walk for a while scratching the back of my head.²⁴

Two years later, in January of 1871, Feofan was still absorbed in his work on the texts attributed to St Antony, devoting considerable time to the study of the life of this great saint as well. He published in *Tambov Diocesan Record* the results of his researches under the title *Neskol'ko slov o zhisni i pisaniyakh svyatogo Antoniya*.²⁵ It is primarily a biographical piece filled with lessons on the regenerating power of the Spirit working within Antony the hermit: 'Никто не видел: что с ним; но Дух Божий ни для кого незримо, неведомо большею частью и для самого Антония, созидал в нем новаго человека, по образу Создавшего его.'²⁶ Feofan based his study on the *Vita*, Sozomen's *Ecclesiastical History* (book I, ch. 13) and the collections of *Apophthegmata*. He presented the material as highly relevant. He always wrote very apropos to the times. When he was preparing the materials for the section of *Dobrotolyubiye* devoted to St Antony, he was hoping that doubting minds would heed the 'authoritative word' of the ancient patristic texts:

²⁴ Letter No. 1070, dated November 14, 1868, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 35.

²⁵ This article had subsequently been published in his first volume of *Dobrotolyubiye*.

²⁶ *Dobrotolyubiye*, I, p. 15.

I am now translating the writings of St Antony the Great, the father of monasticism. Nowadays everyone has his own opinion. Monks have their own, the laity theirs. Yet, what does St Antony have to say? As soon as I arrived here at Vysha I began translating him, then abandoned him, and now decided to start again. The language is quite difficult. Will I be able to finish? It is a lot. Twenty *Homilies*, 20 *Epistles*, and how many exhortations! It makes a whole book. Bishop Ignati [Bryanchaninov - M.K.] in his recently published collection *Sobraniye izrechenii* ... took quite a lot from these writings. It is a pity that he has not selected them in the right order, but lumped them together. Here on one subject, there on another.²⁷

In his own anthology, Feofan assembled all the translated and considerably abridged material (attributed to St Antony) according to the principle of the progression of the spiritual life. Four years later, when the work on Pseudo-Antonian texts was completed, Fr. Arseni and the monks on Mount Athos insisted that these texts should be printed separately and immediately, without waiting for the completion of the work on the other texts destined for the first volume of *Dobrotolyubiye*. Feofan was reluctant to comply and expressed his disapproval to Fr. Arseny:

To print St Antony [separately]?— would not that be to the detriment of the anthology? Since he will be included in it anyway. I think that this [printing of Ps.- Antony's texts separately -M.K.] would not quite be the right thing. We rather need somehow to compile this anthology as soon as possible and to publish it because the notebooks [with translations of other texts for the first volume – M.K.] are lying all over... What if some of them get lost? Yet if you insist, you can print him separately. But who will do the proofs then? You yourself can! All right, go ahead and do that. Or send them to me and I will proof-read.²⁸

We do not know what could have prompted the monks on m. Athos to suggest the printing of Pseudo-Antonian texts separately, but whatever the monks' real motive, they honoured Feofan's will in this case and included the texts in the first volume of *Dobrotolyubiye*. Yet taking into consideration the questionable authorship of the

²⁷ Letter No. 416, dated January 18, 1871, *Sobraniye Pisem*, III, 60.

texts, it perhaps would have been to Feofan's credit if they had been printed separately. The editors of the English *Philokalia*, in contradistinction to the Greek editors and to Feofan, placed the piece *On the Character of Men* in the appendix of their first volume.²⁹ However, it is worth noting that although in his speculative reflections on the human make-up Feofan heavily relies on the text *On the Character of Men*,³⁰ of all his references to St Antony in *Put' ko Spaseniyu* only one is to this particular text.³¹ All the other references in *Put'* are to specific details in the life of St Antony. He refers to Antony's resolute rejection of material possessions³²; to his advice regarding looking to God through one's own sins³³; and his example of being 'led out' for active service in community in order to demonstrate³⁴ that 'not all Hesychasts are forever kept silent by God'³⁵ and that his notion of Hesychasm is far from a passive view of contemplation which sees no value in human personal activity.

The texts by Abba Isaiah

Another solitary whose views on the human make-up Feofan considered and whose texts he included in the first volume of *Dobrotolyubiye* was a certain monk Isaiah. Very little reliable information about the life of this author is available.³⁶ Although Feofan experienced difficulty in obtaining the Greek texts of the works of Abba Isaiah

²⁸ Letter No. 97, dated December 10, 1874, *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 85-86.

²⁹ See *The Philokalia* I, pp. 327-355.

³⁰ See further discussion on this and specific references in chapter IV of this thesis, section *Spirit*.

³¹ *Put'*, p. 189, cf. also 'On the Character of Men', par. 150, *The Philokalia* I, p. 352.

³² *Put'*, p. 100.

³³ *Put'*, p. 200, cited from *Paterik skitskii*.

³⁴ at the end of *Put'*.

³⁵ *Put'*, p. 314.

³⁶ See 'Introductory Note', *The Philokalia* I, p. 21.

he was reluctant to use translations. His contacts at the Holy Mountain proved to be indispensable in the task of acquiring manuscripts. On occasions when he could not track down the whereabouts of Fr. Arseni, who provided the vital connection between Vysha, St. Petersburg, and Mount Athos, Feofan had to resort to the help of the office of Yelagin:

Is Father Arseni going to Mount Athos for sure or this is just our surmising... At one point I was almost ready to go there myself to look through the *paterikons* in the hope of finding the writings of Abba Isaiah the Solitary, the missing ones of Mark the Ascetic, Evagrius and others... maybe they have fallen behind and are hiding somewhere in a corner there... As for the sayings of Isaiah – it is the whole book – 29 *Homilies*... which will be included in the collection, yet from the Latin translation.³⁷

Feofan, conscious of the fact that Latin translators in the West used different terminology, was extremely concerned not to make mistakes that could confuse their terms with the ones used in the Orthodox East: ‘So much depends on the ascetic terminology which is different in the West [‘*которая у латинян иная*’] and one can be wide off the mark.’³⁸ Hence access to the original source was crucial. Feofan indicates in his introductory note to the texts of Abba Isaiah that the Athonite elders were finally able to procure for him a Greek manuscript of the 29 *Homilies* of Isaiah and that he was able to make his translation from a copy of that Greek manuscript, checking it meticulously with the Slavonic translation of Paisi, generously provided to him by the startsi of Optina.³⁹ In translating the other texts by Abba Isaiah⁴⁰ Feofan

³⁷ Letter to Yelagin, dated December 12, 1873, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 44.

³⁸ Letter to Yelagin, dated December 12, 1873, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 44. As Hodges demonstrated in his comparative study of Feofan’s variant of the *Unseen Warfare*.

³⁹ Cf. Feofan’s letter to the Optina Father Superior in *Sobraniye Pisem*, VIII, 179. On June 21, 1882 Feofan remarked to Yelagin jovially: ‘What is Vysha doing? It is still in such a deep sleep that it can stand it no longer. It is faint with sleep! However I am collating the new translation of Abba

used the Greek *Philokalia*, *Patrologia Latina*⁴¹ and the Slavonic alphabetical collection *Alfavitnyi Paterik*. Feofan's attention to the teaching of Abba Isaiah on the unity which dispassion brings about within the three parts of the soul [*'безмятежное троечастности души'*]⁴² and the harmony which the Holy Spirit restores within the inter-relationship of the body, soul and spirit⁴³ is of special interest to us. We shall see a development of this teaching in Feofan in *Put'*, *Chto est'*... and *Nachertaniye*.

Feofan's correspondence does not reveal any details regarding his work with texts of Mark the Ascetic⁴⁴ and Evagrius, apart from the fact that he also was in pursuit of the Greek manuscripts of the works of these authors. The writings of Evagrius Ponticus exerted enormous influence on Eastern asceticism and spirituality.⁴⁵ Yet, as we shall see in chapters IV and V of this thesis, Feofan's teaching reflects much more closely the Ps.-Macarian spirituality of the heart and his emphasis on the

Isaiah with the translation of Paisi Velichkovski which was sent to me by the gracious Optina startsi.' See *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 163.

⁴⁰ The 'Rules for Novices', see *Dobrotolyubiye*, I, pp. 444-452, the 'Sayings of Abba Isaiah', see *Dobrotolyubiye*, I, pp. 452-463 (taken from PG 40, 1212 and *Alfavitnyi Paterik*), 'On Guarding the Intellect', see *Dobrotolyubiye*, I, pp. 456-463 (taken from the Greek *Philokalia* I, pp. 30-35) and the 'Chapters on Asceticism and Stillness', see *Dobrotolyubiye*, I, pp. 464-466 (taken from PG 40).

⁴¹ In order to translate the 'Rules for Novices' preserved by Benedict of Aniane and found in *PL*, vol. 103.

⁴² *Dobrotolyubiye*, I, p. 279, see also pp. 460-461, par. 18. Cf. (ET) *On Guarding the Intellect*, §18 in *The Philokalia* I, p. 26.

⁴³ See *Homily XXIII*, §13, *Dobrotolyubiye*, I, p. 394.

⁴⁴ The writer who attracted interest of early Protestant theologians by his refutation of the idea of human merit in his work *On Those who Think that They are Made Righteous by Works*. Feofan echoes Mark the Ascetic in his own writings in his teachings on self-knowledge, self-examination and the role played by baptismal grace. (For specific references see chapter V of this thesis.) In working on his translation of Mark's texts Feofan, as he states in the introductory note, used the texts in the Greek *Philokalia*, *Patrologia Graeca* volume 65 and a certain manuscript from St Sabas' monastery in Palestine which Feofan found to be fuller and clearer than the texts in the two above mentioned collections. See *Dobrotolyubiye*, I, pp. 467-468. For an examination of the teaching of Mark see Kallistos Ware, 'The Sacrament of Baptism and the Ascetic Life in the teaching of Mark the Monk', *Studia Patristica*, X, Texte und Untersuchungen, 107 (Berlin, 1970), pp. 441-452.

⁴⁵ See 'Introductory Note' in *The Philokalia* I, pp. 29-30, also the study by I. Hausherr, 'Le Traité de l'Oraison d'Evagre le Pontique', in *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, XV (1934), pp. 34-93,

individual⁴⁶ than the intellectualist tradition (the spirituality of the mind) as it is expressed in Evagrius. Feofan, as I demonstrate in chapter IV, transforms the concept of the mind (*nous*) into his eclectic notion of the spirit and emphasises the integral link between the spirit and the heart. We shall postpone a more detailed discussion of this subject till later and shall, in the meantime, return to our brief overview of Feofan's sources (his work on the patristic anthology *Dobrotolyubiye*).

BOOK TWO: INTERIOR DIMENSION OF ASCETICISM

The second volume of Feofan's *Dobrotolyubiye* contains the largest number of texts not found in the Greek *Philokalia*. Besides Cassian's writings, the writings of St Hesychius, and those of St Nilus, Feofan incorporates extensive selections from the writings attributed to St Ephrem the Syrian.⁴⁷ In the second volume, Feofan also included selections from such important sixth and seventh century authors as John Climacus, Barsanuphius and John, Abba Dorotheus and Isaac the Syrian. In his introduction to the second volume he describes these latter authors as the 'foremost interpreters of the interior dimension of asceticism' stating that 'it would be a great injustice to deprive our anthology of their lessons.'⁴⁸

It took Feofan seven years (1877-1884) to prepare the second volume for publication. He was concerned that the work was going too slowly, yet these were

113-170.

⁴⁶ See the respective sections in chapters III and V of this thesis.

⁴⁷ Yet many of those are spurious.

⁴⁸ See *Dobrotolyubiye*, II, pp. III-IV.

perhaps the most productive seven years of Feofan's entire literary career: 'I am concentrating now on the second volume of *Dobrotolyubiye*,' Feofan wrote to Yelagin on April 25, 1883. "Yet, I sense that the work is going with difficulty whereas the first volume was crafted so quickly."⁴⁹ During this same period Feofan published numerous articles, completed the commentaries on the Pauline Epistles and wrote a number of books, including his highly popular *What is spiritual life*.⁵⁰

Cassian

Feofan's correspondence with Father Arseny allows us to follow the progression of Feofan's work on the second volume of *Dobrotolyubiye* and learn of the problems which he encountered in the process:

You can make haste with the printing of *Dobrotolyubiye* [Feofan reported to Fr. Arseny who had just returned to Moscow from Mount Athos - M.K.]. Soon the second volume will be ready ... Cassian will take quite a lot of time... He is difficult to translate, but I will make haste.⁵¹

Although Feofan struggled with Cassian, yet the work on Cassian's texts proved essential in crystallising the principle of selection and arrangement of the texts of those ascetic writers whom Feofan included in the second volume. The Orthodox church holds in high esteem the works of this early theoretician of monastic life who was trained in the Egyptian desert by Evagrius Ponticus himself. The inclusion of the extracts from Cassian's *Institutes* and *Conferences* into the Greek *Philokalia* is a witness to that. Feofan sensed that he needed to ground himself in the spiritual vision

⁴⁹ Letter No. 1160, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 172.

⁵⁰ Which is *Chto yest' dukhovnaya zhizn' i kak na neye nastroitsya?*

⁵¹ Letter to Fr. Arseny, dated July 3, 1875, *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 88.

of Cassian. Cassian's emphasis on the cleansing of the heart from passions as the principal task of asceticism became Feofan's criterion. He makes this fact clear in his remarks in the introduction to the second volume of *Dobrotolyubiye*:

Cassian was my guide in the selection of the extracts. He singled out the purification of the heart from passions as the goal of asceticism and has directed all of his ascetic homilies to that end. So I follow the same idea in making selections from his writings and in arranging everything that I selected from St Nilus of Sinai [that is Nilus the Ascetic – M.K.]. I was guided by the same thought in all of the material selected from St Ephrem, in my selections from St Barsanuphius and St John, St Abba Dorotheus and St Isaac the Syrian.⁵²

We find Feofan discussing with Fr. Arseny the acceptability of this approach. Feofan also shared with Arseny his reasons for departing from the original design, explaining his ideas regarding new incorporations into the second volume – some of which he never followed through:

I had the intention to include [in the second volume – M.K.] the monastic rules also... they are ready, yet some changes have to be made. I am not in the mood to make those changes now. That is why I am setting them aside. ... I am including everything that is in the Greek *Philokalia*... that is Cassian, Hesychius, the Venerable Nilus of Sinai [that is Nilus the Ascetic – M.K.]. Following them in the Greek *Philokalia* there is Diadochus. And there is a big gap of two centuries which should be filled – and will be filled... with Ephrem, Isaac the Syrian, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, St Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Isidore of Pelusium, Barsanuphius and John, Abba Dorotheus and Climacus... Too many?! But it would be a crime not to include them. They are all available in translation. We will take extracts from them primarily on how to overcome passions and to live among temptations.⁵³

While Feofan's dream of including in the second volume the ascetic writings of the Cappadocian fathers, of Chrysostom and Isidore of Pelusium never materialised, it is nevertheless indicative of his knowledge of their writings and of the significance

⁵² *Dobrotolyubiye*, II, pp. III-IV.

⁵³ Letter to Fr. Arseny No. 102, dated October 23, 1877, *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 92-93.

which he attached to their contribution to the Eastern ascetical tradition. The final version of the second volume follows closely the intentions expressed in the second part of Feofan's letter⁵⁴ and the theme of purification of the heart from passions (observed in Cassian) dominates all of Feofan's selections.

Feofan translated Cassian from the original Latin text, as we can see in his letter to Yelagin: 'But to translate St Cassian is a big job for his Latin is quite abstruse [*премудренная-мудрость*]. St Benedict perhaps is simpler... Help me Lord. It is a very pleasant work! One might assume that it would not be totally useless to learn of the origins of monasticism.'⁵⁵

While in the second half of nineteenth century Russian monasticism had been an object of various attacks from the liberal camp, the same period was also characterised by a revival of studies in ancient monasticism and the publication of many monographs and new translations of patristic texts.⁵⁶ Feofan closely followed

⁵⁴ Closer towards the end of the letter Feofan provides a new, more precise list of texts: 'Thus, the second volume will include: 1)Cassian – extracts from the 8th book on passion and the 24 of his discourses which deal especially with the struggle with passions (I will make a new translation)... 2)Hesychius – in new translation, 3)Article from the Venerable Nilus – a) on prayer [this work by Evagrius was mistakenly attributed to Nilus - M.K.], b)two articles from his 'chapters' ..., c)on thoughts ..., d)two chapters to Eulogius... [now recognised as belonging to Evagrius - M.K.] , e) then perhaps some of his letters, those which are directed against passions (all of this in a new translation) ; 4)Extracts from St Ephrem, 5) Extracts from Isaac the Syrian. In both cases we shall present the complete system of their teaching. This I think will be more than enough for the second volume. Yet, we shall see.' Letter to Fr. Arseny, No. 102, dated October 23, 1877, *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 92-93.

⁵⁵ In the Letter dated April 17, 1875, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 58. In the same letter Feofan remarks to Yelagin that he got weary working on his commentaries on the Pauline Epistles and in order to do something different decided to begin working on the second volume of *Dobrotolyubye*: 'Кончил чрез силу 2 [Epistle-M.K.] к Кор. [Corinthians- M.K.]. Приступил к Рим. [Romans - M.K.]. Такая тупость напала и безсердечие... что и интерес весь пропал, и мысли нейдут, и перо не ходит. Думаю, что это от того, что целый год и более все за одним делом. Стерляди да стерляди, - и приелось. Бросим на несколько времени. И вздумалось между делом приготовить второй том русскаго "Добротолубия." *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁵⁶ Especially the translations of the texts of the Desert Fathers by the Optina startsi, for further details see Chapter I, section on *Feofan and the startsi of Optina Pustyn'*.

both developments. It is interesting to observe that in October of 1876, exactly at the time when Feofan was working on the ascetic texts of Cassian, he discovered that Cassian's works had already been translated by Bishop Petr of Mount Athos and published at the expense of the monastery of St Panteleimon.⁵⁷ Feofan, as we learn from his letter to Yelagin, decided that the publication by Bishop Petr was not a major problem after all: it prompted him to be even more selective and to incorporate into his anthology what he regarded as the most representative of Cassian's views on asceticism.⁵⁸ However, even after the abridgements, Feofan's selection still goes beyond what was included in the Greek *Philokalia*.⁵⁹

Feofan especially valued Cassian's teaching on the relationship between grace and human effort and the manifestation of this relationship in prayer [*'о благодати и произволении как деятелях в производстве духовной жизни и о молитве в коей оне сходятся'*].⁶⁰ He translated Cassian's key statements on this subject from the *Conferences* and added them to his *Dobrotolyubiye*. Feofan appreciated Cassian's criticism of Augustine's doctrine of grace and his semi-pelagian stance (as expressed

⁵⁷ *Pisaniya prep. Ottsa Ioanna Kassiana Rimlyanina*, 2nd edn (Moscow, 1892), reprinted by Svyato-Troitskaya Sergieva Lavra in 1993.

⁵⁸ In his letter to Yelagin Feofan explains: 'The rules are ready... and we have missed our chance... I have just found out that St Cassian is already translated and is being printed. A certain Bishop Petr has done the translation and is printing it. Yet, there is no reason for us to grieve. After all this is better for our anthology. In such a case, I will select only the most essential in his teaching on asceticism and on the spiritual growth. It will be shorter and more useful. There are some very broad discourses which are not of great relevance to us.' Letter No. 1108, dated October 4, 1876, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 94.

⁵⁹ Feofan was not satisfied with the quality of the existing Russian translations of Cassian. It is interesting that on 28 March 1883 Feofan commented to Yelagin: 'I have prepared St Cassian already... that is a selection from him. As for the complete corpus of his writings, they require a totally new translation... Yet this is to be accomplished by future generations.' See Letter No. 1159, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 169.

⁶⁰ See *Dobrotolyubiye*, II, pp. 5-6. See also [W.] O. Chadwick, *John Cassian: A Study in Primitive Monasticism*, 2nd edn (1968).

in *Conferences*, 13). As we shall see, this particular emphasis in Cassian is very much in harmony with Feofan's own understanding of the crucial role of self-determination.

Hesychius

Another author whose teachings Feofan took a careful note of and whose writings he translated for the second volume of *Dobrotolyubiye* was Abba Hesychius of Sinai.

Following Nikodemus, Feofan identified Abba Hesychius with the Greek ecclesiastical writer and exegete Hesychius of Jerusalem. Feofan regarded the counsels of Hesychius concerning the inner mental warfare as especially effective and strongly recommended that his correspondents follow closely the strategies laid out in the work *On Watchfulness and Holiness*.⁶¹

Ephrem

No texts of the two great Syriac spiritual writers, Ephrem and Isaac of Nineveh, were included in the Greek *Philokalia*. The Russian poetic soul in Feofan could not tolerate such an omission. Feofan incorporated in the second volume of *Dobrotolyubiye* extracts from both authors.⁶² Feofan called Ephrem a 'Christian David' and was moved by the rich imagery of his hymns and his deeply sacramental theology. He was also impressed by Ephrem's ability to touch the hearts of the educated and uneducated alike and encouraged Russian clergy to read in the church from Ephrem's hymns and

⁶¹ Especially par. 2, 5, 6, 8, 20-23, 29 and 40, see *Chto est'...*, pp. 214-218 where Feofan liberally cites Hesychius. Feofan made his own new translation from the Greek text in the *Philokalia*. He also used the texts in PG volume 93 in order to supplement his selection. Feofan also cites Hesychius in *Put'*, p. 245. For the details on the borrowings of Hesychius from his precursors see the footnotes in the 1979 edn of the English *Philokalia* I on pp. 172-176.

⁶² We shall consider Feofan's study of Isaac's texts in the following chapter.

spiritual texts instead of from some obscure Slavonic texts which were unintelligible even to the priests themselves. Thus in September of 1873 he wrote to archpriest

V.P. Nechaev:

Regarding your question about the obscurity of much that is read in the church I had an idea to compose a Psalter from the writings of St. Ephrem the Syrian. I have found 150 articles. Most of them are in the form of a prayer, a few are of moral and dogmatic nature... they read so well and sometimes bring tears to the eyes. What an astonishingly exceptional saint! A true Christian David.⁶³

Feofan also refers to Ephrem in *Put'* and in *Nachertaniye*, drawing attention to Ephrem's example of dispassion.⁶⁴

Feofan published his collection of Ephrem's hymns and spiritual homilies at the expense of the monastery of St Panteleimon on Mount Athos.⁶⁵ In his letter to one of the ascetics on Mount Athos we read: 'Mt Athos cannot give a better gift to its readers. Nobody can surpass St Ephrem in his ability to awaken the slumbering soul. Yet who has his writings? – This little anthology will serve in the place of it all.'⁶⁶

Feofan says in his introductory note in *Dobrotolyubiye* that he used for his selections from Ephrem the Russian three volume edition of Ephrem's works.⁶⁷ This Russian translation upon which Feofan based his work was made from the very

⁶³ 'Pis'ma episkopa Feofana k protoiereyu V.P. Nechaevu' in *Dushepoleznoe chteniye*, 1910, part 1, p. 114.

⁶⁴ See *Put'*, p. 312 and *Nach.*, p. 141.

⁶⁵ See *Psaltir'*, ili bogomyslennyye razmyshleniya svyatago ottsa nashego Yefrema Sirina, 1874. In his letter to a certain monk O. N. Feofan explains further the nature of his collection: 'St Ephrem's Psalter [*Псалмупук св. Ефрема*] is a book where all of his prayers and lamentations have been collected [meaning contemplative discourses selected from the writings of Ephrem the Syrian and arranged in the order of David's Psalms - M.K.]. Letter No. 900, dated June 17, 1888 in *Sobraniye Pisem*, V, 172. The English translation is published under the title *A Spiritual Psalter, or Reflections on God*.

⁶⁶ *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 82.

⁶⁷ *Tvoreniya svyatago ottsa nashego Yefrema Sirina*, 4th ed., 3 parts, Moscow, 1895

unsatisfactory collection by J.S. and S.E. Assemani and P.B. Mobarek.⁶⁸ We have, unfortunately, no means of ascertaining which of the incorporations made by Feofan in his *Dobrotolyubiye* and in his *Psalter* are authentic and which are spurious; moreover, this question lies beyond the scope of the present survey. In his introduction Feofan relates the traditional biography of Ephrem, many details of which are questioned by scholars today (e.g., that Ephrem accompanied St James of Nisibis to the Council of Nicaea (325), etc.).⁶⁹ Feofan does not mention in his introduction the problem of authorship, although A.K. Sokolov acknowledges in his prolegomena to the Russian 3 volume edition (published in Moscow, 1848-53) that the Assemani's collection is unverified and in many respects leaves much to be desired.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Feofan's selections from St. Ephrem in *Dobrotolyubiye* and his *Psalter* excerpted from the writings of Ephrem are still read in the monasteries in Russia and the English translation of the *Psalter* is being circulated among the English speaking converts to Eastern Orthodoxy.

Climacus

The same desire to share the treasures of the ancient ascetic spirituality which motivated Feofan to include in the second volume the writings of the Syriac fathers prompted him to incorporate the excerpts from Climacus' famous *Ladder*⁷¹ and from

⁶⁸ See their 3 vol. of Syriac texts *Sancti Ephraemi Syri opera omnia graece, syriace et latine* (Rome, 1737-46) and 3 vol. of Greek texts (ibid. 1732-46).

⁶⁹ See Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous eye: the spiritual world vision of Saint Ephrem*, CSS 124 (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1992), pp. 16-17.

⁷⁰ See *Tvoreniya svyatogo ottsa nashego Yefrema Sirina*, 4th ed., part I, Moscow, 1895, pp. 56, 72, see also ibid. part 7, p. II, footnote 1.

⁷¹ *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982) in the Classics of Western

the correspondence of Barsanuphius and John. Feofan draws extensively on Climacus in *Put'* and in *Nachertaniye*,⁷² especially noting the individual approach of Climacus.⁷³ He was also gripped by Climacus' compelling portrayal of the practice of stillness (particularly Step 27) and of the delights of the state of dispassion (Step 29).⁷⁴ Even the style of Feofan's *Put' ko Spaseniyu* echoes that of the *Ladder*. The English translation of *Put'* by Seraphim Rose does not even begin to convey the richness, dynamism and burning metaphors of the original.

Barsanuphius and John

If Feofan interpreted dispassion and stillness in *Put'* on the basis of the *Ladder*, he based his section on spiritual guides primarily on the *Questions and Answers* of

Spirituality (CWS). Hereafter *Ladder*.

⁷² As for the influence of Climacus, one observes, for instance in *Nachertaniye*, that Feofan profusely cites Climacus when he describes dynamics of spiritual growth and the degrees of perfection. See e.g., *Nach.*, p. 141. Feofan cites Step 26 of the *Ladder* on pp. 136, 138 and 139 where he refers to such spiritual feats and signs of progress mentioned in Climacus as: 'lack of vainglory, freedom from anger, good hope, gentleness in criticism, passionless prayer and lack of avarice'. Cf. (ET), *Ladder*, Step 26, p. 232. Hereafter *Ladder*. On p. 140 of *Nachertaniye* Feofan again refers to Climacus describing the state when the spiritual battle is won and the aspirant reaches maturity. Feofan also highlights the fact that Climacus describes the state of the one who has been cleansed from passions as primarily life in the spirit, and communion with God.

⁷³ See for instance the *Ladder*, Step 15, p. 179 where Climacus says: 'The same sin earns punishment a hundred times greater for one person than another, depending on character, place, progress, and much else besides.' (This is the more interesting side of the individualism of Climacus, cf. the helpful comments by Bishop Kallistos (Ware) on the 'apparent individualism' of the *Ladder*, in the 'Introduction', *Ibid.*, pp. 34-36.) In the second volume of *Dobrotolyubiye* Feofan selected from Climacus, among his other sayings, passages on diversity of spiritual ways such as the following: 'For cenobiticism is not beneficial for everybody, neither is everyone capable of hesychia. Each one should decide himself which path is more fitting to his abilities.' See *Dobrotolyubiye*, II, p. 493.

⁷⁴ Thus on p. 138 he uses the imagery of Climacus describing sin as 'тысячеглавый', on p. 243 Feofan again cites Climacus describing degrees of prayer; on p. 308 he refers to the distinction made by Climacus between the stillness of the body and stillness of the soul, on p. 288 he marvels at Climacus' rich enumeration of passions and rules of strife with them, on p. 300 he notes the teaching of Climacus on obedience to the divine will (Step 27), on p. 312 he refers to *Ladder*, Step 29 where Climacus says that dispassion 'raises the poor mind from earth to heaven'.

Barsanuphius and John.⁷⁵ He described this correspondence in his introductory note in *Dobrotolyubiye* as a ‘sword which cuts off one’s will’ and a ‘pole-axe which destroys the pleasing of the flesh’.⁷⁶ Feofan had a special regard for the all-embracing character and pastoral nature of the teachings of these two discerning fathers. In one of his letters Feofan recommends: ‘Read Barsanuphius and John. There are defined all accidental occurrences and one can find directions and instructions regarding anything that one might be in need of.’⁷⁷

BOOK THREE: MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

In contrast to the second volume which took 7 years to prepare, Feofan produced the third volume in a record time of two years (1886-1888). It included half as much material (440 pages compared to 760 pages of the second volume) yet contains texts of no less importance.

Among the eleven authors represented in the third volume of Feofan’s *Dobrotolyubiye* two names stand out: those of Diadochus and Maximus the Confessor. Both authors exerted a profound influence on Feofan. Diadochus attracted Feofan by his pictorial descriptions of the delicate ways in which grace interacts with the human will in baptism and at other stages of spiritual growth.⁷⁸ As for Maximus,

⁷⁵ See *Put*, pp. 290-291 and 292-293.

⁷⁶ *Dobrotolyubiye*, II, p. 558.

⁷⁷ Letter to V.P.B. No. 1458, no date, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VIII, 197.

⁷⁸ We shall consider the influence of Diadochus in chapters IV and V. Feofan recommended his correspondents to read along with other patristic writings the works of Diadochus, especially his descriptions of the delicate ways in which God deals with each soul and how God educates the soul as a mother educates her child. See e.g., Letter No. 189, dated August 21, 1888, *Sobraniye Pisem*, I,

Feofan was struck by the depth and complexity of his interpretation of co-mingling of the human and the divine minds experienced in contemplation. Feofan spoke of the tongue of Maximus the Confessor, which was plucked out by his tormentors⁷⁹ as ‘язык благоглаголевый и ересеоблечительный’ and began to popularize his writings as early as 1874 when he published in Tambov his translation of Maximus’ *Ascetic Life*⁸⁰ taken from the collection of his complete works in the Greek.⁸¹ As for the works of Maximus included in *Dobrotolyubiye*, Feofan translated those from the Greek texts found in the *Philokalia*, comparing them with the texts in *PG* 90-91 (which the editors of the English *Philokalia* regard as ‘on the whole more reliable’). In *Dobrotolyubiye* Feofan opens the section dedicated to Maximus with his translation of the *Ascetic Life*, followed by *Four Hundred Texts on Love*, his selections from the *Two Hundred Texts on Theology* and the *Various Texts on Theology, the Divine Economy, and Virtue and Vice*. Desiring to make the writings of Maximus accessible to a wider readership, Feofan selected passages which in his view were easiest to understand, as well as those which he believed related more directly to spiritual life and ascetic practice.⁸² Feofan was certainly unaware of the fact that the 500 *Various*

226. See also *Vnutrennyaya Zhizn'* (Moscow, 1893), pp. 92-93 where Feofan cites ‘On Spiritual Knowledge, par. 89. In *Put'* Feofan consistently refers to Diadochus, see e.g., pp. 20, 178-179, 180-181, 182, 184, 190. See the discussion of Feofan’s dependence on Diadochus in Chapter V of this thesis.

⁷⁹ for his violation of the emperor’s decree commanding silence regarding the subject of Christ’s wills.

⁸⁰ *Svyatogo otsa nashego Maksima Ispovednika ‘Slovo podvizhnicheskoe v voprosakh i otvetakh’*, (Tambov: [n. pub.], 1874).

⁸¹ in J.P. Migne’s *PG* 90, 912-956.

⁸² See *Dobrotolyubiye*, III, p. 133.

Texts were not all authentic work of Maximus and that they represented more of a collection of extracts from his works made by a later editor or compiler.⁸³

Feofan admits in his letters that he is overwhelmed by the profound nature of Maximus' writings and his portrayal of every aspect of communion with Christ. Also important for our understanding of the challenges which Feofan encountered in his work with these texts is his own open admission that he was forced to paraphrase certain passages in Maximus because of the "extremely terse manner" in which, in Feofan's opinion, St Maximus occasionally expressed himself. Feofan also indicated that his work on Maximus was closely guided by a Latin translation, possibly that of John Scottus Eriugena or that of the fifteenth century Italian Bishop Petro Balbi:

I am working now on Maximus the Confessor. He is a great contemplative! One does not always attain his height or reach the depth of his thought. His discourse ... is always so complete and all encompassing. Yet in certain places it is very terse... I often have to paraphrase instead of rendering it word for word... I observe that the Latin translator, my best helper, has done the same. I still have to translate five *Centuries* – chapters. Sometimes I cannot translate more than one saying in a day... This is how difficult it is at times to come to the understanding of his thinking! ...In him one finds a very thorough exposition of communion with the Lord Jesus.⁸⁴

Feofan's Russian biographers leave out the subject of his study of the patristic tradition (as well as his correspondence pertaining to this). The only exception is Tertyshnikov: he at least provides some of Feofan's own statements on the subject, yet makes no attempt to come up with any assessment of his own. Very likely out of concern not to discredit Feofan, Tertyshnikov – citing the above quoted passage in his

⁸³ See introd. and notes in *The Philokalia*, vol. II, pp. 48-51, 391-395.

⁸⁴ Letter to Madame V.V.Sh., translator of Francis de Sales, No. 1004, dated 23 November 1886, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VI, 142-143.

*Zhizn*⁸⁵ – altogether omits Feofan's admission of the paraphrasing which he employed in many instances, as well as the fact that he was closely guided by the Latin translation. Yet taking into consideration the complex nature of the Maximian texts it seems that Feofan's open confession only does credit to him as a scholar and translator and alerts a student of his *Dobrotolyubiye* to be aware of the shortcomings of his translation. Thus, Feofan, for instance, admitted to Yelagin that he found many passages in Maximus totally unintelligible, and hence had to apply ingenuity and resourcefulness:

I sweat over the third volume of *Dobrotolyubiye* and it looks as if soon I will complete it. I was about to publish St Maximus the Confessor as a separate book yet I changed my mind... In the *Philokalia* there are four of his *Centuries* on love, two *Centuries* on theology, five *Centuries* on virtues and vices and there is an exposition of the Lord's prayer: a total of 1100 of his exhortations or chapters. Some are extremely profound... yet there are some which are incomprehensible... In such instances one is naturally forced to resort to craftiness. When I finish translating him it will be another volume... and a rather thick one...

I doubt that I will be able to complete the work on *Dobrotolyubiye*... One of my eyes grows sickly and it is quite noticeable... Yet my spoon has never missed the mouth as yet!⁸⁶

One of the examples of the difficulties which Feofan encountered in translating St. Maximus is found in *Dobrotolyubiye*, III, pp. 229-230 where translating a passage from the *First Century on Theology* §11 Feofan fails to convey the idea of the equality of every 'deiform' soul in the eyes of God. He translates the Greek phrase: *Οὐκ ἔστι ψυχὴ λογικὴ κατ' οὐσίαν, ψυχῆς λογικῆς τιμιωτέρα*⁸⁷ by the Russian: 'Нет души, более досточестной, чем та, которая по естеству разумна.' Which literally means: 'There is no soul greater than that which by its nature has

⁸⁵ Tertyshnikov, p. 104.

⁸⁶ Letter No. 1176, dated October 30, 1886, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 195.

intelligence.’ The English translators render the same phrase thus: ‘No deiform soul is in its essence of greater value than any other deiform soul.’⁸⁸ And A.I.Sidorov in his recent Russian translation of the *First Century* writes: ‘Нет разумной души, которая по сущности была бы более ценной, чем [другая] разумная душа.’⁸⁹ Yet in the same passage Feofan correctly renders the idea that man’s capacity of self-determination is rooted in the ‘image character’ of his nature – his being created in God’s image. The difficulties which Feofan experienced in translating St. Maximus did not prevent him from grasping the essence of Maximus’ interpretation of divine-human communion. It is noteworthy that Feofan, developing the idea of co-mingling [‘*спасствование*’] with the mind of God in *Nachertaniye*⁹⁰, draws on Maximus the Confessor. Feofan quotes Maximus, saying that there is a possibility for a Christian contemplative to find such a union with God and to attain such height of contemplation that it will be possible ‘to perceive all the inner essences of created things pre-existing in God.’⁹¹

Regrettably, we shall not find in Feofan’s *Dobrotolyubiye* the complete texts of St. Maximus. By spring of 1887, being concerned about his diminishing eyesight and being pressed for time, Feofan decided to make abridgements from the five *Centuries of Various Texts on Theology* and to leave out a number of passages from the two works of Maximus already translated:

⁸⁷ FK II, p.53.

⁸⁸ *The Philokalia* II, p. 116.

⁸⁹ *Tvoreniya prepodobnogo Maksima Ispovednika*, tr. by A.I.Sidorov, book I (Moscow, 1993), p. 216. Hereafter *Tvoreniya Maksima*.

⁹⁰ *Nach.*, pp. 238-242, especially p.241.

⁹¹ ‘Second Century on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God’ §4, (*The Philokalia* II, p. 138). Feofan cites the Russian trans. in *Khristinaskoye Chteniye*, 1835, part I, p.

The third volume of *Dobrotolyubiye* is coming to an end [Feofan wrote to Madame V.V.Sh. in March of 1887] ... I am sending the texts which are finished to m. Athos where, as I am told by the *startsi*, they can arrange much better the process of copying my manuscript... I stopped translating Maximus the Confessor word for word and began making extracts of the more straightforward and more practical of his exhortations. Of all the chapters that I have already translated I am also making selections following the same principle. The rest I left out. So that out of the seven hundred [chapters] I will hardly have three hundred in our anthology.⁹²

Thus, Feofan expanded in his *Dobrotolyubiye* the materials belonging to Evagrius, Cassian and Abba Isaiah (compared to the Greek *Philokalia*), but in the case of Maximus, he included much less than can be found in the Greek collection of Nikodemus. Yet, it would nevertheless be wrong to conclude on the basis of this fact that he personally valued Evagrius or Cassian and Abba Isaiah more than he did Maximus the Confessor. Evagrius, for instance, receives no mention in Feofan's major writings and in his private correspondence. At the same time it must be said that while Feofan admired the outstanding firmness of Maximus in fighting the heresy of monothelitism, and drew on Maximus in developing his teaching on divine-human communion⁹³, one does not find in Feofan a focused interest in Maximian Christology and in its bearing on Maximian anthropology (cf. e.g., Vladimir Solovyev's appraisal of the theology of Maximus).⁹⁴ The same is true of the Maximian theme of the cosmic vocation of humanity. But no one can deny the role which Feofan's translations of Maximus' works in the third volume of *Dobrotolyubiye* (together with the translations

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⁹² Letter No. 1008, dated 19 March 1887, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VI, pp. 146, 149-150.

⁹³ For references to Maximian parallels see chapter V of this thesis.

⁹⁴ See V. Solovyev's article 'Maksim ispovednik' in *Khristianstvo* II, pp. 77-78.

made at Optina) played in making known to nineteenth century Russia the writings of this ‘Real Father of Byzantine theology.’⁹⁵

BOOK FOUR: THEODORE OF STUDIUM

The fourth volume likewise represents a pioneering effort on the part of Feofan to disseminate the writings of another notable teacher of ascetic spirituality and defender of the practice of veneration of icons. The significance of the Studite tradition for Russian monasticism was great indeed.⁹⁶ The Studite Rule was just as influential in the establishment of the Russian monastic tradition as the Rule of St. Benedict in the West. Yet, the *Long Catechesis* – the major work of St Theodore the Studite was little known in Russia and very hard to find.⁹⁷ Feofan decided to address this need in the fourth volume of his anthology.

On February 20, 1889, Feofan’s letter to Yelagin was bubbling with enthusiasm regarding the progress of his work on the fourth volume of Dobrotolyubiye and his admiration of St Theodore of Studium:

I have a lot of things to do. I am going over the final draft of the fourth volume [of *Dobrotolyubie*]... It will consist entirely of the writings of St Theodore the Studite... What a marvellous father! What a vibrant soul... How vividly does he describe cenobitic monasticism...its privileges, its labours and its worth in the eyes of God!⁹⁸

⁹⁵ See A.I.Sidorov, ‘Prepodobnyi Maksim Ispovednik’ in *Tvoreniya Maksima*, p. 73.

⁹⁶ See Father Sergei Hackel, ‘Russian spirituality’ in *The Study of Spirituality*, p. 262.

⁹⁷ Only two small collections one of 105 and another of 95 exhortations of St. Theodore predominantly from the *Short Catechesis* were available in the translation of the Optina startsi. See Feofan’s detailed note on the availability of the manuscripts of Theodore’s *Catechesis* in Russia and in the monastery of St. Panteleimon on m. Athos in *Dobrotolyubiye*, IV, pp. IV-VI.

⁹⁸ Letter No. 1186, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 210-211.

Feofan made every effort to promote Theodore's brilliant organisational vision as an ideal of monastic leadership, yet as we shall see later in this thesis, Feofan also felt personally challenged by the Studite's integrity and uncompromising stand regarding the independence of the Church from the state. He was equally surprised by Theodore's austerity: "One can see that he esteemed monasticism," Feofan remarked to Yelagin. "Yet [he] was so stern. He really grills you. [He writes] "my children... my fathers... my brothers... and then begins to really pummel you."⁹⁹ Perhaps, Feofan's admiration of Theodore's spirit of austerity explains, to some degree, his own harshness towards Russian students who, following Tolstoy, began to doubt the validity of the veneration of icons.¹⁰⁰

While the works of Theodore the Studite are totally absent from the Greek *Philokalia*, the fourth volume of Feofan's *Dobrotolyubiye*, by contrast, consists exclusively of his selections from Theodore's *Long* and *Short Catechesis*. Feofan emphasised the fact that all the texts included in the Greek *Philokalia* concentrated on the interior life, and that only Theodore of Studium alone managed to explain how the daily chores of physical existence in a monastery should be directed towards the attainment of the highest goals of asceticism. Feofan attached immense significance to Theodore's practical exhortations to monks and taught that his words of wisdom were equally edifying for believers living outside of the cenobium.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Letter to Yelagin, No. 1189, dated October 26, 1889, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 214-215.

¹⁰⁰ See chapter V of this thesis, section on *self-determination and 'silent submissiveness'*.

¹⁰¹ In *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, on pp. 213 –214, the letter dated August 16, 1889 contains further details of Feofan's work with the texts of Theodore the Studite as well as his appraisal of Theodore's teaching and the texts: "The work on the extracts from St Theodore is moving ahead... even though rather sluggishly. Let me tell you: this is the most essential thing. We do have lessons on monastic life... Yet looking from the heights; but as for the directions regarding the everyday life in a

Feofan spoke of the fourth volume as his favourite in the whole anthology and tried to distribute personally as many copies of the printed volume as possible.

Feofan's special interest in Theodore's *Catecheses* goes back to the period of his first stay in Palestine (1847-1853) and his friendship with starets Joasaph – the prior of the monastery of St Sabas near Jerusalem - who presented Feofan with a manuscript of the *Short Catechesis*. From that time on, Feofan persistently tried to obtain a copy of the Greek manuscript containing Theodore's *Long Catechesis*. Feofan was sensitive to the nature and quality of the texts which he was receiving from m. Athos. He had brought from the Orient a number of translations of patristic texts rendered in Modern Greek. Upon comparing those with the original texts, he found that some Greek translators paraphrased the ancient texts in a rather free manner, often obscuring the meaning of the original. From the letter to Fr. Arseny dated February 21, 1874, we learn that many years later Feofan was still in pursuit of Theodore's original Greek texts:

When you go home [m. Athos] bring Theodore the Studite. His rule will possibly be included in the second part of our collection... Then all the rules will be in one place. I have a publication of his works. Yet it does not include everything. This is what you should find! – The *Catecheses*. There were two of those: the shorter one – which contains brief exhortations for monks and the longer one containing more lengthy instructions. There were 130 or 135 of the shorter ones... As for the number of the longer ones I do not know, perhaps 96-97... So that is what you should find. Borrow them for about a year and bring them. Please keep in mind that for matins the Greeks read Theodore's exhortations in the Modern Greek and those are divided into three parts,

monastery, we do not have those. St Theodore almost stays away from the heights and simply walks around the monastery... and gives instructions regarding every little detail, drawing spiritual lessons from it... As for things of this nature I do not omit anything... The only thing which I do regret is that I am not in possession of good manuscripts and it seems as though there have not been any. I come across many words which I do not understand, as well as thoughts which I find incomprehensible. Yet I think that what we do have and what we do understand will be quite sufficient for us.'

according to the three annual seasons of reading ... I have this book. And I do not need it so much... Find the originals... in the ancient Greek. Because Greeks translate very freely from the ancient Greek... and distort much compared with the original.

This is your task... Search at Vatopedi or at the Lavra in your libraries there.

These exhortations are a real treasure for the monks... For whatever [Theodore] begins to talk about, he directs it to the monastic rules... constantly reminding [us] to what a monk should give precedence.¹⁰²

Feofan rejoiced in March 1887 when he finally received a copy of a Greek manuscript of the *Long Catechesis*:

The [Athonite] startsi have procured the exhortations of St Theodore the Studite... We know only 90-95 of his exhortations... but all of them amount to about four hundred... How wonderful that would be if all of them could be translated! We are almost bereft of instructions of an explicitly monastic nature... those of St Ephrem, of St Isaac the Syrian and Abba Dorotheus are too high and are dealing predominantly with the interior order of life. Yet all of these [by St Theodore] are directed to the practical issues of everyday life in a monastery as we have it.¹⁰³

Feofan explains in the introduction to the fourth volume that the startsi of the monastery of St Panteleimon on Mount Athos copied for him the text of the *Long Catechesis* from a three volume manuscript found in the monastery of St John the Theologian on the Island of Patmos (founded by St. Christodoulos in 1088)¹⁰⁴ and that the material included in that volume is translated from this particular manuscript. Of special interest to us is the fact that from among the numerous exhortations, Feofan selected a passage (section 77 from book II of the *Long Catechesis*) in which Theodore entreats his spiritual children to appreciate the unique differences and various individual gifts of each member of the cenobium:

¹⁰² In the letter to Fr. Arseny No. 95, dated February 21, 1874, *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 84.

¹⁰³ Letter No. 1008, dated March 19, 1887, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VI, 146, 149-150.

¹⁰⁴ See *Dobrotolyubiye*, IV, p. III, also, on the monastery of St John the Theologian see Timothy

[Б]удучи друг другу членами, так как одно тело ес[ть] мы все, будем сорадоваться друг другу, почитая своим все, чем отличаются другие; ибо когда один одним, другой другим, третий еще иным чем отличается, все же суть одно тело братства, то всем этим братство все отличается и является всесовершенным, честь чего и на каждого переходит: тот мелодичен, а ты громогласен; тот читает внятно, а ты понимаешь читаемое скоро; иной сообразительнее умом, а ты способнее ходить по делам... . Так благий Бог наш для всех нас сделал удободостижимым и удободоступным благо добродетели.¹⁰⁵

The significance of this particular exhortation is not in the recognition of individual differences as such, but in the idea that instead of being suppressed, these differences should rather be encouraged and appreciated: they make the cenobitic community as a whole more distinguished, stronger, and more positively versatile, as well as creating an atmosphere in which everyone is enriched by others. In the outlook of St Theodore this sensitivity to human diversity and belief in its legitimacy and positive nature co-existed with radicalism and austerity. It is, perhaps, this polarity and complexity of mindset which constitute the most characteristic features of St Theodore's and St Feofan's outlooks.

Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 132.

¹⁰⁵ (ET): 'Being members of one body we ought to rejoice in one another, considering as our own all that which makes others different [from us]. For when one distinguishes in one area, the other in something different and the third in yet another [sphere], still being of the same body of brotherhood, then the whole brotherhood is characterised by means of this [diversity] and becomes perfect in all respects. The honour [due the body] is passed on to everyone: Your voice is strong and the voice of the other is melodious; one is reading distinctly, and you have a quick grasp of what is read; another has a sharper mind but you have a better ability to see things through... . In this way our gracious Lord made the blessings of virtue easily attainable for all of us and placed them within an easy reach of all. 'Nastavleniya monakhm', 144. 3, *Dobrotolyubiye*, IV, pp. 282-283.

BOOK FIVE: LATER BYZANTINE SPIRITUALITY

A highly significant author who combined in his teaching the cenobitic approach of St Theodore with the more eremitic style and who is prominently featured in the last volume of *Dobrotolyubiye* is St Symeon the New Theologian.

The fifth volume contains, besides the *Practical and Theological Texts* of St Symeon, the writings of such major authors of later Byzantine spirituality as Nikitas Stithatos, Gregory of Sinai, Palamas, Nicephorus and Maximus Kavsokalivit. Feofan departs from the Greek *Philokalia* in this particular volume in three respects. First, he completely excludes the writings of Peter of Damascus (already available in Russian in the translation by the Optina startsi) and the chapters of Symeon Metaphrastes (also available, due to the fact that Symeon's paraphrased selections from Ps.-Macarius had earlier been published in Russia together with the complete text of the Ps.-Macarian homilies themselves). Second, he leaves out the chapters by Kallistos Cataphygiotes¹⁰⁶ and sections from the texts by Gregory Palamas and Nikitas Stithatos due to the fact that they in his opinion contain many things which are 'hard to understand and to formulate,' being primarily of 'abstract and syllogistic nature.' Third, he considerably abridges the passages in Nicephorus the Monk, Ps.-Symeon and Gregory of Sinai which describe the method of controlling one's breathing during

¹⁰⁶ Due to 'their extreme complexity ...and predominantly abstract and syllogistic nature.' See *Dobrotolyubiye*, V, p. 3. His *Syllogistic Chapters* are found in the Greek *Φιλοκαλία* V, 4-59, also in PG 147, col. 833-942. The first Russian translation was prepared by D.N.Leontyev (Kazan', 1898). There is an excellent Russian translation of the *Syllogistic Chapters* by A.F.Losev which is available on-line <http://www.ccel.org/contrib/ru/Other/Kallist/kallisht.htm> with helpful 'Explanatory Note' by V.V.Bibikhin.

the unceasing repetition of the Jesus Prayer. Feofan admitted to Yelagin that he struggled at length over the content of the fifth volume; he was tempted to leave out the texts dealing with the physical method altogether and to 'end the anthology with the writings of St Symeon the New Theologian alone.'¹⁰⁷ The practice of the physical method of Hesychast prayer had been a rather controversial and delicate issue in Orthodox circles in nineteenth century Russia. Feofan himself, in contradistinction for instance to Bryanchaninov, was of the opinion that the physical method [*'мо художество какое придумали и приладили к сей молитве'*] was not only nonessential, but was outright dangerous, leading some to the *prelest* of fantasizing and others 'however surprising that may be, to a state of permanent lustfulness.'¹⁰⁸ He insisted that it should be discouraged and even prohibited and emphasized that one should never forget that the Jesus Prayer is only a means of communion with God, of devotion and contemplation, but that it is not contemplation itself. Thus once again we observe how Feofan's own personal convictions, theological preferences, and intellectual and practical limitations are closely reflected in his handling of the texts of the Philokalia.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ See *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 58.

¹⁰⁸ *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 58. For a thorough discussion of the meaning and the use of the Prayer of Jesus in Orthodox tradition see Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Power of the Name: The Jesus Prayer in Orthodox Spirituality* (Oxford, 1986).

¹⁰⁹ See Feofan's comments regarding the content of volume V of *Dobrotolyubiye* in his letter to Yelagin in *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 86-87. See also the collection of Feofan's letters regarding the Prayer of Jesus: *Svyatitel' Feofan Zatvornik o molitve Iisusovoi, v pis'makh k skhiigumenu Germanu i skhimonakhu Agapiyu* (St. Petersburg: Spaso-Preobrazhensky Valaamsky monastyr', 1998) and the recent study by Igumen Mark on Ignati Bryanchaninov's position. Bishop Ignati, as the study shows, in difference to Feofan was not totally against the use of the physical method. See Igumen Mark (Lozinsky), *Dukhovnaya zhizn' miryanina i monakha po tvoreniyam i pis'mam episkopa Ignatiya (Bryanchaninova)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, 1997), pp. 220-277, especially 268-269.

Symeon the New Theologian

Of all the authors of the fifth volume Feofan had a special devotion for Symeon the New Theologian, regarded by some Orthodox scholars as the pioneer of ‘personal mysticism’ in medieval Byzantium.¹¹⁰ Long before he commenced his work on the fifth volume of *Dobrotolyubiye* Feofan began translating all of Symeon’s discourses available to him. He was ardently hoping to be able to obtain manuscripts of Symeon’s writings in the original Greek, but when that proved to be impossible he began to make the translation from the Modern Greek text acquired for him by Fr. Arseny on Mount Athos.¹¹¹ Feofan was deeply frustrated by the lack of knowledge of St. Symeon’s works in Russia and their inaccessibility. Prior to the publication of Feofan’s own translation of the 92 discourses, only 12 discourses (besides the texts in Paisi Velichkovski’s *Dobrotolyubiye*) were available to the Russian readers in the Slavonic and Russian translations. ‘Symeon the New Theologian is an unappreciated treasure,’ wrote Feofan in a letter to a friend. ‘Better than anyone else he inspires zeal

¹¹⁰ Meyendorff presents Symeon as a prophet of the idea of a conscious experience of God in medieval Byzantium, see his *Byzantine Theology*, pp. 73-74.

¹¹¹ On December 10, 1874 Feofan wrote to Fr. Arseny: ‘Even though I have not received as yet the book which you sent, I already sense that this is not what is needed. It is in the Modern Greek and what is needed is the text in the ancient Greek. In the ancient Greek Symeon has not been printed, neither has Theodore the Studite or Isaiah the Solitary... They should be searched among the manuscripts. And as for the availability of these manuscripts that is beyond any doubt for Symeon was translated into the Modern Greek by some Athonite [Dionysios Zagoraïos- M.K.] who lived on an island [Piperi- M.K.] across from m. Athos. There are others also.’ See *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 85-86. Feofan made his translation of St Symeon’s discourses from the inadequate Modern Greek translation by Dionysios Zagoraïos published in Venice in 1790. Krivocheine in his well-known study of St Symeon describes the translation by Dionysios as ‘incorrect and misleading’ yet at the same time observes that Feofan’s translation based on that of Dionysios ‘was widely read in Russia and even contributed to the religious revival in this century. In present-day Russia the new editions of Symeon the New Theologian rest on the library shelves of the Theological Academies. ... Russian believers continue to read Theophan’s old translations...’ See Archbishop Basil Krivocheine, *In the Light of Christ* (New York, 1986), pp. 9 and 139.

for the inner life of grace, yet writes so simply.¹¹² Feofan was not only fascinated by the simplicity of St Symeon's style and his emphasis on spiritual zeal, but he was equally struck by the unflinching firmness of his character and the profound nature of his mystical vision: 'And what about Symeon the New Theologian? He surely deserves to be translated! I am translating him a line at a time... He is so stern. There is an infinitude of wisdom in him!'¹¹³

Feofan could not wait for the completion of his work on St. Symeon's writings and made arrangements with the editor of the popular *Dushepoleznoye Chteniye*, Archpriest V. P. Nechaev, to publish translations of the discourses in small instalments:

I sent to you several discourses of Symeon the New Theologian before I received your letter [Feofan wrote to Nechaev in April of 1878 - M.K.]. I will continue sending them to you a few at a time and will not give up until I complete the translation. His writings are not scholarly, but are all based on life. That is why they are so appreciated by those who love life.¹¹⁴

In contrast to Feofan, many of his former colleagues at St Petersburg Academy were at the time captivated by Kantian philosophy, the challenging works of F. C. Baur and D. F. Strauss, and the revolutionary discoveries of J. Wellhausen in the area of biblical criticism. Feofan was convinced (as we learn from his correspondence) that the writings of Symeon, with their vivid portrayal of the practical effects of contemplation and their emphasis on one's own personal, conscious experience of God, would be a healthy antidote to the prevailing influence of the German rationalist approach to faith:

¹¹² In the letter to D.M., No. 527, dated October 29, 1890, *Sobraniye Pisem*, III, 223.

¹¹³ Letter of April 28, 1877 in *Sobraniye Pisem*, III, 50.

What is Vysha doing? Just wasting her time. [Feofan wrote jovially in his letter to Yelagin in January of 1881 - M.K.] She has completed letters 5, 6 and 7 to St Petersburg [directed against the teachings of Radstock and Pashkov - M.K.] and went to sleep. She will only busy herself for a little while longer with the translation of St Symeon and that is it. The final discourses of St Symeon (10 are still to be translated) are the height of spiritual understanding.¹¹⁵ Those German scholars [*ученая немчуря*] do not have an inkling of that. They have grown weak in their discernment of spiritual things [*оскудели разумением духовных вещей*], jibbing at the spirit and digging their heels into the letter under the whole weight of their German nature. Yet look what an understanding this unlearned Orthodox attained with just one bow!¹¹⁶

Apart from his private letters, there are very few direct references to Symeon in Feofan's own spiritual writings, yet there are many striking affinities: we observe in both authors the same synthesis of the cenobitic approach of St Basil the Great and St Theodore the Studite with the more eremitic style of St John Climacus and the contemplative emphasis of Isaac the Syrian.¹¹⁷ One also notes the same consistently sustained stress on the importance of the sacraments and of personal, conscious experience of God.¹¹⁸ What must be pointed out, however, is that in *Put'*, Feofan mistakenly refers to St Symeon the New Theologian as an instructor in the practice of the Jesus Prayer. One does not find in Symeon's authentic writings any reference to

¹¹⁴ 'Pis'ma episkopa Feofana k protoiereyu V.P.Nechayevu' in *Dushepoleznoye chteniye*, 1910, part 1, p. 335.

¹¹⁵ The final discourses (83-92) are on dispassion, prayer and contemplation. See e.g., Feofan's translation of Symeon's passage on deification and co-mingling in discourse 83, vol. II, p. 386.

¹¹⁶ In the Letter No. 1141, dated January 21, 1881, *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, 138.

¹¹⁷ See Bishop Kallistos (Ware). 'Symeon the New Theologian' in *The Study of Spirituality*, p. 238 and the recently published thorough study by Hilarion Alfeyev on the relationship of St Symeon to Orthodox tradition *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford, 2000), especially chapter I, pp. 9-27. See also Feofan's *Drevniye inocheskiye ustavy*, pp. 213-244, and *Put'*, pp. 248, 250-252, 284-285 as well as the discussion of this matter in respective sections of the present Chapter and Chapter III.

¹¹⁸ See the examination of the development of the above themes in Feofan in Chapter V of this thesis, especially the section on *Communion in the sacraments*.

the Jesus Prayer and in this, as it has been pointed out¹¹⁹ there is a difference between Symeon and such later Hesychasts as, for instance, Gregory of Sinai and Nicephorus the Monk, whose writings Feofan also included in the fifth volume.

Summary

This brief sketch is intended to show that Feofan's work on the texts of *Dobrotolyubiye* provides a testimony to his thorough knowledge of the riches and the diversity of the Orthodox tradition and demonstrates that his own personalist teaching on the human person is rooted in the teachings of the Fathers of the Philokalia. We have seen that in Abba Isaiah, Feofan noted the teaching on the unity which dispassion brings about within the tripartite make-up (body, soul and spirit) of the human person. Cassian's emphasis on the cleansing of the heart determined Feofan's organization of the material within *Dobrotolyubiye*. The 'Ladder' of John Climacus shaped his understanding of the dynamics of spiritual growth and the degrees of perfection. Diadochus attracted Feofan by his pictorial descriptions of the delicate ways in which grace interacts with the human will, and Maximus the Confessor overwhelmed him by his interpretation of the union of the human and the divine minds experienced in contemplation. In Theodore the Studite, Feofan discovered the ideal of monastic leadership, taking note of Theodore's exhortations to appreciate the individual differences and gifts of each member of the monastic community. In Symeon the New Theologian, Feofan found a clear focus on the personal, conscious experience of God.

¹¹⁹ See Kallistos Ware, 'Symeon the New Theologian' in *The Study of Spirituality*, p. 240.

If in the texts included in *Dobrotolyubiye*, Feofan the mystic found and took note of the emphasis on the personal conscious experience of God and on the positive attitude to human diversity, in the thesis of the famous *Commonitoria* of St Vincent of Lérins (extracts from which Feofan translated upon the request of the Russian Athonite starts), Feofan the traditionalist found a definition of doctrinal uniformity as well as a developed ideology of traditionalist conformity which he would passionately expound in his apologetic sermons *On Orthodoxy*. Yet, however paradoxical that may seem, the authoritarianism of Feofan the ideologist co-existed with a fair measure of openness and sensitivity to the spiritual diversity of Feofan the mystic and Feofan the contemplative, as I intend to demonstrate further in the next chapter where we shall consider Feofan's study of the ascetic homilies of Ps.-Macarius and Isaac the Syrian.

CHAPTER III

THE INDIVIDUAL IN PSEUDO-MACARIUS, ISAAC THE SYRIAN AND FEOFAN THE RECLUSE

The teachers of the Church had a doctrine of the *theosis* of man, but in this *theosis* there is no man at all. The very problem of man is not even put. But man is godlike not alone because he is capable of suppressing his own nature and thus freeing a place for divinity. There is godlikeness in human nature itself, in the very human voice of that nature.

Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, 1955, p. 84.

Even in historic Orthodoxy and Catholicism there is a tendency towards sectarianism, an insufficiency of the universal spirit. Individuality is smothered where there is no universal spiritual breath.

Ibid., p. 156.

Our nature in its pure form is worthy of love. Even angels look upon it with love and amazement when it is thus revealed.

Feofan the Recluse, *What is Spiritual Life?* p. 71.

Far from doing a disservice to Orthodox ascetical teaching, Berdyaev's scathing rebuke in the two statements cited above serves to alert a student of that tradition to some of its deeper insights into mystery of human personality and brings into sharper focus themes which might otherwise escape his attention. What picture of the individual emerges from Feofan's compelling description of the intricate labyrinths of spiritual life? What was the source of his inspiration? To what degree are the emphases in his treatment of the issues of individual freedom and individuality

conditioned by the needs and the spirit of his times and to what extent is he influenced by the tradition which he set out to expound?

In many instances it is impossible to trace the exact origin of Feofan's ideas. Yet a close examination of his writings and those of some of the fathers whom he held in high esteem provides significant parallels, similarities, references and direct citations. Out of all the writings of the Desert Fathers, Feofan chose to recommend that his correspondents use the Pseudo-Macarian *Homilies* and the *Homilies* of Isaac the Syrian as the surest guide 'into the inner sanctuary' of their hearts. Feofan himself extensively used both authors in *Put'* and in *Nachertaniye* and referred to them often in his private and public correspondence. What were some of the specific emphases of these two Eastern mystical authors in their treatment of the issues of personal distinctiveness, inner spiritual freedom and diversity and to what extent they influenced Feofan's concept of the individual person?

THE PSEUDO-MACARIAN HOMILIES

Feofan attributed the Pseudo-Macarian Homilies to St Makarios the Great of Egypt (c. 300- c. 390). As it is evident from his own introduction to his selection of Ps.-Macarian sayings in *Dobrotolyubiye* I (pp. 153-154), he believed that the Homilies were of Egyptian and not of Syrian or Mesopotamian origin. It is now generally recognised that the ascription to Macarius of Egypt is impossible for the vocabulary and imagery as well as the geography and climate described in the *Homilies* point to

Syria rather than Egypt.¹ Feofan was certainly not aware of the disputed Messalian connection of the *Homilies*² although it should be mentioned that Messalianism as a heretical ascetic movement (known for its exclusive emphasis on prayer) was known to Russian 19th century scholars through the work of the heresy hunter Epiphanius of Salamis.³

Feofan departs from the Greek *Philokalia* in his decision what to select and include in his *Dobrotolyubiye* from the most popular collection (known as collection II) of the *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*. Instead of including the eleventh-century paraphrase (150 sections) attributed to St Symeon Metaphrastes, Feofan makes his own selection of 298 sections directly from the text of the fifty homilies. Of all the prominent themes of the homilies Feofan singles out the Ps.-Macarian description of the dynamics of sanctification of the soul by the grace of the Holy Spirit as the dominant theme. ‘*Одухование есть душа души*,’ he insists in his introduction.⁴ The way he structures the material further reveals what was of special interest to him in Ps.-Macarius. Feofan divides his selection of the passages into eight parts which deal

¹ For a thorough and comprehensive examination of the Syrian background of the Pseudo-Macarian vocabulary of spiritual experience see the latest study by Columba Stewart, OSB: *“Working the Earth of the Heart.” The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 84- 95. Hereafter Columba Stewart.

² For the examination of the Messalian connection see Columba Stewart, pp. 12-96, and especially pp. 234-240, also H. Dörries, *Symeon von Mesopotamien: Die Überlieferung der messalianischen ‘Makarios’-Schriften (Texte und Untersuchungen 55, 1: Leipzig, 1941)*; and ‘Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon’ (*Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Dritte Folge, Nr 103, Göttingen, 1978*). For an Orthodox position, see J. Meyendorff, ‘Messalianism or Anti-Messalianism? A Fresh Look at the “Macarian” Problem’, in *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, vol. II (Münster, 1971), pp. 585-90.

³ See for instance the article ‘Messaliane’ in the Russian encyclopaedic dictionary *Khristianstvo* II (Moscow 1995), p. 104 which was incorporated from the larger 19th century reference work *Pravoslavnaya bogoslovskaya entsiklopediya* (St Petersburg, 1900-1911).

⁴ *Dobrotolyubiye* I, p. 154.

with seven fundamental conditions of the human person or stages in the development of a highly personal relationship between God and the individual.⁵

The approach of God to man

Of major interest to us in the Ps.-Macarian corpus is not the motif of mystic love or the ‘burning desire for the heavenly Bridegroom’⁶, nor the metaphysical aspects of *theosis* as the indwelling of God who ‘has assumed a body’⁷, but the Ps.-Macarian emphasis on divine recognition and accommodation of human individuality. We encounter this emphasis first in the fourth homily:

Thus he [God] appeared to each of the holy fathers, exactly as he wished and as it seemed helpful to them. In one manner he appeared to Abraham, in another to Isaac, in another to Jacob, in another to Noah, Daniel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, and to each of the holy prophets. Still in another way to Elijah and again differently to Moses.⁸

In the twelfth *Homily*, Ps.-Macarius speaks again of the Spirit and of grace working in diverse ways ‘in individual Christians.’⁹ This divine recognition of the necessity of an individual approach to each human being is better understood in the light of the characteristically semitic emphasis of Ps.-Macarius on ‘the process of continued

⁵ 1) Светлое состояние первого человека, 2) Мрачное состояние падшего, 3) Образование твердой решимости последовать Господу, 4) Состояние трудничества, 5) Состояние приявших ощущение благодати, 6) Возможное христианское совершенство на земле and 7) Будущее состояние по смерти и воскресении.

⁶ Ps.-Macarius, H. 10 §4 as found in the critical edition of H.Dörries, E. Klostermann, and M.Kroeger, *Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien Des Makarios*, Patristische Texte und Studien 6 (Berlin, 1964). The English translation here and elsewhere in the thesis is cited from *Pseudo-Macarius: The fifty spiritual homilies and the Great Letter*, The Classics of Western Spirituality, trans. and ed. by George A. Maloney, S.J. (New York: Paulist, 1992). Hereafter CWS.

⁷ H. 4 §9.

⁸ H. 4 §13.

⁹ H. 12 §4.

growth in interpersonal relations¹⁰ between God and human beings' and the overall stress of the Eastern spiritual writers on 'the dynamic, the existential and psychological' nature of the Christian experience.¹¹

The distinctive emphasis on the dignity of the human soul in the Ps.-Macarian writings has been noted in some studies.¹² However, I have not encountered any specific study that draws attention to the Ps.-Macarian emphasis on the individuality of each human person. Yet his *Homilies* abound with statements which bear witness to this focus; e.g., 'The soul is neither by nature divine nor by nature part of the darkness of wickedness, but is a creature, intellectual, beautiful, unique and admirable.'¹³ 'There are different types of human hearts and wills.'¹⁴ According to Ps.-Macarius, each man is free and unique, by contrast with the animal kingdom:

The nature of irrational animals is fixed and unchangeable. The nature of the serpent is to bite and to spew out poison. Therefore, all serpents are of one kind. The wolf is accustomed to be rapacious. Therefore all wolves are of this same nature. The lamb is a gentle animal and a prey to marauders. Therefore all lambs are of the same nature. The dove is guileless and harmless. All doves also are of the same nature. *But a human being is not so.* One person is a rapacious wolf and another, like a lamb, is a victim of marauders. Both come from the same human race.¹⁵

¹⁰ See for example H. 12 §2 where Ps.-Macarius describes the fall in terms of the broken relationship with God.

¹¹ G. A. Maloney, 'Introduction' in CWS, p. 2. See also Columba Stewart, pp. 84-95.

¹² See G.A.Maloney, *Man-The Divine Icon*, (Pecos, N.M., 1973) which is a survey of the Eastern fathers' common teaching on the dignity of human beings.

¹³ H. 1 §7.

¹⁴ H. 26 § 4. As for the more general issue of Ps.-Macarian spirituality as being the spirituality of the heart (in contradistinction to Evagrian intellectualist spirituality which became known as the spirituality of the mind) and for the question of Feofan's dependence on these two traditions, see chapter IV of this thesis, section *Heart and Mind*.

¹⁵ H.15 §24. See also H. 15 §43: 'Christians have known that the soul is by far more precious than all other creatures. Indeed, only man has been made according to the image and likeness of God.'

This basic assumption in the observations regarding species in the animal kingdom is open to a good deal of criticism, but the prominence which Ps.-Macarius gives to the fact that rationality, volition and specific traits form distinctive characteristics of the individual human person certainly predates the definition provided by Boethius (sixth century) in the West: *persona est naturae rationabilis indiuidua substantia* [the person is the individual substance of a rational nature].¹⁶ The very nature of the human person makes us capable of change, development and growth in a unique relationship with God.

Following the Ps.-Macarian tradition Feofan speaks of personal identity in the context of divine-human communion. Feofan widely uses in his ascetical writings the vocabulary of mixing and blending [*смешение*] when speaking about the relationship between nature and sin,¹⁷ nature and ‘the admixture of unnatural passion’,¹⁸ grace and nature,¹⁹ God and the human person²⁰. Both Ps.-Macarius and Feofan stress the fact that the mingling does not imply a loss of individual traits and separate individual existence by either party involved. ‘All are immersed in light and fire and are indeed changed, but are not, as certain people say, dissolved and transformed into fire so that nothing of their nature remains. For Peter is Peter, and

¹⁶ *Contra Eutychen* IV, 20.

¹⁷ See *Chto est* ... , p. 70: ‘Смятение и беспорядочность прирождены нам ...’, Feofan makes a distinction between the ‘intrinsic’ [*природно*] and that which has been ‘grafted onto’ [*прирождено*] as a result of the fall. For further discussion of this distinction in Feofan see chapter IV of this thesis, section *Human Nature*.

¹⁸ *Put*’, p. 201.

¹⁹ *Put*’, p. 179.

²⁰ *Put*’, p. 177.

Paul, Paul, and Philip is Philip. *Each person in his own unique nature and personality remains, yet filled by the Spirit,* – so Ps.-Macarius.²¹

Feofan was also eager to point out that the present disorder is not intrinsic to our nature but is as if grafted onto it,²² and although our nature is ‘fused’ and ‘mingled’ with passion, it is capable of being freed by the Spirit of grace and brought to the new and natural mode of existence.²³ As for the divine-human union, Feofan understands it as one in which ‘without absorbing the powers and the personality of man, God is acting in him.’²⁴ This as we shall see later (especially in chapters IV and V of this thesis) is possible due to self-determination of the human person and the nature of his or her interaction with grace.

Freedom and grace

Feofan was enthralled by the depth and grandeur of the Ps.-Macarian vision of the ‘inspiriting’ [одуховление] of the soul²⁵ and his dynamic and multifaceted notion of man’s freedom. Feofan’s section in *Put’* entitled *Ascent to the state of resoluteness to abandon sin*²⁶ is a development of the theme of human freedom found in Ps.-Macarian *Homilies* 15 and 27.²⁷ It is extremely important to observe that Ps.-Macarius links the concept of freedom to the ‘image character’ of a person’s being:

The heavens were once established, the sun, moon, and the earth, but in these creatures the Lord could not find lasting pleasure. They could not be other

²¹ H. 15 §10.

²² *Chto est’* ..., p. 70.

²³ *Put’*, p. 202.

²⁴ *Put’*, p. 176.

²⁵ *Dobrotolubiye*, I, p.154.

²⁶ *Put’*, pp. 133-134.

²⁷ It is not clear which particular edition or translation Feofan is citing. On page 133 in *Put’* he indicates in brackets: (*sl. 1 o khranerii serdtsa, gl. 12, str. 451*).

than what he created them to be. They had no will. You, however, for this reason are made according to the image and likeness of God. Insofar as God is his own Master and does what he wishes ... so are you also your own master, and if you wish to perish, you are of a changeable nature.²⁸

Feofan cites Ps.-Macarian descriptions of the delicate interaction between grace and human freedom to provide patristic support for his own teaching about the necessity of exercising one's will and making a free resolution. 'Grace,' he states in *Put*, quoting Ps.-Macarius, 'does not in any way bind the will of man by a coercive power.'²⁹

Common to both Ps.-Macarius and Feofan is the conviction that throughout the course of the Christian life the interior spiritual freedom of man is never suppressed or overpowered by the indwelling grace.³⁰ 'Grace permits even the spiritually perfect persons to have their free wills and to enjoy the power to do whatever things they wish and to incline toward wherever they wish.'³¹ 'Those who are filled with the Holy Spirit still entertain natural thoughts and possess free will,' says Ps.-Macarius.³² 'In Christianity man still remains man Man has the honour not to be a blind confessor,' echoes Feofan.³³

In his aversion to philosophical ideas of the constraining power of necessity, Feofan is also strikingly similar to Ps.-Macarius. 'Human nature ... is capable of both good and evil. Man is in no way submitted to necessity.'³⁴ And 'our human nature tends toward both good and evil and the opposing force acts by enticement, not by

²⁸ H. 15 § 23.

²⁹ Ps.-Macarius cited in *Put*, p. 133.

³⁰ This is an accepted notion among the early fathers of the Christian East. See E. Pousset *et al.*, 'Liberté, liberation', *DSp*, tome IX, col. 780-838.

³¹ H. 27 §11.

³² H. 12 §8.

necessity,'³⁵ says Ps.-Macarius. 'I believe that the all-gracious God, having created the world, neither abandoned it to itself, nor did He shackle it by chains of some inexorable necessity,' so writes Feofan.³⁶

Ever-changing man

Feofan also shares with Ps.-Macarius the idea of the basic inconsistency of man and the unpredictability of his actions. 'Irrational animals are much more consistent than we.'³⁷ And 'we do not say that before he [Satan] tempts he knows what man will intend to do,'³⁸ writes Ps.-Macarius.³⁹ '[W]ho knows the future and who can guess in advance the changes of the human heart?'⁴⁰ And 'Who decides? The free individual himself. [N]obody can determine why this person is inclined this or that way; it is impossible to explain his decisions by certain laws which would provide a key for

³³ *Put*, p. 47.

³⁴ H. 15 § 25; 15 §40.

³⁵ H. 27 §10; see also H. 27 §21-22, H. 15 §39.

³⁶ Here Feofan rejects the idea of necessity in relation to the world in general. This is a statement from Feofan's personal creed which he read to the Tambov diocese upon commencing his duties as bishop. See *O pravoslavii*, pp. 8-9.

³⁷ H. 45 §6.

³⁸ H. 26 §9.

³⁹ Cf. A. Louth, 'Messalianism and Pelagianism' in *Studia Patristica*, vol. XVII, part one, p.132. While A. Louth is justified in saying that 'for Macarius... a man's actions are not wholly his own: he is swayed by forces that he cannot control', [See *Ibid.*] this should not be taken to imply that Ps.-Macarius did not believe in the genuine freedom of man. Ps.-Macarius also insisted that 'whatever binds every man to all things of the senses is from his own free will...' [H. 21 §2. Incidentally this phrase is omitted in A.Louth's citation. See *ibid.*, p.130.) and that 'the mind, as we [Ps.-Macarius] said often, is an equal opponent squared off against sin so that it has equal powers to stand up against the attacks of sin and to repel its suggestions.' (Ps.-Macarius, H. 3 §5; see also 3 §6). When dealing with the issue of freedom in Ps.-Macarius it is important to keep in mind his allowance for the three different stages of one's reclaiming of freedom. See H. 15 §35, H. 17 §4 and H. 32 § 6. See also the important comments on the three stages of spiritual growth in Ps.-Macarius by Bishop Kallistos (Ware) in the 'Introduction' to *Pseudo-Macarius*, (CWS) p. xiii.

⁴⁰ *O pravoslavii*, p. 37. His further development of this idea in the sermon to Tambov diocese is quite revealing: 'That is why wishing you well, but having no power to secure for you a constancy of your good inclinations and not knowing how to prevent an accidental change which may take place within you, I turn to the most sure facility - to God's help... .' See *ibid.*

predicting his decisions. For at this moment he might hold to one decision and in an hour he might come to another in absolutely identical circumstances,’⁴¹ so says Feofan. Feofan valued highly the Ps.-Macarian voluntarist vision of the human person (as can be seen from his own selections from the Ps.-Macarian *Homily* 46 §§ 5-6 in his *Dobrotolyubiye* I, p. 156 §§ 6-7: ‘Indeed, a great and divine work and wonderful is the soul. For in fashioning it, God made it such as not to put any evil in its nature... . He has placed in it intelligence, thoughts, will, a ruling mind. He has implanted in it also a great, different subtlety. He made it to move with ease, to be volatile, inexhaustible.’) and pointed out in *Nachertaniye*, p. 225 the Ps.-Macarian emphasis on God’s diversified approach to human individuality.

The Delight of Diversity

Ps.-Macarius considers diversity and individuality among humans within the larger context of the universe, drawing an analogy with the infinite variety found among plants, living creatures, heavenly bodies and the saints of the heavenly church. He notes that each ‘number’ comprising the heavenly Church ‘is adorned in a very unique way’ and the ‘saints are rooted in the one Heaven of the Godhead in different ways.’⁴² What is most remarkable for this fourth-century author is the recognition that even in the realm of human intellectual activity there is individuality and diversity:

[W]e spoke of the difference in seeds, that many are sown in the same ground and bring forth a variety of fruits, all different. It is the same in regard to

⁴¹ Commenting on Romans 2.15 in his *Tolkovanie pervykh vos'mi glav Poslaniya sv. Apostola Pavla k Rimlyanam* (Moscow, 1890), p. 158. Smirnov was deeply impressed with Feofan’s grasp of St Paul’s teaching and the breadth of his psychological analysis and observation. See Smirnov, p.370.

⁴² H. 32 §3 (CWS, p.198).

trees. Some of them are bigger, some smaller, but one earth holds the roots of all of them. So also the heavenly Church, being one, yet . . . is without number. And each number is adorned in a very unique way by the glory of the Spirit. Take the example of birds who produce out of the body the raiment of their wings, yet great is the variety among them. For some fly close to the ground, while others fly high in the air. Or take the example of the heavens. It has many stars in itself, some brighter, some bigger, some smaller, yet all are fixed in the heavens. So also the saints are rooted in the one Heaven of the Godhead in different ways and also in the invisible earth. *So likewise those thoughts which come to the sons of Adam are different*, yet the Spirit, coming into the heart, makes one thought and one heart. For those below and those above are directed by the one Spirit.⁴³

Ps.-Macarius cannot conceive monastic life in terms of mechanical uniformity. He is eager to alert ascetics to the existing difference in the stages of spiritual maturity and to exhort them to recognise the diversity of the needs and the forms of spiritual life:

In the case where some thirty live together, they cannot continue at one thing the whole day and night. But some of them devote themselves to prayer for six hours and then they wish to read. Others readily and kindly serve the others, while still others do their own work.⁴⁴

Far from being condemned, the non-uniform actions of a fellow brother in the monastic community are to be accepted with love and joy in the understanding that all are working toward a common good:

Thus he who prays should not judge the one working because he is not praying. Neither should he who works condemn the one praying because he is resting while he himself is at work . . . But let each one do whatever he is doing for the glory of God. He who reads should regard the one praying with love and joy with the thought: 'For me he is praying.'⁴⁵

Ps.-Macarius sees perfection in renouncing a fractured view of humanity and in gaining through the direction of the Spirit a genuine breadth of spiritual vision

⁴³ H. 32 §3 (CWS, p. 198), italics mine.

⁴⁴ H. 3 §I (CWS, p. 47).

⁴⁵ H. 3 §2 (CWS, p. 47-48).

regarding mankind. An urge to condemn is ruled out by a grasp of the intrinsic value and dignity of each human being and his ultimate redemption:

Question: Tell us, in what degree of perfection are you?

Answer: After I received the experience of the sign of the cross, grace now acts in this manner. It quiets all my parts and my heart so that the soul with the greatest joy seems to be a guileless child. No longer am I a man that condemns Greek or Jew or sinner or worldling. *Truly, the interior man looks on all human beings with pure eyes and finds joy in the whole world.* He really wishes to reverence and love all Greeks and Jews.⁴⁶

Ps.-Macarius had a passionate belief that ‘all things that exist come about by divine providence and economy, both the rising of the sun as well as all creatures.’⁴⁷ He was convinced that ‘all exist for the kingdom.’⁴⁸ This explains his exhortations to Christians to overcome judgmental attitudes and all forms of segregation into categories on the basis of social behaviour, ethics, spiritual or physical condition:

Christians, therefore, should strive in all things and ought not to pass judgement of any kind on anyone, neither on the prostitute nor on sinners nor on disorderly persons. But they should look upon all persons with a single mind and a pure eye, so that it may be for such a person almost a natural and fixed attitude never to despise or judge or abhor anyone *or to divide people according to categories*. If you see a man with one eye, do not make any judgement in your heart, but regard him as though he were whole. For this is purity of heart, that, when you see the sinners and the weak, you have compassion and show mercy toward them.⁴⁹

However much Feofan revered Ps.-Macarius, he, nevertheless, read him through the spectacles of the ‘complex Russian nationalist mystique’. As we have seen in chapter I, in his practical attitude to people of other nationalities and believers of other faiths Feofan was often far from this attitude of indiscriminating acceptance which is so

⁴⁶ H. 8 §6 (CWS, p. 83), italics mine.

⁴⁷ H. 15 §7 (CWS, p. 111).

⁴⁸ H. 15 §7 (CWS, p. 111): ‘... all exist for the kingdom, which the elect die to possess by right of inheritance...’

⁴⁹ H. 15 §8 (CWS, p. 111), italics mine.

prominent in Ps.-Macarius. Yet in his ascetical teaching Feofan shows the same degree of attentiveness to the subjectivity and diversity of inward states which one finds so striking in Ps.-Macarius.

Individuality within Community

That Feofan closely followed Ps.-Macarius in his explications of the way in which individuality of each human person shapes their Christian experience is also evident from his descriptions of the inner spiritual strife with passions where he directly cites Ps.-Macarius.⁵⁰ Feofan approaches the subject with the same sensitivity, warning of the subjectivity, dissimilarity and uniqueness of each particular experience. It is this sense of the uniqueness of each spiritual experience that explains Feofan's insistence on the impossibility of designing a universal rule for everyone. He shows no reservations in encouraging each person to invent the rules of this 'strife' for themselves:

On the whole, as for the rules of strife it must be observed that in their essence they are nothing else but an application of the full armour to individual cases and that for this reason it is impossible to describe them all. The work of the inner strife is hidden and incomprehensible; its manifestations are extremely diverse, *persons engaged in it are too different*: what could be a temptation to one means nothing to another; what brings defeat to one another treats with indifference. This is why it is absolutely impossible to establish one rule for all. Each person is the best inventor of the rules of strife for himself.⁵¹

Yet, the emphasis on distinctiveness and individuality of each spiritual experience in Ps.-Macarius as well as in Feofan is balanced by recognition of the communal propensities of human nature. Ps.-Macarius writes that our 'nature itself wishes to go

⁵⁰ See *Put*, p. 133.

and see the brethren to speak a word'⁵², the 'nature itself wants to go off to the brethren to fulfil charity.'⁵³ He also believed that 'the rest' of prayer, if abounding, brings about compassion and a desire for fellowship and sharing the Word with brothers.⁵⁴ In *Homily* 18, Ps.-Macarius writes that persons can be 'so enflamed by the Spirit with such joy and love that, if it were possible, they would gather every human being into their very hearts, without distinguishing the bad and good.'⁵⁵ Does Feofan subscribe to this attitude? Indeed: we find in his work a similar concept. He also writes of the experience of all-embracing unity, yet he expresses it not through the metaphor of gathering as Ps.-Macarius does, but rather through the imagery of 'dissolving' and 'overflowing'; not in relation to the whole of humanity but to the body of the Church:

He who has this [Christian] love having brought himself to the state of like-mindedness and of one will with all, and then having dissolved and as if overflowed to all in his feeling and his heart, brings the whole of himself, all the powers of his body and spirit into sacrifice for the benefit of the whole body of the Church.⁵⁶

It is true that in his *Nachertanie* Feofan speaks of 'mutual relations' [*сношения or взаимоотношение*] and 'mutual fellowship' [*взаимообщение*] as Christian duties⁵⁷, yet he clearly did not understand them as externally imposed obligations, but, rather, believed sociability to be the natural state of the human person. His distinction between estrangement and the solitude of an anchorite is very significant:

⁵¹ *Put'*, p. 284, italics mine.

⁵² H. 40 §6 (CWS, pp. 215-216).

⁵³ H. 40 §6 (CWS, p. 216).

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ H. 18,8, p. 144.

⁵⁶ *Nachertanie khristianskago nravoucheniya*, 2nd edn (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr', 1895), p. 436. Hereafter *Nach.*

Estrangement is a deformity of the heart. But it is not as the blessed life of a recluse or hermit's life. A hermit, having separated himself from others in the body, abides with them in the spirit whereas this estranged one is separated from all in the spirit, even though he lives among them.⁵⁸

Feofan's own extensive correspondence, which he maintained in his reclusion with individuals from diverse backgrounds, testifies to the truthfulness of this claim. Yet his highly social nature, his spirit of fraternity and even of nationalism never overflowed into propagation of the superiority of communal spiritual experience (as in the case of such Slavophiles as A. S. Khomyakov).

Primacy of the private experience of God

Feofan, himself a staunch defender of both tradition and the Church⁵⁹ insisted on the primacy of the private experience of God. He held that the soul of the individual is the primordial possessor of a citadel of faith⁶⁰ and that the personal experience of an ascetic is a more valid measure of the rules of spiritual strife than even his own writings.⁶¹ In *Put'* he writes:

The inner development of the Christian life in each person reminds one of a highly intricate and mysterious ancient underground maze. There is this same mysteriousness about the inner Christian life. Here everyone walks alone. Even if he is surrounded by a multitude of rules. Only the trained senses of his heart and especially the suggestions of grace are his abiding and faithful guides in the struggle with himself; everything else departs from him.⁶²

⁵⁷ *Nach.*, pp. 459-462. The whole of his ethical teaching in the second part of *Nachertanie* is expressed in the language of Christian duty.

⁵⁸ *Nach.*, p. 460. Berdyaev is strikingly similar to Feofan in his understanding of loneliness. See his 'Sınıyl Tvorchestva' in *Filosofiya tvorchestva, kul'tury i iskusstva* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1994), vol.I, p. 162.

⁵⁹ For instance in *Nach.*, p. 32, he claims: 'As there is no life and no living creatures outside of nature, likewise, there is no spiritual life and no spiritually living persons outside of the Church.'

⁶⁰ 'Faith is older than society and family and consequently older than upbringing itself.' *Chto est'* ..., p. 268.

⁶¹ *Put'*, p. 252.

⁶² *Put'*, pp. 284-285.

Comforting those who due to increasing frailty were afraid of being isolated from the Church, Feofan eagerly reassures them that in such adverse circumstances inner union with God is capable of gradually substituting for the church (*xpam* as distinct from *цepкoвь*) to one's complete satisfaction:

Do not worry that you will be deprived of church when you will be no longer able to walk. God is present everywhere. Then willy-nilly you will get accustomed to be with God in thought and in the heart. And when you will acquire the habit then to your complete satisfaction it will for you substitute [for] church ⁶³

In his correlation of the private experience of God with that of the corporate worship in a church, Feofan is not deviating from his tradition. In fact, the manner in which Ps.-Macarius correlates one soul with a group of individuals, claiming that the notion of the 'church' can be equally applied to the former as well as to the latter, throws additional light on the issue at hand and possibly indicates one of the sources of Feofan's inspiration:

[T]he word 'church' is said of many individuals as well as of one soul. For the soul brings together all the thoughts and is thus a church to God. For the soul is by nature suited for fellowship with the heavenly Spouse and mingles with the heavenly One. This truly can be applied, not only to men [in general – M.K.], but also to the individual.⁶⁴ Concerning Jerusalem the Prophet says: 'I found you, deserted and stripped and I clothed you' (Ez 16:6), and so forth, as if he were speaking of a single person.⁶⁵

⁶³ *Sobraniye Pisem*, VIII, 135. And in the Letter №1387 to the same person: 'It is no big loss that you didn't have a chance to visit Vysha [the monastery]. God is everywhere close at hand... and unites with the hearts opened by faith and love.' Ibid., p.131. See also *Sobraniye Pisem*, I, 32.

⁶⁴ Literally, 'τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ πολλῶν νοεῖται καὶ ἐπὶ ἐνός'. The distinction made here is between the individual person ἐπὶ ἐνός (Gen. Masc. Sing.) and humanity in the aggregate ἐπὶ πολλῶν (Gen. Masc. Plur.). See H. 12 §15.

⁶⁵ H. 12 §15 (CWS, p. 103). In H. 37 §8 (CWS, p.209) Ps.-Macarius further clarifies his double usage of the word church: 'Church is understood in two ways: the assembly of the faithful, and the soul taken together as a whole. When, therefore, it is understood spiritually of the human person, church means man taken as a whole.'

For Ps.-Macarius it is precisely the communal and relational nature of the individual soul that makes such a comparison possible.

Another Eastern mystic who also contemplated the issues of unity and diversity in the realm of divine-human communion was the 7th century Syriac writer Isaac of Nineveh. Isaac's homilies demonstrate his thorough acquaintance with the Ps.-Macarian texts.⁶⁶ Yet, while there are a number of common emphases in the Ps.-Macarian and Isaac's teachings on the individual, Isaac, as we shall see, adds a new dimension of depth to the theme of the individual by his challenging teachings on humility and on the imitation of divine love.

THE HOMILIES OF ISAAC THE SYRIAN

Like his teacher in the Kiev Academy Petr S. Avsenev,⁶⁷ Feofan had a real admiration for Isaac of Nineveh. The compilers of the Greek *Philokalia* did not include Isaac's writings⁶⁸ in their anthology. Feofan, on the contrary, concludes the second volume

⁶⁶ Along with the fact of his dependence on the intellectualist traditions of Evagrius and Dionysius. See *Dobrotolyubiye* II, p. 676, also S. Brock, 'The Syriac Tradition' in *The Study of Spirituality*, p. 212 and Alfeyev, *Mir Isaaka Sirina*, p. 36.

⁶⁷ See biographical note by D. Pospekhov, *Iz Zapisok*, p. VIII.

⁶⁸ For the complete Syriac edition of Isaac's *First Part* see *Mar Isaacus Ninevita. De perfectione religiosa*, ed. by P. Bedjan (Paris/Leipzig, 1909); for the English trans. of Bedjan's Syriac text see A.J. Wensinck, *Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Nineveh* (Amsterdam, 1923); for the Greek version of the *First Part* published by Nicephorus Theotokes see *Τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰσαάκ...*, Leipzig, 1770 (yet it should be kept in mind that this version contains some texts by two other Syriac authors, Philoxenus and John of Dalyatha, mistakenly attributed to Isaac); for the excellent English translation of the Greek edition see *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, trans. by [Dana Miller] (Boston, MA: Holy Transfiguration monastery, 1984). Hereafter H. in [D. Miller]. For the Syriac text of the *Second Part* discovered by S. Brock see *Isaac of Nineveh (Isaac the Syrian). 'The Second Part', chapters IV-XLI*, ed. with Eng. tr. by Sebastian Brock. – CSCO 554-5, *Scriptores Syri*, 224-5, 1995. For the best English introductions to St Isaac see [D. Miller], 'Translator's Introduction', pp. LXIII-CXII; S.P. Brock, 'St Isaac of Nineveh and Syriac Spirituality', *Sobornost* 7:2 (1975), 79-89; 'St Isaac of Nineveh', *The Way* (January 1981), 68-74;

of his *Dobrotolyubiye* with his own selection of Isaac's ascetical exhortations and a brief introduction to Isaac's heritage.⁶⁹ It was from Feofan's selection that extracts of Isaac also reached English.⁷⁰ Feofan believed that Isaac lived in the second half of the 6th century and not in the second half of the 7th century as it is now generally recognised.⁷¹ He mentions that Isaac was made bishop of Nineveh and that he shortly afterwards resigned his see.⁷² These details in Feofan's introduction indicate that he never confused Isaac of Nineveh with Isaac the Great (c. 350-438) of the Armenian Church and with three other Syriac writers of the 5th/6th centuries who often are identified by the name of Isaac of Antioch. Feofan had access to the Greek translation of the *First Part* of Isaac's work.⁷³ Moreover, Feofan, as we recall, had occasion to work at the monastery of St Sabas near Jerusalem during his stay in the Orient, where, at the end of the 8th and beginning of the 9th century, was made the Greek translation of the *First Part* of Isaac's *Homilies*. Feofan states in his introduction that Isaac's writings have 'reached us in the Syriac and the Arabic languages' and says that 'only half of Isaac's work has been translated into Greek and from the Greek into

also by S. Brock, 'Lost – and found: Part II of the Works of St Isaac of Nineveh', *Studia Patristica* 19:4 (Louvain, 1990), 230-233. See also the recently published first monograph on Isaac in Russian by Ilarion (Alfeyev), *Mir Isaaka Sirina*, with intro. by Bishop Kallistos (Moscow: Krutitskoye Patriarshee Podvor'ye, 1998

⁶⁹ See *Dobrotolyubiye* II, 'Svyaty Isaak Sirianin. Kratkoye svedeniye o nem', pp. 643-644 and 'Podvizhnicheskaya nastavleniya Sv. Isaaka Sirianina', pp. 645-760.

⁷⁰ See S. Brock, 'Isaac of Nineveh' typed MS of the chapter to appear in *Théologie Byzantine*, p. 5 of the MS. By courtesy of Sebastian Brock.

⁷¹ See *Dobrotolyubiye* II, p. 644.

⁷² See *Dobrotolyubiye* II, pp. 643-644. Feofan is probably citing the details of Isaac's biography from J.B. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* (Rome, 1719) I, p. 445. For the latest study of Isaac's biography see Alfeyev, *Mir Isaaka Sirina*, pp. 23-28.

⁷³ As well as the Slavonic translation which was made in 1812 by Paisi Velichkovski from the Greek edition of Nicephorus Theotokes and published in 1854 by the *starsi* of Optina Pustyn'. Feofan also had in his possession the complete Russian translation also published in 1854 by the Moscow Theological Seminary.

Russian'.⁷⁴ This indicates that Feofan was aware of the *Second Part* of Isaac's work, the complete manuscript of which was discovered in the Bodleian Library by Sebastian P. Brock in 1983.⁷⁵ Yet the *Second Part* was not accessible to Feofan. Although it is known that Feofan read Arabic⁷⁶ there is no evidence indicating that Feofan had access to any of the Arabic translations of the *First Part*. Thus his sources were the Greek, Slavonic and Russian editions of Isaac.

Of all the passages which Feofan selected from Isaac the most interesting for our study are the passages which reveal the contours of Isaac's penetrating vision of the individual. Feofan included these passages in his *Dobrotolyubiye* primarily because of their relevance to the practical aspects of ascetic life. It is Isaac's deep insights into the way towards God 'inwardly in the heart' ['зрящим выну Господа в сердце'] that are of the greatest value in Feofan's view. In *Pis'ma o khristianskoi zhizni*, Feofan refers to this in a letter to one of his correspondents:

Just now I have opened St. Isaac the Syrian - this unique teacher of ascetic life. Carry this book with you wherever you go. I began to read and the first lines speak directly to your need. Look how he is praising those who behold the Lord inwardly in the heart.⁷⁷

Feofan's melodious prayer to Abba Isaac written in the ancient elevated Russian style is another testimony of what was so precious to him in the writings of this ancient mystic:

⁷⁴ See *Dobrotolyubiye* II, p. 644.

⁷⁵ Although the *Second Part* was never translated into Greek it appears that it was known among Syriac-speaking Orthodox readers. It is interesting that one of the manuscripts in the monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai dated in the 10th century contains fragments from Isaac's *Second Part*. See S. Brock, 'St Isaac the Syrian: Two Unpublished Texts, *Sobornost* 19:1, Oxford, 1997, 7-8. Feofan as we know made an extensive visit to St Catherine's monastery together with Porfiri Uspenski during their stay in the Orient. See Tertysnikov, p. 23.

⁷⁶ See Smirnov, p. 64.

⁷⁷ Letter № 15, *Pis'ma o khrist. zhizni*, p. 27.

Venerable Abba Isaac! Intercede for us and by your prayer illuminate our minds to comprehend the lofty visions with which your words abound. Uplift us into the inmost recesses of prayer, whose origin, degrees and power your homilies so masterfully portray; so that being inspired by it we would follow freely and steadfastly the way of Lord's commandments, avoiding all obstacles in our way and overcoming enemies who arm themselves against us.'⁷⁸

Feofan found St Isaac's teaching on the three stages of the spiritual journey (the stage of beginners, the intermediate stage and the stage of perfection⁷⁹) extremely helpful in understanding the principles of spiritual ascent to God. It confirmed to him the truthfulness of the insights gleaned from Ps.-Macarius and other spiritual masters.⁸⁰

Feofan was also enthralled by Isaac's portrayal of the supremacy of God's love for his creation.⁸¹ These central themes of spiritual ascent to God and of the supremacy of divine love provide the broader context within which one needs to consider St Isaac's statements on human equality, on the dynamism and inconstancy of human nature, on divine recognition of the individual's condition, on indiscriminating love, free will, and human diversity.

⁷⁸ Letter № 77, *Pis'ma o Khrist. Zhizni*, p. 102. Feofan had a thorough knowledge of the works of this ancient mystic. Thus, on page 296 in *Put'* he remarks in the foot-note: 'In St. Isaac the Syrian the 'external' trials, tears and griefs are praised across the whole body of his homilies.'

⁷⁹ See *Put'*, p. 314.

⁸⁰ Throughout his writings, Feofan draws on a wide range of sources within the Eastern ascetical tradition. He sees his primary task as explicating the essence of the major stages of the spiritual journey to God without slavishly following any one writer or strand of thought within his tradition. He moves freely from one ancient author to another, interpreting an idea in the work of one writer by the imagery and the illustrations from another writer. For instance in *Put'*, p. 312, to explain the meaning of dispassion he refers to a definition in Climacus where it is likened to 'the resurrection of the soul prior to that of the body' [*The Ladder*, Step 29] and he turns to Isaac the Syrian for interpretation, who on the basis of Col. 3:1 taught it to be 'the exodus from the old state' that very experience when the new man comes into being, having nothing of the old man. See *Homily 37* according to the numbering in *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, trans. by [D.Miller] (Boston, MA: Holy Transfiguration monastery, 1984), p. 175. Hereafter H. in [D.Miller].

⁸¹ See *Dobrotolyubiye II*, pp. 679, 696, 743, 759.

The human soul: a pearl of great price

The notion of the immeasurable value of the human person so prominent in the Ps.-Macarian homilies is also present in the homilies of Isaac of Nineveh. 'Your soul,' – writes Isaac in *Homily 27*, 'slain by sins, lies before you, your soul which is of greater value to you than all the world.'⁸² This idea is unquestionably fundamental for Isaac and is implicit in his central teaching on the supremacy of God's love for his creation and the infinite mercy with which he deals with men. It is also directly related to his other teachings on humility and Christian tolerance.

Isaac's association of intolerance towards one's fellow men with such passions as anger and disdain is illuminating. He is eager to emphasise that anger and indiscriminating disdain deprive those who are possessed by them of interior freedom. Hence, 'If a man ... does not look down upon any man because of his defects, in very truth he is free.'⁸³ Moreover, Isaac affirms the equality of all men in the eyes of God: 'Do not hate the sinner. We are indeed, all laden with guilt.'⁸⁴ In *Homily 51* Isaac contrasts the essence of the God-inspired opposition of love with the self-centred persecution motivated by hatred:

If for the sake of God you are moved to oppose him [a sinner], weep over him. Why do you hate him? Hate his sins and pray for him, that you may imitate Christ Who was not wroth with sinners, but interceded for them. Do you not see how He wept over Jerusalem? We are mocked by the devil in many instances, so why should we hate the man who is mocked by him who mocks us also? Why, O man, do you hate the sinner? Could it be because he is not so righteous as you? But where is your righteousness when you have no love? Why do you not shed tears over him? But you persecute him. In ignorance

⁸² H. 37, [D.Miller], p. 178.

⁸³ H. 51, [D.Miller], p. 250.

⁸⁴ H. 51, [D.Miller], p. 250.

some, who are considered to be discerning men, are moved to anger against the deeds of sinners.⁸⁵

God's goodness and mercy, then, rather than some misconstrued notions of justice, are to be both the driving force and the criteria of all human attitudes: 'Be a herald of God's goodness, for God rules over you, unworthy though you are. ... Do not call God just, for His justice is not manifest in the things concerning you.'⁸⁶ 'An unmerciful ascetic is a barren tree.'⁸⁷ Feofan included in his *Dobrotolyubiye* Isaac's striking statements on human equality and indiscriminating love. Thus he quotes Isaac saying: 'Не старайся распознать достойного от недостойного; пусть все люди будут у тебя равны для доброго дела.'⁸⁸ 'Никого не обличай, не поноси, даже и крайне худых по жизни своей. Распрости одежду твою над падающим и покрой его. Знай, что для того нам и надобно не выходить из дверей келии, чтобы не знать худых дел человеческих; и тогда в неведении ума своего во всех увидим людей святых и добрых.'⁸⁹ And although many of Feofan's own statements and actions cannot be interpreted any other way but as highly intolerant, closer toward the end of his life, carefully rereading the works of St Isaac and being under their profound influence, Feofan was compelled to write to one of his correspondents the following words:

Мне вообще приходит на мысль, что люди являются не совсем хорошими так – невзначай, а на деле они хороши. Потому лучше и вернее всех считать святыми. Последнее можно предпочесть суду даже верному. Тут есть подвиг, и не попусту; чтоб исполнить доброе правило:

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* He even goes as far as to say that 'justice does not belong to the Christian way of life and there is not mention of it in Christ's teaching.' See *ibid.*, pp. 246-247.

⁸⁷ H. 51, [D.Miller], p. 246.

⁸⁸ *Dobrotolyubiye* II, p. 705.

⁸⁹ *Dobrotolyubiye* II, p. 755.

*выну зреть чистым лице ближняго. У нас есть пословица: свое немыто – бело; она грешна. Надобно наоборот: свое мыто – черно, а чужое не мыто – бело.*⁹⁰

Feofan was struck not only by Isaac's teaching on humility and unquestioning love but also by his psychological penetration into the inner nature of the human person and his ability to apply his insights to specific situations in the life of an ascetic aspirant.

Human nature: perpetual flux

Among such insights are Isaac's notions of the dynamism and inconstancy of human nature, as well as the fluidity of the states which human beings constantly assume.

Isaac points to these human propensities in order to forewarn and encourage the inexperienced. Some of his statements which we find in Feofan's *Dobrotolyubie II* highlight the necessity for observation and analysis of the causes of the various states of our being. Thus in article 98 we find this comment:

Every rational nature undergoes endless changes and every human being experiences changes every hour. A sensible person can gain wisdom in discerning this by conducting tests on himself. If he will be vigilant and will observe himself in his mind, then he will easily find out when and in which way his thoughts change; and how and due to which causes his mind suddenly shifts from a state of tranquillity to that of confusion.⁹¹

⁹⁰ (ET): It seems to me that it is only unwittingly that people appear to be not entirely good, yet in reality they are good. That is why it is better and more upright to regard all as saints. The latter, could be preferred even to the fairest decision of any court. It is an exploit which is worth aspiring for; in order to abide by the principle which states that *I am to see the face of my neighbour as clean*. We have a saying: 'One's own dirty laundry is white'. - that saying is sinful. It should be the other way around: 'One's own, though washed is black, but the neighbour's even though unwashed is white.' *Pis'ma o khristianskoi zhizni*, Letter No. 17, pp. 29-30.

⁹¹ *Dobrotolubiye II*, § 98, p. 676. In the same homily St. Isaac remarks that Ps.-Macarius as well as St. Mark (the Ascetic) also taught that everyone constantly undergoes changes, even 'those who are perfect' and that one should therefore not be discouraged when the soul is plunged into a turmoil.

Feofan also included in his collection of Isaac's sayings statements in which Isaac is warning that often certain states of mind are experienced involuntarily and they cannot be comprehended by reason alone:

The Lord knows that He will not remove from us before we die the possibility for aberration, that this straying is too close to us - namely the transition from virtue to vice; that man and his nature accept the opposite into themselves. That is why he has commanded us to be careful and to be engaged in constant prayer. And He has given us this command to pray not only for the sake of guarding ourselves from an obvious change, but also due to the subtlety and incomprehensibility of that which we always encounter and because we are unable to grasp by the reasoning of our mind those states in which we often find ourselves involuntarily.⁹²

St. Isaac was convinced that it is precisely this 'nature's proclivity to aberration'⁹³ as well as the 'variations which the will undergoes through the choice of dispositions' that make necessary 'the diversity of the forms' of divine love towards human beings. In other words, the human propensity for change necessitates a uniquely individual approach on God's part towards every human person. Isaac portrays it as the relationship between Love and the beloved in which knowledge of each other plays a crucial part: 'The Father of truth deals with His sons in different ways. For the profit of His sons He restrains Himself from the uniformity that consists in always showing to them the same face.' . . . The diversity of the forms of wise love accords with voluntary variations⁹⁴ corresponding to the recipients of these actions of love.⁹⁵ 'Love is constantly ready to give pleasure to its beloved.' But St. Isaac warns us: 'Let us not ask foolish love of a wise friend. The man who kills his son by feeding him

⁹² *Dobrotolubiye* II, § 102, pp. 677-678.

⁹³ H. 30 [D.Miller], p. 146.

⁹⁴ Lit. *the variations of choice*, see foot-note 3, [D.Miller], p. 145.

⁹⁵ H. 30, in [D.Miller], p. 145, (found only in Syriac).

honey does not differ from the man who kills his son with a dagger.’ Motivated by love God often has to lead a person through trials and tests.

Feofan was sensitive to this personalist emphasis on the individual approach and the above insights in Isaac.⁹⁶ He himself taught that afflictions can at times substitute for the direction of a spiritual guide and can equal his influence in the strength of their impact on a humble and trusting soul. Yet he believed that this is possible only because in such cases God Himself acts as a spiritual guide who surpasses a human guide in understanding the condition of each particular individual.⁹⁷

And when Feofan says that ‘in Isaac the Syrian one finds a detailed portrayal of the gradualness with which the Lord leads a Christian deeper and deeper into purifying trials’ he refers to Isaac’s descriptions of the great sensitivity and discrimination with which the Lord tempers men: ‘Divine providence proportions ... trials,’ says Isaac, ‘to the strength and needs of those who suffer them. In them are mingled both consolation and griefs, light and darkness, wars and aid.’⁹⁸ ‘For in proportion to your humility you are given patience in your woes; and in proportion to your patience the burden of your afflictions is made lighter.’⁹⁹ We observe the same sensitivity and discrimination in Feofan’s own statement in *Nachertaniye* where speaking about interpersonal relations he directly says: ‘нельзя идти в область другого духа

⁹⁶ We find in Feofan’s *Dobrotolyubiye* a forceful exposition of this theme excerpted from the Isaac’s *First Part*: ‘Итак и когда обуреваем бываешь, не отчаивайся, - и когда бываешь миром осеняем, не превозносись. ... [И] знай, что все это к смирению нашему навел на нас Божий Промысл, который о каждом из нас промышляет и устрояет, что кому полезно.’ *Dobrotolyubiye* II, p. 677, § 99.

⁹⁷ *Put*’, pp. 295-296.

⁹⁸ H. 42 [D.Miller], p. 210 referred to in *Put*’, p. 296.

⁹⁹ H. 42 [D.Miller], p. 212.

самовольно. Всякий замкнут в себе.’¹⁰⁰ Feofan taught that the other person should be either predisposed (to contact or change, etc.) or alternatively one should await his predisposition. In any case, he was convinced, that it is better to assist the other person in his independent action instead of imperiously dictating him: ‘ибо он есть живой и свободный дух.’¹⁰¹

Free will and the absolute nature of divine providence

For St. Isaac, genuine ascetic pursuits are always a result of conscious and voluntary choice motivated by love for God.¹⁰² They are an exercise of our freedom.¹⁰³

Therefore, without freedom, no action of ethical value is possible:

Good and evil deeds are the offspring of freedom.¹⁰⁴ Where freedom is lacking, the doing of [good or evil] deeds is superfluous with respect to receiving recompense. There is no recompense for what is natural. A reward is bestowed for a conflict, and one does not speak of a victory where there is no struggle. When opposition is taken away, freedom also vanishes with it.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ *Nach.*, p. 447.

¹⁰¹ *Nach.*, p. 447. Yet, Feofan, nevertheless, insisted in *Nachertaniye*, p. 452 that there is one particular sphere in which a Christian has every right to intrude and disturb the other person and that is the sphere of sin. He wrote: ‘Только одно обезпокоение позволительно, именно, обезпокоение грешника, и притом, как грешника, чрез пробуждение его от усыпления; сего потряси во всех основаниях, сокруши кости его, пусть скорбит до отчаяния и не находит покоя день и ночь.’ It is most likely that this understanding justified in his mind intolerance towards dissent within the Church and religious diversity in society at large.

¹⁰² See the passages on the voluntary choice which Feofan selected from Isaac and placed in *Dobrotolyubiye* II, pp. 664, 698, 757, as well as such statements as the following: ‘Those who are proven and true... long for and yearn to do violence to themselves for the love of God, and they freely choose to labour for virtue’s sake rather than to possess this transient life and its every comfort.’ See H. 39, in [D.Miller], p. 196. Also H. 24 (found only in Syriac), [D.Miller], p. 123.

¹⁰³ See H. 51 [D.Miller], p. 249.

¹⁰⁴ Or free will.

¹⁰⁵ H. 30 [D.Miller], p. 146. While this homily is found only in Syriac and it is not certain whether it was known to Feofan, it must be noted that in Feofan’s *Dobrotolyubiye* we also find passages which he selected from Isaac’s *First Part* on the crucial importance of exercising free will, see for instance *Podvizhnichieskiye nastavleniya* §§ 283-284 on p. 757 in volume II. Cf. Feofan’s own statement in *Put’*, p. 268 where he says: ‘Сила, борющаяся со страстями, есть также ум или дух, в коем сознание и свобода.’

Even though we find that in some places Isaac writes about the time which is ‘reserved for the abolition of freedom’ and says that ‘thereafter the faculty of reason¹⁰⁶ will be bound both in men and in angels,’ he also concedes that ‘there is no perfect freedom in this [present] imperfect age’.¹⁰⁷ He speaks of ‘the future age’ as ‘the fatherland of freedom’¹⁰⁸ and says that though the faculty of reason will be bound - it will be bound not ‘by a compulsory bond, but by a bond of delight, a delightful coercion...’¹⁰⁹.

Side by side with his emphasis on free will, Isaac upheld a belief in the overriding providence of God. He distinguished between ‘chance occurrences’ (which he regarded as non-existent) and ‘accidental occurrences’, which the Pilot Who steers the things of this world empowers ‘so as even to defy the free will’ of man.¹¹⁰ Isaac taught that the guardian angel of each individual carefully manages these ‘accidental occurrences’, apportioning them in response to prayer and according to specific needs.

St. Isaac also taught that ‘free will [literally, ‘freedom’], not bondage, is the natural power of reason.’¹¹¹ He was eager to emphasise in his *Homilies* that the highest forms of the vision of the nature of incorporeal beings (which he termed as the ‘true *theoria*’) are attainable only through the exercise of free will.¹¹² It is through this conscious exercise of the will (under divine guidance) that the mind is freed from

¹⁰⁶ Further on Isaac explains that he means the higher ‘power of knowing’ as distinct from the limited ‘power of reason’. See H. 30 [D.Miller], p. 146.

¹⁰⁷ H. 52 [D.Miller], p. 262

¹⁰⁸ H. 70 [D.Miller], p. 341.

¹⁰⁹ H. 30 [D.Miller], p. 146.

¹¹⁰ H. 24 [D.Miller], p. 123 (found only in Syriac).

¹¹¹ H. 27 [D.Miller], p. 134 (found only in Syriac), yet the same theme is developed in Homily 28 available in the Greek and other translations.

its many human conceptions and brought into ‘the unified simplicity of purity’ in order to experience spiritual knowledge.¹¹³ Thus St. Isaac speaks of the will not only as the foundation of ethical actions, but also as the cause of the highest modes of vision, calling them the ‘offspring of the free will.’¹¹⁴ In Feofan’s writings we come across the same emphasis on the inherent link between consciousness and self-determination – the two constituents of the human spirit.¹¹⁵ He also stressed the fact that freedom is essential not only for the highest modes of vision, but is a *sine qua non* for man to remain man. ‘Man is always free. Freedom is granted to him together with consciousness of self and together with it, it forms the very essence of his spirit and the norm of humanness. Eliminate (self-) consciousness and freedom – and you extinguish the spirit, and man is no longer a man.’¹¹⁶

Feofan selected some of the most significant sayings from Isaac’s *First Part* for his *Dobrotolyubiye*. He himself described his selection of 291 paragraphs as ‘the most essential’ [‘самонужнейшее’]¹¹⁷. Analysing his collection one can observe that he attached importance not only to Isaac’s statements on spiritual freedom, indiscriminating love to the despised, dynamism and inconstancy of human nature, but also to Isaac’s teachings on personal uniqueness and diversity.

¹¹² H. 28 [D.Miller], p. 137.

¹¹³ H. 72 [D.Miller], p. 353.

¹¹⁴ H. 28 [D.Miller], p. 137.

¹¹⁵ *Chto est’ ...*, p. 72. Cf. *Nach.*, p. 206 where Feofan also insists on the inherent link between consciousness and self-determination: ‘Второе свойство человеческого лица есть разумно-свободная самостоятельность. Состояние этого свойства определяется уже состоянием сознания, ибо они служат взаимным друг для друга отражением.’

¹¹⁶ *Chto est’ ...*, p. 43.

¹¹⁷ *Dobrotolyubiye* II, p. III.

Diversity and eternity

We find in Feofan's *Dobrotolyubiye* Isaac's striking commentary on John 14.2 where Isaac argues for divine accommodation of the personal uniqueness and individuality of the redeemed in the age to come. He speaks of the various degrees of the intellect among the redeemed and of the distinctiveness and diversity of gifts:

The Saviour, speaking of many mansions of His Father, referred to *diverse capacities of intellect* of those who will be settled in that country. The Saviour meant *the diversity and distinctiveness of spiritual gifts*, which the saints enjoy commensurate with the capacity of their intellect. For it is not according to difference of place, but according to the measure of gifts that He spoke of many mansions Thus in the future all righteous will inseparably settle in the same land, but *each according to his own measure* illuminated by the same rays of the intellectual Sun, and according to his virtue attracts to himself joy and gladness... . And no-one can see the measure of his friend, neither of the highest nor of the lowest... . Everyone there, commensurate with the grace given to him, inwardly rejoices to the measure of his own capacity.¹¹⁸

Thus in Isaac the harmony of Christ-centred unity does not eliminate diversity and personal distinctiveness and diversity does not imply aberration or opposition.

Feofan's own statements on the individuality of the human spirit ['дух... у всякого проявляет себя своим образом']¹¹⁹ and on personal uniqueness ['то как протекает процесс обращения зависит от личностей и обстоятельств каждого']¹²⁰ (which we shall have the occasion to consider in greater detail in the following chapters)

¹¹⁸ *Dobrotolyubiye* II, § 199, pp. 714-715. Feofan gives the following translation to the above passage from Isaac: 'Спаситель многими обителями у Отца назвал *различные меры ума* водворяемых в оной стране, т.-е., *отличия и разность духовных дарований*, какими наслаждаются по мере ума. Ибо не по разности мест, но по степени дарований назвал обители многими... . Так в будущем веке все праведные нераздельно водворяются в одной стране, но *каждый в своей мере* озаряется одним мысленным Солнцем, и по достоинству своему привлекает к себе радость и веселие –И никто не видит меры друга своего, как высшего, так и низшего Там всякий, по данной ему благодати, веселится внутренно в своей мере.' See *Ibid.* (Italics in the ET and the Russian text are mine - M.K.)

¹¹⁹ *Chto est'...*, p. 36.

¹²⁰ *Put'*, p. 172, cf. also pp. 91, 252, 265.

acquire new depth when considered in the light of the teaching of such highly admired by him and closely followed predecessors as Ps.-Macarius and Isaac the Syrian.

What have we learned?

The preceding text demonstrates that within the domains of his own ancient ascetical tradition and particularly in the works of such notable representatives as Ps.-Macarius and Isaac of Nineveh, Feofan had at his disposal a highly intriguing notion of the individual person. All the emphases of Feofan's anthropology which we have singled out for our preliminary examination in this chapter are expounded in the writings of the two ancient authors. Specifically, these are the notions of:

1. The eternal value of the human person;
2. Acceptance of human individuality and diversity of religious experiences;
3. The inconsistency and unpredictability of man;
4. The importance of individual freedom;
5. The validity of the private experience of God.

Yet the personalist stress on the uniqueness and self-determination of each human being predominates in the passages selected for our examination. The two ancient authors considered here were certainly not the only sources of Feofan's inspiration. As we have seen from our examination in chapter II, the teachings of Chrysostom, Diadochos of Photiki, John Climacus, Symeon the New Theologian (and a number of other authors referred to in the following chapters) were also highly significant for the formation of Feofan's dynamic concept of the individual person. Feofan dreamed of finding a time between his enormous projects to produce a comprehensive study of the psychological

insights of the ancient fathers. Though his dream never materialised, he left many valuable leads. He also showed unusual openness to the Western spiritual tradition, especially certain Romantic notions of the individual person, and he experimented in constructing a synthesis. It is to the study of Feofan's development of those distinctive patristic as well as Romantic insights in his general anthropology that we turn in our next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE TEMPTATION OF ROMANTICISM

The synthesis of the patristic and Schellingian motifs in Feofan's anthropology

As we have already observed in the first chapter, Feofan's interest towards German idealist thought was not an isolated occurrence. German metaphysics (represented by such names as Hegel, Fichte, Schelling and Friedrich Schlegel) penetrated universities and spiritual academies in Kiev, Moscow and St. Petersburg at almost the same time as did the Hesychast revival and the circulation of Paisi Velichkovsky's increasingly popular Slavonic translation of the Greek *Philokalia*. Yet, if the fascination with German idealist thought was a universal phenomenon in Russian nineteenth century religious philosophy (it would be sufficient just to mention its influence on the Kireevsky brothers, Alexei Khomyakov and Vladimir Solov'ev), Feofan's experiments with Schellingian *Naturphilosophie* presented an unusual development in the Russian nineteenth century monastic tradition.

Feofan's own interest in German romantic thought goes back to his student years at the Academy in Kiev and the influence of his teacher Avsenev – the enthusiastic proponent of the ideas of Schubert, the German romantic psychologist in the tradition of Schelling. Avsenev's emphasis on the unity of nature and spirit, on the supremacy of the spirit in the created order, and on the interpretation of the spirit

in man as ‘consciousness’ and ‘self-determination’ sharpened Feofan’s perception of the significance of these concepts and stimulated him to search for clarification and more satisfactory solutions in the writings of such ancient Eastern ascetical authors as Ps.-Macarius, Diadochos, Isaac the Syrian, and others. Moreover, as we shall see in the course of this study, Avsenev’s lectures on Romantic psychology and his references to patristic parallels later prompted Feofan to attempt a construction of his own synthesis between Schubertian and Eastern Orthodox ascetic anthropology.

In this chapter I shall assess the degree of Feofan’s indebtedness to Schubert and Avsenev and examine some of the roots of Feofan’s teaching on the human person. We shall begin our study with a brief examination of Schubert’s and Avsenev’s principal anthropological concepts and their bearing on Feofan’s teaching regarding the human person. We shall then evaluate Feofan’s reasons for choosing the trichotomist scheme and his presuppositions regarding human nature and will proceed to examine the major anthropological notions of his teaching; e.g., a) the integrating function of the human spirit [*νοῦς*], b) the relationship between the human spirit and the faculties of the soul and c) the status and the functions of the body within the human person. This will lay the necessary foundation for a study, in our final chapter, of the function of Feofan’s trichotomism ‘(i.e., his concept of a tripartite make up of the human being, consisting of body, soul and spirit)’ in his ascetic teaching on divine-human communion. It is there, in his Hesychast teaching on divine-human communion, that he unfolds fully his understanding of the uniqueness of each human being and of the infinite diversity of individual religious experiences.

I. THE INFLUENCE OF SCHUBERT AND AVSENEV

Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert (1780-1860), son of a German Lutheran pastor in Saxony, gained popularity in nineteenth century Europe and Russia as a remarkable naturalist, a prolific writer, and a Romantic philosopher.¹ As a professor of natural history at the university of Munich, he was revered by his students; his widely circulated opus on Romantic psychology known as *Geschichte der Seele* (2 vols., Stuttgart, 1830) became a standard textbook not only at German universities, but also at Russian seminaries and academies.² In his youth Schubert was profoundly influenced by the famous Herder, who, having noticed the outstanding abilities of young Schubert, placed him in his own home in order to devote more time to him in personal tutorials.³

Although Schubert's father intended his gifted son for the ministry, the rationalism at Leipzig, where he initially began his theological studies, was so alien to his mystically inclined nature that he chose to abandon Leipzig and devote himself to medicine at Jena. It was there at Jena that Schubert met Schelling and was carried away by Schelling's lectures on *Naturphilosophie*. Schelling's idea of the world as a single organism and his teaching on the creative role of the spirit in transforming and

¹ The following account of Schubert's biography and of the major tenets of his idealistic psychology is based on the study by Peter Krebs, *Die Anthropologie des Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert* (Cologne: Dissertations druckerei Orthen, 1940), hereafter Krebs; Schubert's *Die Geschichte der Seele*, 2 vols (Stuttgart, [n. pub.], 1850), hereafter *Geschichte*, and the article 'Schubert, Gotthilf Heinrich von' in *Kirchliches Handlexicon*, vol. 6 (Leipzig: Verlag von Justus Naumann, 1900), pp. 99-100, hereafter *Kirchliches*.

² On Schubert's influence on Russian theologians see *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, pp. 198, 241, 399; see also the collection of studies *Filosofiya Shellinga v Rossii*, ed. V. F. Pustarnakova (St. Petersburg: Izd-vo Russkogo khristianskogo humanitarnogo instituta, 1998).

³ *Kirchliches*, p. 99.

uniting nature had a lasting and formative influence on Schubert's outlook which is reflected in all of his philosophical writings. In fact one of Schubert's earlier biographers, V. Hess, insists that hardly anybody has done more for the propagation and popularization of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* than Schubert.⁴ It is nevertheless important to point out that Schubert was also open to other views and traditions. In *Geschichte* he draws on a number of classical and patristic authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Philo, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine. Nevertheless, the influence of Schelling was predominant.

Following Schelling, Schubert held that in every organic being as well as in the world as a whole, there is an immaterial soul which directs and governs the organic nature.⁵ This unifying and directing metaphysical principle makes every biological organism a part of a greater whole. The inorganic elements, living beings, and the system of immaterial forces, which govern them, are all arranged in an ascending order from the simplest to the most complex. Human beings possess not only the same kind of soul as do animals, but also other attributes unique to humans and created by the Spirit. Personal consciousness, the creative power of imagination, longing for perfection, and speech are for Schubert the works of the Spirit.⁶ It is the exclusive privilege of man to have the 'inspired soul' [*Geistseele*].⁷

Schubert's anthropology is trichotomist.⁸ Each human being is composed of three intricately integrated 'parts' or dimensions: body, soul and spirit. His

⁴ *Kirchliches*, p. 100.

⁵ *Geschichte* II, pp. 148, 149-156, Krebs, p. 17.

⁶ *Geschichte* II, p. 491.

⁷ Krebs, p. 126.

⁸ Krebs, p. 97.

anthropology is integrally linked with his cosmology, drawing extensive parallels between the relationship of the constituents of the human person and various systems in the universe. As for the relationship of body and soul, Schubert believed that they are intricately intertwined, mutually affecting and influencing each other.⁹ Yet the spirit is to have authority over the soul and the body [‘*Die Macht des Geistes über Leib und Seele*’].¹⁰ The soul and the body are to be penetrated by the spirit; i.e., ‘inspired’ [‘*vergeistigt*’].¹¹

Schubert distinguished between the divine Spirit and the human spirit and maintained that the human spirit [‘*des Menschegeistes*’] is capable of becoming a voluntary divine agent, ‘a unifying organ’ [‘*vereinende Organ*’] between God and the human person. He believed in the immense potential of the human person. ‘In his present state man is not what he must be and could be.’¹² He defined the human person in his present condition as a ‘prophetic hieroglyph.’¹³

In *Geschichte*, Schubert also emphasises the communal nature of man. He points out that the longing for mutual relations with other understanding and compassionate persons is inherent in our nature and fundamental to our ‘inner consciousness’. The human person has been created for communion with other persons. Humanity in its collective togetherness is just as much an organism as is the human body, and it is governed by the same laws of deterioration and renewal.¹⁴

According to Schubert, the pan-organism of humanity transcends the limitations of

⁹ Kerbs, p. 97.

¹⁰ Krebs, p. 115.

¹¹ *Geschichte* II, p. 565.

¹² *Geschichte* II, p. 339.

¹³ Krebs, p. 20.

time and space. It unites with invisible cords not only those who inhabit the earth at present, but also both those who lived in the past and those who are yet to be born.

Schubert devoted considerable space in *Geschichte* to the exposition of the social aspects of his anthropology and to his views on the nature of the state. He conceived the state as a large family in which the monarch acts as a father of his subjects, who in turn reciprocate with love and respect. Krebs correctly observed that the idea of the state as a family unites the romantics in the patriarchal sense with the adherents of political autocracy.¹⁵ According to Pierard, the tendency towards monarchical legitimacy in late romanticism is rooted in the organic theory which envisions the state as grounded in the past, and the state, monarch, subjects, and church are perceived as all parts of one spiritual being or body.¹⁶ Yet Schubert's idea of humanity as a single organism does not preclude his insisting on the inner spiritual freedom of each individual person. Throughout *Geschichte*, Schubert emphasises the unique creative role of man in the cosmos and the highly personal and intimate nature of man's communion with God.¹⁷ As we shall see in the course of this chapter, the parallels between the cosmologies and the psychology of Schubert and Feofan are many and striking. In these two latter aspects of his thought Feofan was deeply influenced by Schubert. And, as we already know, it was Avsenev, Feofan's teacher of psychology at the Kiev Academy, who first introduced Feofan to Schubert.

¹⁴ Krebs, p. 103.

¹⁵ Krebs, p. 106.

¹⁶ R.V. Pierard, 'Romanticism' in *EDTh.*, p. 960.

¹⁷ Krebs, p. 116.

Having accepted in 1836 the appointment of the chair of psychology at the Kiev academy, Petr Semenovich Avsenev (in religion, Archimandrite Feofan) was eager to raise the rather low academic level of his discipline to the heights of the achievements of psychology in Western Europe. At the same time, he hoped to bring it into harmony with the goals and the spirit of the theological academy.¹⁸ He studied diverse literature on psychology from Germany (such as K.Carus and J.F.Fries), England (D.Steward and J. Mill) and France (V.Cousin and J.P..Flourens). However, not totally satisfied by his findings, he turned as well to the study of teachings on the soul by ancient classical authors and church fathers. Of the ancient psychological theories, Avsenev especially favored ethical, religious, and poetic notions on nature and the life of the soul found in Plato and, even more, the ‘high-flown, mystical visions’ of Plotinus. In the writings of the ancient teachers of the Church, he was enthralled by the insights in the homilies of Ps.-Macarius and Isaac the Syrian; of the *mystical* writers he was especially attracted to the ideas of the German Lutheran mystic and theosophist Jakob Boehme. Of the latest psychological theories, he regarded with utmost seriousness those developed by the Schellingian school (L.Oken, K.Carus, and particularly the adherents of the school’s mystical wing, e.g., Baader, H.Steffens, J.Gorres and others.) He tried to gather insights into the ancient myths and primitive ideas regarding the human soul, as far as he could access the sources, and was interested in the multifaceted relationship of psychology to other

¹⁸ The following is based on D. Pospekhov’s *Biographic Note* [*Biograficheskaya zametka*] as well as the published *Notes* of Avsenev’s lectures both found in *Iz Zapisok*. References to Pospekhov’s *Biographic Note* are hereafter indicated as Pospekhov.

natural and anthropological sciences.¹⁹ Pospekhov observes that while Avsenev possessed a keen mind, passionless, cold and disinterested objectivity was alien to him. His intellect was under the great influence of his heart. From the sources which he studied he incorporated into his own outlook only those ideas which harmonized with his own inner spiritual being. The typically romantic emphases on spirit, mind, feeling, subjectivity, and religion of the heart were of primary value to him. The inner realm of the spiritual was his supreme subject of study. Pospekhov recalls that 'truth appeared to him in the image of beauty, science in the form of artistic and harmoniously integrated whole, knowledge in the form of direct inner contemplation.'²⁰ Yet none of the theories developed by Schellingians satisfied his scholarly, religious and esthetic demands as completely as did the theory of the soul expounded by Gotthilf Schubert. Avsenev was literally magnetized by the profound content, elegant structure, and poetic style of Schubert's exposition. Schubert's *Geschichte* became his basic textbook and guide. Only at times when Avsenev was puzzled and confused by some obscure construction of Schubert would he turn to other sources.²¹

Avsenev's *Notes on Psychology* [*Из Записок по Психологии*] demonstrate not only his great dependence on Schubert and his own impressive erudition, but also reveal the source of a number of psychological and cosmological concepts in Feofan. Of special relevance to us is Avsenev's development of Schubert's notion of the

¹⁹ Pospekhov, p. V.

²⁰ Pospekhov, p. VII.

²¹ Pospekhov, p. IX.

human spirit, and his own experiments in combining patristic and Schubertian concepts. In his *Notes* Avsenev states that it is the 'spirit that makes the human being superior to animals.'²² Like Schubert, he insists that the human spirit is of divine origin. Yet we also find him expressing the same thought in more patristic terms when he says that 'in his spirit man carries the very image of Divinity.'²³ There are places where he directly says that the human spirit itself is the divine image.²⁴

He goes on to explain that while the human spirit reflects the very essence of divine power, in other earthly creatures divine power is embodied in the form of material existence which is alien to the spirit.

Avsenev argues for the distinction in principle between humans and all other creatures not only on the basis of the difference of the mode in which the human being was created in contrast to other species, but also because humans possess self-determination. For Avsenev an animal soul is an immaterial being, yet it is a being which is constrained by matter and hence, as such, it cannot be regarded as a pure spirit. In accordance with Romantic *Naturphilosophie* he contends that a spiritual being acquires a genuine image of the spirit only when it is no longer constrained by the limitations of matter and when it acts independently and of its own volition. Only the human spirit has this exclusive privilege among created beings. In the whole sensible world there are no beings which are equal to man in his dignity.

'Consciousness and freedom,' he insists, 'belong only to a pure spirit and

²² *Iz Zapisok*, p. 36.

²³ *Iz Zapisok*, p. 53.

²⁴ *Iz Zapisok*, p. 54.

consequently to the spirit of man.’²⁵ We shall meet this notion often in Feofan.

Animals in themselves are a part of the living planetary system while ‘man is a microcosm and by virtue of that he equals the universe.’²⁶ Under the transforming and ennobling supremacy of the spirit, even those faculties of the soul which are related to earthly existence and which humans share with animals acquire a higher direction and spiritual purpose.²⁷

Even a cursory reading of Avsenev’s key statements on the nature of the human person reveals that his anthropology and his teaching on the human spirit are restatements of the Schellingian philosophy of nature and spirit: nature as ‘intelligence in the process of becoming,’ spirit which is ‘coming to be.’ Yet it is, nevertheless, a distinctively Orthodox restatement into which Avsenev weaves elements of patristic anthropology and Eastern Orthodox asceticism.

Avsenev enjoyed the great respect and admiration of the students at Kiev University and the academy, and the future Bishop Feofan was among his admirers. Although Avsenev was chiefly known as a ‘humble philosopher,’ Florovsky observes, in his *Ways of Russian Theology*, that his lectures were bold and inspiring. While delivering fascinating explications of the major tenets of Schubert’s theory of the soul, Avsenev loved to digress to such subjects as the ‘nocturnal life’ of the soul, mysterious and magical spiritual phenomena, dreams, somnambulism, psychic

²⁵ *Iz Zapisok*, p. 57.

²⁶ *Iz Zapisok*, p. 53. Cf. Plato, *Tim.*; 81A and D, Aristotle, *Phys.* 8,2; 252 b, 24; Nemesius, *De nat. hom.* 1; PG 40. 529 B; St Maximus, PG 91. 429 D. On the origins of the view of man as microcosm see Thunberg, p. 133. Feofan also speaks of man as microcosm, see his commentaries on Ephes 1.21 in *Yefes.*, p. 107; 1Thess 5.23 in *1Solun.*, p. 383 and Gal 5.16 in *Gal.*, p. 361 but he does not develop it as for instance St Maximus.

²⁷ *Iz Zapisok*, p. 37.

disorders, 'demon possession, magic and sorcery.'²⁸ Upon reaching greater maturity, Avsenev, as Pospekhov points out in his biographical sketch, was gradually able to discern some of the major flaws in Schubert's theory of the soul. He realized that Schubert's psychological ideas were intricately connected with his general naturalist world view which contained a fair number of obscure and dubious conceptions, as, for instance, his teaching on the world-soul. He also realized and admitted the fact that Schubert's psychological theory was constructed by a 'purely synthetic method' and 'totally lacks the analytical approach.'²⁹ Yet, nevertheless, as one can see from the latest (1869) published edition of the *Notes* [*Iz Zapisok*] of his lectures on psychology, he did not succeed in purging them of Schubert's Schellingian *Naturphilosophie* (its exposition still takes a considerable portion of the space in his textbook) and failed to introduce an analytical approach into his method. Even the structure of the section on the human make-up (which is subdivided into such subsections as: a) the forces of inorganic nature; b) the principles of plant life; c) animal soul; d) the human spirit) shows that he persisted in expounding his views on the human soul within the context of the romantic philosophy of nature.

Yet, what, nonetheless, is significant for our study in Avsenev as well as in Schubert is the defense of the status and the dignity of the individual person. In Avsenev this emphasis is even stronger than in Schubert. He decries theories which attach greater value to collective humanity than to the individual. In his *Notes* he insists that 'man as a self-conscious being is destined for immortality.' And he says

²⁸ *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, p. 241.

²⁹ Cited in Pospekhov, p. X.

further, 'It is the individuality of man, which is raised in his being to the status of the universal; his individuality is his own consciously perceived notion and his essential purpose in nature.'³⁰

In the eighteen forties (which were the last ten years of Avsenev's academic career) psychology whether 'empirical' or 'spiritualistic' was still essentially an area of philosophical and theological reflection. The beginnings of experimental psychology were still a quarter of a century away. It was only in 1876 that the German psychologist Wilhelm Max Wundt started his research laboratory and began his work on the experimental analysis of consciousness.³¹ Pospekhov correctly observed that while Avsenev always described his psychology as empirical it was not an experimental science based on facts, but rather a speculative theory founded on philosophical presuppositions: 'not a science, but a philosophy of the spirit.'³² Avsenev's work was nevertheless a highly tempting example for Feofan of the possibility of a synthesis of patristic asceticism with romantic-theosophical mysticism, an example which, as we shall see in our study of Feofan's trichotomism, he did follow despite his publicly expressed alarm regarding the pernicious effect of German influence.³³

³⁰ *Iz Zapisok*, p.222, footnote 1): 'Но человек есть существо самосознательное, - в нем именно индивидуальное возвышено на степень всеобщаго; его индивидуальность есть его собственное понятие, существенное назначение его в природе; почему раскрытие его как рода, не должно необходимо сопровождаться уничтожением его, как неделимага.'

³¹ See John D. Lawry, *Guide to the History of Psychology*, Littlefield, 1982, also Clarence J. Karier, *Scientists of the Mind: Intellectual Founders of Modern Psychology*, Illinois, 1986.

³² Pospekhov, p. XII.

³³ See for instance *Sobraniye Pisem*, VII, p.209-210 where we find him complaining to Yelagin: 'Понравится писатель, и начнут его переводить... и уж все под ряд и дуют... А у тех между добрыми приводятся и их неправославные воззрения. - Вообще говоря, жаль смотреть, как у наших богословов... все немчура да немчура. - Вот пошлет за это на нас Господь немчуру,

II. REASONS FOR TRICHOTOMY

Feofan is an eloquent and systematic proponent of the trichotomist theory. He is surely more faithful to the Eastern patristic tradition in his choice of the tripartite scheme³⁴ than is Makari Bulgakov with his diffuse explanation of the diversity of patristic views on the subject.³⁵ Feofan, however, had a number of other weighty reasons for embracing the trichotomist scheme – and not all of them were of patristic inspiration. It provided, in his opinion, the most convincing explanation of the supreme status of human beings among all other creatures; i.e., he considered its distinction between the spirit and the soul to be the best safeguard against materialistic and Darwinian interpretations of human nature in terms of pure animal nature.³⁶ Hence, everything that makes human beings unique and distinct from the animal world he located in the human spirit – and not in the soul. At first glance Feofan's trichotomy appears to be identical to the biblical Pauline triad of body, soul and spirit. However, Feofan's definition of the spirit differs from the Pauline, due to his synthetic combination of the elements of Pauline, patristic and Schellingian

чтоб она пушками и штыками выбила из головы всякое немецкое (неправославное) мудрование.'

³⁴ See for example Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, V, 6.1, Isaac the Syrian, *First Part*, Homily 4, p. 45 in P. Bedjan's *Mar Isaacus Ninevita* and Ephrem, Rhythm 57, 2-5; cited by Sullivan in *The Image of God* (Dubuque, 1963), p. 200; cf. Evagrios, 'On Prayer', § 132, cf. § 110 (*The Philokalia* I, pp. 69, 68) and St Isaiah the Solitary, 'On Guarding the Intellect', §18 (*The Philokalia* I, p. 26) who referred to the *spirit* as one of the three elements in man.

³⁵ See Zarin, pp. 225-226 where he indirectly endorses Feofan's trichotomism, see also I.D. Andreev, 'Apollinary Mladshy' [Apollinarius of Laodicea], in *Khrist.: Ents. Slovar'*, I (1993), p. 107 where Andreev refers to Feofan as a notable Russian trichotomist and compares his trichotomism with the trichotomism of Apollinarius. Cf. *Pravoslavno-dogmaticheskoe bogoslovie Makariya, Arkhiepiskopa Khar'kovskogo* [*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology by Makari, Archbishop of Khar'kov*], 3rd edn, 2 vols (St. Petersburg, [n.pub.], 1868), I, pp. 442-448.

³⁶ See Letter № 106 (2 May 1878) to Father Arseny in *Sobraniye Pisem* I, p. 100.

notions of the spirit. Feofan himself openly admits that what the early ascetic writers described by the term *intellect* [νοῦς], he designates as spirit:

I deduce that according to St Anthony³⁷ our soul is of one status with the animal soul. What makes us different is the intellect [γῆμα]– what I call the spirit [δύς]. Whatever he [St Anthony] says of the intellect I ascribe to the spirit.³⁸

(It could be that Feofan, in addition to being concerned to combat Darwinian claims, makes this change in order to emphasise the spiritual nature of communion with God and in order to avoid confusion between such terms as intellect [γῆμα] and discursive reason [παιδεία].)³⁹ In the same letter, he also mentions Isaac the Syrian and Ephrem the Syrian to claim support for his tripartite structure.⁴⁰ In fact, his heavy reliance on St Anthony is rather unfortunate in view of the questionable authorship of the piece *On the Character of Men* and its Stoic and Platonic anthropological assumptions.⁴¹ Moreover, the reference to St. Anthony does not explain Feofan's reasons for substituting *intellect* for *spirit*.

The identification of the intellect with the human spirit is not, however, without precedent. Philo of Alexandria associated human spirit with the intellect [νοῦς],⁴² and the Valentinians professed tripartition of humanity into spirit [or νοῦς],

³⁷ Feofan refers to the text 'On the Character of Men', § 166 (*The Philokalia* I, p.354) attributed to St Anthony the Great.

³⁸ *Sobraniye Pisem* I, p. 99. The same claim that the word 'spirit' fully corresponds to the term 'intellect' we find in other places in Feofan's writings, see for example: *Put'*, p. 268, *Rim.*, p. 118, and *Nach.*, p. 189, footnote. Cf. St Peter of Damaskos who in his 'Sixth Stage of Contemplation' (*The Philokalia* III, p. 138.) speaks of the intellect as being 'spiritual' by its nature.

³⁹ On the danger of confusing the two terms see *Nach.*, p. 228.

⁴⁰ See *Sobraniye Pisem* I, pp. 98-99. Cf. Isaac the Syrian, *First Part*, Homily 4, p. 45 in P. Bedjan's *Mar Isaacus Ninevita* and Ephrem, Rhythm 57, 2-5; cited by Sullivan in *The Image of God* (Dubuque, 1963), p. 200.

⁴¹ See *The Philokalia* I, pp. 327-328. Cf. Thomas Špidlík, *La Doctrine Spirituelle de Théophane le Reclus: Le Coeur et l'Esprit*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, p. 172 (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1965), p. 7. Hereafter Špidlík.

⁴² See his *Making of the World*, 135; *Allegorical Laws* 3.161; *Who is the Heir*, 55-56.

soul and body.⁴³ Yet it is likely that the most decisive influence on Feofan in this choice of terms was exerted early in Feofan's student years by Avsenev and Schubert, whose writings were highly popular in Russian seminaries at the time. Schubert was a trichotomist.⁴⁴ We have observed that in his *Geschichte der Seele*, he argues for the necessity of 'dividing the inner man into soul and spirit.'⁴⁵ He emphasises that 'man alone among all other creatures possesses a spirit besides the soul.'⁴⁶ And Avsenev, in his psychology course based on Schubert, states that 'the spirit is what makes the human being superior to animals.'⁴⁷ This is in perfect harmony with the Schubertian and Schellingian philosophy of freedom, which perceives the evolution of nature as a gradual 'awakening' of the spirit and understands the freedom of the human spirit as the highest form of that development.⁴⁸ Feofan never directly refers to these

Shubertian parallels in his exposition of the teaching on the human spirit, yet as we shall see later in this chapter he makes direct references to Schubert and Avsenev when discussing his cosmological views and the origin of the human soul.

Feofan was criticised for his trichotomist anthropology, particularly for statements which were interpreted as assigning equal status to the human and the

⁴³ See Richard A. Norris, 'Soul' and Karen L. King, 'Valentinus' in *EEC*, pp. 863 and 923. Thunberg observes that in the Eastern ascetical tradition Evagrius was perhaps the first writer who departs completely from the Pauline triad (πνεῦμα, ψυχὴ, σῶμα) and substitutes the biblical concept of the spirit (πνεῦμα) with mind (νοῦς). See Thunberg, p. 108. Feofan does the opposite in his ascetical teaching: he substitutes 'mind' with 'spirit' and returns to the concept of the spirit some of the Pauline meanings. In *Nachertaniye* Feofan even refers to the Pauline triad as his own. See *Nach.*, p. 195.

⁴⁴ See Krebs, p. 97.

⁴⁵ *Geschichte* II, p. 495.

⁴⁶ *Geschichte* II, 492.

⁴⁷ See *Iz Zapisok*, p. 36.

⁴⁸ See J. Marias, *History of Philosophy* (New York: Dover, 1967), pp. 314-316. Hereafter Marias.

animal soul.⁴⁹ His intentions for distinguishing between the spirit and the soul were not always correctly understood and appreciated by such of his more conservative admirers as Yelagin and Father Arseni.⁵⁰ Yet, in any evaluation of his position, one has to keep in mind the applied nature of Feofan's anthropological reflections. Practical, pedagogical concerns were always primary for him. He recognised the relativity and consequent inadequacy of the terms used in any discussion of the constituents of the human person and allowed for the possibility of other interpretations. In *Nachertanie* he observes: 'Those who are not willing to differentiate between spirit and soul could be advised to understand by the word *spirit* the highest aspect of our incorporeal part and to designate its lower functions and attributes by the word *soul*.'⁵¹ He always approached the subject holistically, emphasising the unitary nature of the human person.

Stress on wholeness and inter-subordination

Feofan was highly concerned to emphasise the integral wholeness of all the constituent elements of the human person: 'These parts of our make-up are not located one next to the other.'⁵² He taught that all elements and powers 'meet and are centred in our person [*лицо*], our personality [*личность*], in that within us which says: 'I', which is the confluence and the indissoluble unity of all powers. They are

⁴⁹ See *Sobraniye Pisem* I, p. 98.

⁵⁰ See *Sobraniye Pisem* I, p. 101, footnotes *) and **).

⁵¹ *Nach.*, p. 188, the footnote. Cf. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991), p. 127 where he observes that among the Greek Fathers one finds both dichotomists and trichotomists and that 'the difference... is in effect simply one of terminology'. Hereafter Lossky, *MT*.

⁵² *Nach.*, p. 189.

centred in it and proceed from it as from a virtual focus.’⁵³ He also adds in *Nachertaniye*, ‘The human person (‘I’) is a unity of spirit, soul and body.’⁵⁴ Especially valuable in Feofan’s work is the fact that he integrates this holistic concept of the human person into his interpretation of the Eastern ascetic teaching on the prayer of the heart⁵⁵ and portrays the heart as the moral and spiritual centre of the human person.⁵⁶

Feofan’s spiritual insights, as well as being compelling descriptions of the practical manifestations of the ‘disconnection’ or ‘uncoupling’ of ‘the powers’ [*cuл*] and ‘the personality’ [*лицѧ*] in those who live apart from Christ are as potent now as they were in his time.⁵⁷ His exegesis of St Paul’s portrayal of the disintegration of human personality in Romans I is bold and fresh.⁵⁸ Feofan insisted that the natural correlation of the dimensions of the human person should follow not only the principle of unity, but also the rule of subordination of the lesser to the greater and of the weaker to the stronger: ‘The body should be submitted to the soul, the soul to the spirit and the spirit in accordance with its nature should be immersed in God. Man should dwell in God with all his being and consciousness.’⁵⁹ Man’s fall caused confusion within the whole make-up of the human being and a reversal in the

⁵³ Ibid., p. 188-189.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 189.

⁵⁵ Which I consider in the following, final chapter of this thesis.

⁵⁶ See *Nach.*, p. 306, see also how he develops this theme in *Put*, pp. 205-208.

⁵⁷ This has been illustrated in recent decades by the renewed interest of cognitive psychology in the study of ‘disorders of consciousness’ and ‘altered states of consciousness’. See for instance the historical review and evaluation of current research in D. Cohen’s *Dreams, Visions, and Drugs: A Search for Other Realities* (New York, 1976).

⁵⁸ See Ibid., pp. 195-197.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 191. Cf. Evagrius the Solitary, ‘On Prayer’, §132, (*The Philokalia* I, p. 69).

correlation of the constituent elements⁶⁰ which Feofan graphically pictured as a telescope in which tubes are pushed one into the other.⁶¹ This principle of subordination and inter-relatedness can be found in both Romantic psychology⁶² and Eastern Orthodox asceticism.⁶³ In Feofan's ascetic teaching it serves a valuable practical purpose (insuring life according to the Spirit); in his speculative psychology, as we shall see, it reflects the *Naturphilosophical* concept of the hierarchy of being and unity of nature.

One can only surmise about the extent of Feofan's awareness of the common neo-platonic roots of Eastern Orthodox asceticism and German Romantic philosophy, but we know that he certainly thought about the congruence of Schuberts *Naturphilosophie* with Orthodox asceticism and was convinced that the two were compatible. In one of his letters to M.D., he directly states that Schubert's psychology and *Naturphilosophie*, as laid out in *Geschichte der Seele*, can be comfortably reconciled with the Eastern patristic teaching on the Fall and redemption: 'Тут единство природы. Помнится мне, что у Шуберта *Geschichte der Seele* – история души – подробно раскрываются сии положения. С этим удобно мирится и падение и искупление'.⁶⁴ He does not, however, substantiate this claim in the letter, and, as we shall see in the section dealing with Feofan's teaching on the soul, this synthesis creates a number of problems in Feofan's psychology,⁶⁵ contributing to the abstruseness of his whole discussion on the soul. Further, more

⁶⁰ Cf. Lossky, *MT*, p. 128.

⁶¹ *Nach.*, p. 191.

⁶² See Krebs, chapter 8, esp. pp 97-116.

⁶³ See Evagrios, 'On Prayer', § 132 (*The Philokalia* I, p.69).

⁶⁴ See *Sobranie Pisem* II, p.109.

detailed examination of Feofan's trichotomist anthropology should be conducted within the context of his major theological assumptions regarding human nature in general. These assumptions reveal both his faithfulness to the Eastern patristic tradition and his expressed personalist concerns.

III. HUMAN NATURE

One of Feofan's basic anthropological assumptions is the inherent goodness of human nature. He devotes four letters in his collection of letters *Chto est' dukhovnaya zhizn'*⁶⁶ to an exposition of the Orthodox teaching on the nature of man, the consequences of the Fall, and his discussion of the 'germ of disorder and confusion.'⁶⁷ 'Our nature in its pure form is worthy of love,' writes Feofan. 'Even angels look upon it with love and amazement when it is thus revealed.'⁶⁸ Speaking of the present 'disorder and confusion' within human nature after the Fall of Adam, Feofan exclaims: 'That is not the way we were created!'⁶⁹ This grasp of human nature as inherently good and internally harmonious causes Feofan to insist that the rules of righteous living are not forced upon us from outside, but 'stem from the very nature of man.'⁷⁰ He is convinced that the needs of the soul and the body are just as natural to us as our spiritual needs and when subjected to the spirit, their fulfilment cannot

⁶⁵ See specifically the section of this thesis on the soul.

⁶⁶ See *Chto est'...*, Letters 11 18-21, pp. 65-80.

⁶⁷ See *Chto est'...*, p. 69.

⁶⁸ *Chto est'...*, p. 71.

⁶⁹ Ibid..

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

bring confusion and disorder into our lives. ‘Had they been developing in an orderly fashion and natural mutual subordination – human life would flow splendidly.’⁷¹

Feofan’s notion of the inherent goodness of human nature is one of the basic implied assumptions also in *Put’ ko Spaseniyu*, in which (describing the role of grace as that which liberates the human spirit from its bonds) he asserts: ‘Liberate the spirit, give it freedom, and it will spontaneously flow to the place from which it came – that is to God.’⁷² The same thought is expressed in *Chto est’*: ‘God’s spirit mysteriously acts upon our spirit and brings it into motion. Once set in motion⁷³ our spirit restores within itself its natural knowledge of God.’⁷⁴ What then, according to Feofan, actually constituted the Fall, and with what consequences for human nature? How did he define his concept of ‘the germ of disorder and confusion’?

In accordance with Orthodox ascetical teaching, Feofan understands the Fall primarily as the corruption of the human spirit and deformity of its principal attributes of consciousness and self-determination through selfishness; [in Greek *φιλαυτία*].⁷⁵ He uses the old Russian word *самость*. Describing the Fall of Adam and Eve and their rebellion against God, Feofan states, ‘Thus, consciousness became conceited and freedom self-willed, taking upon itself to arrange its own destiny.’⁷⁶ Elsewhere he

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 66.

⁷² *Put’*, p.89

⁷³ Literally ‘that which came into motion’ [*пришедший в движение*]. It is not clear why Feofan is using active voice here *пришедший* whereas passive *приведённый* would be more logical especially since in the previous sentence he speaks of God who sets our spirit in motion. Possibly this is indicative of the fact that Feofan (and the Orthodox tradition in general) do not regard the unregenerate person as spiritually dead. Feofan consistently speaks about the freeing of the human spirit not about the resurrection of the human spirit.

⁷⁴ *Chto est’...*, p. 82.

⁷⁵ Cf. Basil, *Reg. brev., interr.* 54; PG 31. 1120A, Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 2, *apol.* 19; PG 35. 428; Thalassius, *Cent.* 2. 1; PG 91. 1437B, *Cent.* 3. 86; PG 91. 1456 CD.

⁷⁶ *Chto est’...*, p. 74.

writes that the spirit of man became ‘conceited’ and ‘self-willed,’ qualities which brought about its loss of power and its coming under the dominion of the soul and the body and all things external.⁷⁷ Thus, Feofan concludes, in the Fall God-given freedom turned into ‘the despotism of self’ [*самость*].⁷⁸

Feofan held a sombre view of the condition of fallen human nature before baptism and in *Put*’ explicitly states that humans are ‘conceived and born in sin.’⁷⁹ However, his statements on the fallen state of nature can be reconciled with his insistence on the intrinsic goodness of human nature by his distinction between the ‘intrinsic’ [*природное*] and the ‘adnate’ [*прирожденное*] – i.e., that which belongs to our primordial nature and that which has been acquired as a result of the fall or ‘grafted onto.’⁸⁰ (This differentiation between the ‘intrinsic’ and the ‘acquired’ has a corresponding, but opposing, distinction in Eastern Orthodox anthropology between the image of God, as that which is given at creation, and the likeness, as that which is still to be attained).⁸¹ Describing the fallen state of man, Feofan was always concerned to emphasise the far reaching spiritual and ethical consequences of the inner disintegration of the human person:

⁷⁷ *Chto est*’, p. 75.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 74. Zarin describes it as the general ethico-psychological essence of the sinful state, the root of religious and moral evil in the human person and the basis of all vices. See Zarin, pp. 687, 341, 301. Cf. *Sobraniye Pisem* I, p. 165; cf. also Zarin, p. 220.

⁷⁹ *Put*’, p. 18.

⁸⁰ *Chto est*’..., p. 70.

⁸¹ It is generally recognized that the first Christian writer to make the distinction between the divine image and the divine likeness in man is Irenaeus, see his *Adv. Haeres.* 5. 6, 1; cf. also Origen, *Sel. In Gen.*; PG 12. 96B and Maximus, *Amb* 42; PG 91. 1345 D. For a general survey of the patristic teaching on man as created according to the image of God see G.A. Maloney, *Man, the Divine Icon* (Pecos, New Mexico: Dove, 1973). Feofan explains the distinction between the image and likeness in his little book entitled *Uroki iz deyani i sloves Gospoda Boga i Spasa nashego Iisusa Khrista*, 2nd edn. (Moscow: Izdaniye Russkago Panteleimonova monastyrya, 1901), p. 257 where commenting on Matthew 5.48 he says: ‘Мы созданы по образу и подобию Божию. Образ –

Conceived in iniquity and born in sin, prior to baptism man carries within himself all the venom of sin with all the heaviness of its consequences. He is out of favour with God and is by nature a child of wrath; he is disfigured, out of tune with himself in the interrelationship of his parts and powers, which are directed primarily towards the multiplication of sins; he is subjected to the influence of Satan who rules within him because of the sin which lives within him.⁸²

Feofan is careful to make it clear that the cause of the corruption of the human spirit, which he describes as the 'germ of inner confusion and disorder,'⁸³ did not originate with God. He believed it to be the result of the moral choice of 'our primogenitors,' whose Fall brought about disorder within human beings in their relationships both with God and with the world around them:

We believe that this germ was not put into our nature by the Creator at the time of the Creation, but was introduced after the Creation by the power of the Fall [*силою падения*] of our primogenitors, who, having broken the commandment, damaged and unsettled our nature, and transmitted it in that damaged and unsettled state to their posterity, that is to the whole human race. Thus it passed into us and causes confusion and disorder within us as well as outside of us in our personal, family and social life.⁸⁴

He was also concerned to point out that our nature is damaged and unsettled, but not inherently sick; it is not permanently altered in the character of its make-up.⁸⁵ Rather, this confusion and disorder is 'wedged in between the natural parts of our nature.'⁸⁶

в духовном естестве нашем, в сознании, свободной деятельности и бессмертии; подобие – в отражении на себе Божественных совершенств.

⁸² *Put*, p. 18.

⁸³ *Chto est* '...', p. 69.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* Feofan's concept of the 'germ of inner confusion and disorder' in its essence reflects the Eastern Orthodox teaching on the 'garments of skin' (allusion to Gen. 3:21) which represent that which was added to human nature as a result of the fall, i.e., the passions, sexual stirrings and mortality. For an evaluation of the patristic use of the expression 'the garments of skin' see Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, (ET) Malherbe and Ferguson (CWS), pp. 160-1. Note 29. Cf. also Climacus, *The Ladder*, Step 15, 'On Chastity' (CWS), p. 184.

⁸⁵ He insisted that 'the human nature is so good and noble that man is incapable of completely perverting it here even by all his wrongdoing.' See *Nach.*, p. 179.

⁸⁶ *Chto est* '...', p.70. Feofan believed that it is crucial to be convinced of the unnaturalness of the

The divine image is never totally obliterated.⁸⁷ This fact is of direct consequence for man's will.

The concept of individual self-determination is paramount for all Feofan's reflections on the human person. He rejected the idea that humans are under some necessity of committing sin. On the contrary, he taught that no one must ever hold that man is born with a compulsion to sin. True, Feofan states: 'We are weak and enfeebled and commit sin because of our penchant for sin or our susceptibility to sinful pleasures.' Yet he emphasised that 'we do that always voluntarily and not due to some inescapable necessity.'⁸⁸ Humans still retain the power to will and the freedom to choose although the Fall has limited their horizons and enfeebled their potential.⁸⁹ The very Eastern Orthodox notion of *ἄσκησις* as a life of radical self-denial and active virtue presupposes freedom of self-determination as a foundational principle: 'The beginnings of salvation are accomplished through the voluntary action of [the human] spirit' [*начало спасения полагается свободными движениями духа*'].⁹⁰ Thus, it is within this larger context of Feofan's thoroughly patristic teaching on the human person as created in divine image and capable of self-determination and the human nature as being inherently good that I intend to examine the specific elements of Feofan's eclectic trichotomism, beginning with his notion of the spirit.

sickness of sin if one is to maintain the 'zeal to cure the disease'. see Ibid..

⁸⁷ See Athanasius, *De Incarn.*, 14, *NPNF*, vol. 4, p. 43.

⁸⁸ *Pis'ma k raznym...*, p. 24.

⁸⁹ See Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 222-224.

⁹⁰ Feofan, *Pis'ma*, p. 74 cited in Zarin, p.125.

SPIRIT

Individuality of the human spirit

We have already observed the crucial importance of the distinction between the human spirit and the human soul in Feofan's ascetical teaching. He understands the spirit as a vital superior force within human personality. It is the 'power' breathed in by God at the creation of man. He speaks of the human spirit glowingly as the 'temple filled with the Triune God'⁹¹ and as 'the sovereign'⁹² of soul and body. For Feofan 'to live in the spirit is to live in God.'⁹³ Life in the spirit, he maintains, is the ideal mode of human existence.⁹⁴ The spirit as 'an integral part of our being' manifests itself in each individual person in a unique way [*'дух... у всякаго проявляет себя своим образом'*].⁹⁵ This concept of the human spirit as the self-conscious unifying agent and the foundation of man's individuality is central not only to the whole of Feofan's Hesychast teaching on divine-human union, but to his understanding of the dynamic nature of the human composite, as well. In *Put*, '*Chto est*' and *Nachertaniye*, both the ascetic and the anthropological elements lock into one harmonious whole.

⁹¹ *Put*, p. 177.

⁹² *Chto est*..., p. 74. Cf. with Schubert who believed in the authority of the spirit over the soul and the body: '*Die Macht des Geistes über Leib und Seele*.' See Krebs, p. 115; and Avsenev who taught that 'under the supremacy of the spirit even those faculties of the soul which are related to our earthly existence and which we share with animals, acquire a higher direction and spiritual purpose, being thus transformed and ennobled.' See *Iz Zapisok*, p. 37.

⁹³ Yepiskop Feofan, *Tolkovanie poslanya sv. Apostola k Rimlyanam*, 2nd edn, (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr, 1890), p. 422. Hereafter *Rim*.

⁹⁴ See Episkop Feofan, *Rim*, pp. 421-422.

⁹⁵ *Chto est*..., p. 36.

The awakening of the human spirit is the first step on the way to true humanity. The image of God resides in the spirit.⁹⁶ Man for Feofan is not an autonomous being.⁹⁷ Deprived of communion with God, the human spirit 'is smouldering as a spark in the ashes.'⁹⁸ Yet, on the lower level, the excessive nature of 'soulish' and bodily needs and desires is due to the 'captive spirit' which is 'raging within them' – since 'by its nature it [the spirit] has limitless energy,'⁹⁹ and by this excessiveness 'it is hoping to quench its thirst for the eternal.'¹⁰⁰ And it is the Holy Spirit which 'delivers our spirit from the passions of soul and body'¹⁰¹ and 'gathers together the darkened and shattered traits of God's image.'¹⁰² Feofan's entire concept of the redemption of the human spirit by the Divine Spirit is unmistakably Pauline as can be seen from his numerous references in *Nachertaniye*¹⁰³ and in his own commentary on

⁹⁶ *Rim.*, p. 421. *Put'*, p. 131. In this Feofan is faithfully following those church fathers who located the image of God in man's mind (or spirit or soul) and not in his body. See Clement of Alexandria, *Str.* 2.19; Athanasius, *Gent.* 34; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 4.18; John Chrysostom, *Hom. In Gen.* 8.3-4, Cyril of Alexandria, *Mt.* 6.23, *Hom. in Lc.* 96, and Augustine of Hippo, *Trin.* 14.4; *Civ. Dei* 12.23; *Gen. Ad litt.* 10.2; *Ep.* 166.12. Cf. also Episkop Feofan, *Dusha i Angel ne Telo, a Dukh*, [Souls and Angels are not Flesh but Spirit] (Moscow: Afonskii Russkii Panteleimonov monastyr', 1891), pp. 120-121. Hereafter *Dusha*.

⁹⁷ In *Nach.*, p. 194 Feofan directly says: 'Man should dwell in God with all his being and consciousness' ['в Боге должен пребывать человек всем своим существом и сознанием'].

⁹⁸ *Nach.*, p. 193. Cf. Schubert who taught that the human spirit [*des Menschegeistes*] can become a voluntary divine agent; a 'unifying organ' [*vereinende Organ*] between God and Man.' See *Geschichte*, II, p. 339.

⁹⁹ *Chto est'...*, p. 76.

¹⁰⁰ *Sobraniye Pisem* VIII, p. 213.

¹⁰¹ *Rim.*, p. 884.

¹⁰² *Put'*, p. 14. In *Nachertaniye* explaining the regenerating and unifying power of God's Spirit as described by Paul in *Colossians* and *Ephesians* Feofan concludes: 'в душе истинного христианина совсем не бывает того нестроения, какое неизбежно в человеке, непричастном Духа Христова. Все его способности действуют совместно, устремлены на одно, состоят в подчинении ему как лицу, - почему и приписывается ему целость, полнота, здравие.' See p. 199. Cf. also Nikitas Stithatos, 'On Spiritual Knowledge', §18 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 144) where he describes the fallen state of man as that of 'self-fragmentation'.

¹⁰³ See pp. 192-199.

Romans 8.16.¹⁰⁴ In his compelling descriptions of the regeneration of the human spirit Feofan combines the insights gathered from St Paul's reflections on the life according to the flesh and the life according to the Spirit in Rom 8.1-17, 1 Cor 2.4, 10-14 and the Schubertian teaching on the 'creative' and 'willing' spirit.¹⁰⁵

There are three major similarities between the notion of the spirit in Feofan and in St. Paul. For both, the spirit is superior to the soul,¹⁰⁶ and for both the spirit *in the believer* is 'superhuman in nature' and distinct from the soul, which is understood as a purely human attribute.¹⁰⁷ In both, it anticipates the notion of consciousness used in twentieth century discourse.¹⁰⁸ Yet, the principal difference is that St. Paul expressed his notion of the spirit by the Greek *πνεῦμα* and did not identify it with *νοῦς*. In Paul, as Stacey points out, these two terms are related, but not identical.¹⁰⁹ As for instance in 1 Cor 14.14 where Paul says: 'For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit (*πνεῦμα*) prayeth, but my understanding (*νοῦς*) is unfruitful.' Regarding this particular distinction in Paul, Stacey observes that the spirit (*πνεῦμα*) in Paul is 'man under the influence of

¹⁰⁴ Cf. St Paul's discourse on the life in the Spirit in Romans 8, esp. verse 16. See Feofan's comments in *Rim.*, pp. 494-497.

¹⁰⁵ As it is especially evident in his train of thought in the letter to N.I.K. where he summarises his whole teaching on the human spirit. See *Sobraniye Pisem* VIII, pp. 210-214.

¹⁰⁶ See W. David Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man: In Relation to its Judaic and Hellenistic Background* (London: MacMillan, 1956), pp. 203-204. Hereafter Stacey. See also J.D.G. Dunn in E.Kamlah et al., 'Spirit, Holy Spirit,' *NIDNTT* 3, pp. 689-709 and G.D.Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 212; as for the superior status of the human spirit in Feofan see *Nach.*, p. 188, *Chto est'...*, pp. 31, 34, and esp. p. 49, also *Put'*, pp. 177, 225, 304, 307; and *Sobraniye Pisem* VIII, p. 212.

¹⁰⁷ See 1 Cor 2.14-16 and Stacey, p. 133. Also J.K.Chamblin, 'Psychology' in *Dictionary of Paul and his letters* ed. by G.F.Hawthorne et al. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 773. On the diametrically opposite conditions of the spirit in believers and unbelievers in Feofan and his use of Rom 8; Rom 1.9; 7.6; Gal 5.25; Rom 8.9; 1Cor 3.16 see *Nach.*, pp. 192-195.

¹⁰⁸ See R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* I, p. 207, see also Stacey, p. 135. As for instance the usage of William James in his *Principles of Psychology*, 1952, chapter X on the 'Consciousness of Self', pp. 189-259, esp. pp. 214 and 258 through 259; for an introductory survey of ideas on consciousness from ancient times to scientific experiments in the recent decades see J. Mishlove, *Roots of Consciousness* (Random, 1975).

the Spirit, and νοῦς man exercising his judgement and regulating pneumatic experience with a view to practical utility.’¹¹⁰ Feofan, as we have already indicated, identifies the Greek νοῦς with his notion of the spirit [δυx] and eclectically combines within it Pauline, patristic, and Schubertian meanings.

He also makes some important adjustments to his trichotomist model as a whole. While designating the spirit as the seat of the divine image, Feofan, as we recall, does not limit his definition of the human person exclusively to the spirit (as was the case in the Greek patristic tradition in general, with the notable exception of Irenaeus and Palamas.¹¹¹) Feofan’s definition of the human person also includes body and soul. In fact, whereas the notion of the human spirit is pivotal for Feofan’s anthropology, the patristic concept of *Imago Dei*, though present, is certainly not prominent.

Consciousness and freedom as the chief attributes of the spirit

In his exposition of the teaching on the human spirit, Feofan distinguishes between the attributes and the manifestations of the spirit. His development of the teaching on the properties of the former represents one of the most creative aspects of Feofan’s anthropology. He consistently teaches that the chief attributes of the spirit

¹⁰⁹ Stacey, pp. 203-204.

¹¹⁰ See Stacey, p. 203.

¹¹¹ See Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, V, 6, 1, PG 7; and Palamas, *Topics of natural and theological science*, § 62 (*The Philokalia* IV, pp. 374-375) where he claims that ‘man is created more perfectly in God’s image than the angels, both because he possesses in himself a sustaining and quickening power and because he has a capacity for sovereignty. ... angels do not have a body joined to them and subject to their intellect.’

are two: consciousness [сознание] and freedom [свобода].¹¹² These constitute ‘the essence of the spirit and the norm of humanity.’¹¹³ The notions of freedom and consciousness as pertaining to the spiritual nature of man are clearly evident in the anthropology of the Eastern monastic tradition,¹¹⁴ yet what is characteristic of Feofan is that he singles out ‘freedom’ and ‘consciousness’ as the two chief interdependent attributes of the human spirit and makes them central to his teaching.¹¹⁵ In this emphasis, he is strikingly similar to Nikitas Stithatos, the disciple and biographer of St Symeon the New Theologian, who – eight centuries earlier – spoke in surprisingly similar terms of the ‘intellect’ [νοῦς] (or ‘spirit’ according to Feofan) as ‘the father’ of his ‘consciousness’ [λόγος] and taught that ‘the power of intelligence’ and ‘free will’ represent ‘that which characterises me, and is regal and sovereign.’¹¹⁶ Yet these concepts are definitely not as pivotal in Stithatos as in Feofan. This aspect of Feofan’s teaching gives evidence of his keen creative development of anthropological insights found both in the teachings of the Fathers of the *Philokalia* and the writings of his contemporaries like Schubert and Avsenev.¹¹⁷ Feofan’s teaching on the nature of

¹¹² Or ‘awareness and freedom’ as in Amis, p. 133.

¹¹³ *Chto est’...*, p. 43. Also *Put’*, pp. 187, 225, 268.

¹¹⁴ See for example the Homily VI, *The Freedom of the Intellect*, §118 (*The Philokalia*, III, p. 337) attributed to St Macarius of Egypt; St Diadochos, *On Spiritual Knowledge* §§12,14,16, esp. § 89 where he speaks of the *intellect* perceiving the Holy Spirit ‘with full consciousness’. See also John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983) pp. 73-74, 140 for a valuable discussion of the development of this theme by St Symeon the New Theologian. See also V. Lossky, *Obraz i Podobie* [The Image and the Likeness] (Moscow: Izdatel’svo Svyato-Vladimirskogo Bratstva, 1995), p. 113.

¹¹⁵ *Chto est’...*, p. 43; *Nach.*, pp. 70-73, 188-209, *Put’*, pp. 225-226.

¹¹⁶ Nikitas Stithatos, *On the inner nature of things*, §37. See also Lossky, *MT*, p. 201 where Lossky describes the human spirit [νοῦς] as ‘the principle’ of man’s consciousness and freedom, indirectly endorsing Feofan’s definition.

¹¹⁷ See Schubert, *Geschichte* II, p. 491, who taught that man’s ‘consciousness’, the creative power of his imagination, longing for perfection and speech - are the works of the Spirit; and Avsenev, *Iz Zapisok*, p. 57, who writes that ‘consciousness and freedom’ are possessed ‘only by the pure spirit and consequently belong to the spirit of man.’

consciousness builds on these romantic insights and anticipates later Christian interpretations of the concept of individuation.¹¹⁸ As we shall see in our final chapter, the concepts of inner spiritual freedom and individual consciousness also provide conceptual bases for Feofan's teaching on diversity and uniqueness of individual spiritual experiences.

In his reflections on consciousness, Feofan distinguishes between 'general consciousness' and 'self-consciousness.'¹¹⁹ He defines consciousness as 'the fundamental property from which all other attributes stem; the immediate attribute of personality and, so to speak, an interpretation of it.'¹²⁰ He describes self-consciousness as an ability to speak of oneself as the 'I,' to be mentally aware of one's own existence and of the existence of objects outside of oneself. It is the capacity not only to distinguish self from other people but to distinguish between oneself and one's own actions, between 'one's being and what proceeds from it and to be able to rise above both.'¹²¹ It is extremely important to observe that Feofan did not identify his notion of the human person with consciousness as such or with other attributes of man's nature. He insists: 'Условие к совершенству сознания или к стоянию его в своем чине есть возвышение нашего лица и над собой, и над

¹¹⁸ Such as the teaching of Ivan Aleksandrovich Il'in (1882/3-1954) on the freedom of the human spirit. See his *Aksiomy religioznogo opyta* [The Axioms of Religious Experience], Moscow, 1993. See also the essay *Real'nost' sub'ektivnogo dukha* [The Reality of the Subjective Spirit] by V.I. Slobodchikov in 'Nachala khristianskoi psikhologii', ed. by B.S. Bratus' and others (Moscow: Nauka, 1995), pp. 122-138.

¹¹⁹ *Nach.*, 189, 201, 203, 206.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

¹²¹ See *Ibid.*, 189. In this differentiation between 'oneself' and 'one's own actions', 'one's being' and that 'which proceeds from it' Feofan anticipates the distinction made by William James between the 'stream of passing thoughts' and 'the thinker' and his teaching on the non-material dimension to personality outlined in his *Principles of Psychology*, first published in 1890. See *The Principles of Psychology* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), pp. 146-187, 191-197.

внешним миром.¹²² Consciousness in Feofan is one of the attributes of the person. It is only in twentieth century that Vladimir Lossky will develop this idea within the context of Trinitarian theology and Chalcedonian Christology and will come up with a profoundly precise definition of the 'irreducibility of person to nature' - person as that who cannot be reduced to nature.¹²³ Lossky valued Feofan's vision. This is evident from the several highly positive references to Feofan in Lossky's most influential work, *Essai sur la Théologie Mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient*, in which he also makes use of Feofan's definition of the spirit as consciousness and freedom.¹²⁴

Feofan develops his teaching on consciousness and personhood in reference to the inner spiritual strife, thus applying his psychological insights to the practical needs of ascetic pursuits. In *Nachertaniye* he insists that a person enslaved by passion is incapable of attaining a clear consciousness of the world around him. He cannot rise above the external world. 'He lives within it as if being co-mingled with it and hence is called an outsider, the one who lives outside of himself, the one who departed from self.'¹²⁵ He is thus also incapable of rising above 'his own inner world' because he is 'carried away by the mechanism of his own inner movements.'¹²⁶ He cannot possess a clear knowledge of his own actions, neither is he capable of soundly evaluating them and reflecting on them. This, in Feofan's view, leads to one of the most dangerous delusions for a person enslaved by sin: namely, the inability to distinguish between

¹²² *Nach.*, p.201.

¹²³ See *Obraz i Podobiye*, pp. 113-114 and M.T. pp. 121-122.

¹²⁴ See Lossky, *MT*, pp. 199, 211, 201 and 158 footnote 1.

¹²⁵ *Nach.*, p. 202.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

oneself and one's own actions, needs, desires, passions, and emotions.¹²⁷ 'Everything that arises within him he regards as his own self and stands up for it as he would stand up for himself, that is for his own life.'¹²⁸ In such a state, man cannot attain true self-knowledge or true personhood.¹²⁹ In the process of spiritual awakening, then, the soul is first of all removed from the 'mechanism of its interior and exterior life' and is 'elevated above its own flow.'¹³⁰ This movement, in Feofan's opinion, creates the first possibility for the acquisition of full and clear consciousness. In fact, in *Nachertanie* Feofan shows that the Christian experience of new birth involves the 'rebirth of self-consciousness' shaped by the experience of healing and freedom in Christ.¹³¹ This is possible through divine-human communion – the theme of our final chapter and it is there that I shall return again to our discussion of the role of consciousness in Feofan's ascetical teaching. What must be addressed at this point, however, is Feofan's emphasis on the inherent link between consciousness and self-determination.

The essence of freedom

For Feofan the consciousness of the human person is intimately interconnected with the capacity for inward moral freedom. He taught that these two attributes 'mutually

¹²⁷ Compare with the statement in the text 'On the Character of Men', §142, (*The Philokalia* I, p. 351) about the soul 'drunken with ignorance, indifferent to her true self, not understanding what she is...'

¹²⁸ *Nach.*, p. 203.

¹²⁹ Feofan also stressed that an individual can consciously and adequately react to the promptings of grace only upon reaching mature age. See *C'hto est*..., p. 99.

¹³⁰ *Nach.*, p. 204. There is a striking similarity between the metaphor of 'flow' used by Feofan and the allusions to the 'current of a river' employed by the author of 'On the Character of Men', §§ 142, 143, (*The Philokalia* I, pp. 350-351).

reflect each other' and that the state of inward freedom is determined by the spiritual condition of one's consciousness.¹³² Feofan saw the essence of human freedom in the ability to make a conscious and independent decision regarding an external or internal impulse, demand or circumstance.¹³³ He marvelled at the power of inward freedom accessible to human beings: 'Just one word – 'I do not deign to' – disarms all powers and every manner of force.'¹³⁴ Yet, paradoxically, Feofan insists at the same time that except for God's will, there is nothing genuinely free either within the human person or outside of him.¹³⁵ It seems that when he says that there is nothing genuinely free within the human person he has in mind, if one is to use Berdyaev's helpful distinction, the absence of 'that intelligent freedom which is our final liberty in truth and goodness'; what Berdyaev classified as the 'second meaning' of freedom.¹³⁶ While Feofan did not specifically spell out the distinction between 'initial irrational freedom' and 'intelligent freedom' in the truth (and would certainly not have shared Berdyaev's interpretation of the creature-Creator relationship), he clearly taught that 'a person must first be master of himself to be able to surrender himself to God'¹³⁷ and maintained that 'freedom belongs to the human person as one of his characteristic

¹³¹ *Nach.*, p. 70-71.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹³³ *Sobraniye Pisem* VIII, p. 221. We find the same idea of the freedom of the human spirit (intellect) in St Maximos the Confessor 'Third Century on Love', §92 and 'First Century on Theology', §11, (*The Philokalia* II, p. 98 and p. 116.)

¹³⁴ *Nach.*, p. 39.

¹³⁵ *Nach.*, p. 40.

¹³⁶ Nicolas Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit* (London: The Centenary Press, 1944), pp. 125-127. As we have observed earlier (see chapter I of this thesis), Berdyaev was rather critical of Feofan. He claimed: 'Еп. Феофан, в сущности отрицает христианство как религию свободы, он в религии несовершеннолетия. ... Еп. Феофан в сущности монофизит: он отрицает человека, богочеловека и богочеловечество.' See N. Berdyaev, *Filosofiya* I, pp. 328-329. Berdyaev seems to have refused to understand and appreciate the Eastern ascetic teaching on the freedom in submission to God. Yet however paradoxical, one cannot but notice some striking parallels between Berdyaev's teaching on the freedom of the spirit and the tradition of the Fathers of the *Philokalia*.

traits.’¹³⁸ His reasoning becomes clearer in his explanation of the purpose of human freedom.

The object and the mechanism of freedom

It is only in submission to the divine will that human freedom ‘acquires scope and breadth,’ ‘becomes as if unlimited or enters a certain infinite realm.’¹³⁹ This submission to the divine will Feofan held to be the only ‘worthy vocation’ and true purpose of human freedom.¹⁴⁰ He spoke of this act of self-surrender as ‘the whole burnt-offering of freedom,’¹⁴¹ the essential precondition for the action of God’s power within the human spirit. It is the beginning of a mutual divine-human indwelling in which human ‘freedom is not abolished but lives on, for self-surrender is not a final and established act, but a constantly repeatable one.’¹⁴²

In his *Outlines*, Feofan makes it clear that by ‘freedom’ as the second attribute of the spirit he actually means the capacity for ‘intelligent and free self-determination.’¹⁴³ Feofan taught that an impulse or a motive is not yet in itself ‘a necessity to act, but is a suggestion for action.’¹⁴⁴ Hence self-determination is the

¹³⁷ *Nach.*, p. 38.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*. See also his emphatic reaffirmation of human freedom in *Chto est’...*, p. 43 and *S.P.*, I, p. 165.

¹³⁹ *Nach.*, pp. 40-41. Feofan refers to Psalm 119.45, the Ps.-Macarian *Homily* 46, and St. Tikhon of Zadonsk whom he cites saying: ‘Если свободен человек то ему можно делать все, что хочет? Нет. Не в том свобода, чтобы жить своевольно. Это не столько свобода, сколько рабство – истое, тяжкое.’ Tikhon, *Sochineniya preosv. Tikhona* (SPb., 1825-26), vol. XI, p. 161 cited in *Nach.*, p. 41.

¹⁴⁰ *Nach.*, p. 40; *Put’*, p. 150.

¹⁴¹ *Put’*, p. 132.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 307, see also 304, 132.

¹⁴³ In Russian ‘разумно-свободная самостоятельность’ see *Nach.*, pp. 190, 206-207.

¹⁴⁴ *Sobraniye Pisem* VIII, p. 214.

condition in which thought always governs desire.¹⁴⁵ It is that very capacity which he characterised as ‘the dignity of the human person.’¹⁴⁶ In the Eastern ascetic tradition self-determination [in Greek *αὐτεξουσία* and in Russian *самовластие*]¹⁴⁷ is contrasted with the degenerate state of self-centredness [*самость*] or egotism, which Feofan in some places describes as the human spirit which became ‘conceited and wilful’ and which has, ‘due to that [corruption], lost its power and fallen under the dominion of soul and body and all things external.’¹⁴⁸ Thus sin to Feofan (as to St. Maximus before him) is not of lower human nature, but is always a manifestation of man’s use of his spiritual faculty of self-determination. The ‘conceited spirit’ in Feofan is very similar to the concept of the fallen spiritual will or the ‘fallen *γνώμη*’ in St Maximus, which, as Thunberg points out, is understood there as a ‘reflexion of man’s basic capacity for self-determination.’¹⁴⁹ Yet the major difference between St Maximus and Feofan lies in the way each of them develops the theme of man’s freedom. Maximus, as Thunberg so vividly illustrated, portrays man as a microcosm and an active mediator between the Creator and His creation, showing the social and even cosmic dimensions of the ‘image character’ of man’s self-determination, whereas Feofan makes a sharp distinction between inward spiritual freedom and external freedom – of which he had a very low view.

¹⁴⁵ *Nach.*, p. 207.

¹⁴⁶ *Sobraniye Pisem* VI, p. 87. Cf. St Maximus the Confessor, ‘First Century on Theology’, §11 where he speaks of the soul reaffirming ‘its true nobility’ by exercising freedom of choice.

¹⁴⁷ Florovsky points out that in the Macarian Homilies this notion of self-determination is portrayed as the ‘essential attribute of human nature’. See his *Vizantiiskie Ottsy V-VIII vekov* [*Byzantine Fathers: AD 500 - 800*], (Paris, [n. pub.], 1933), p. 149.

¹⁴⁸ *Chto est* ‘...’, p. 75.

¹⁴⁹ See Thunberg, pp. 227, 213, cf. Maximus, *Th Pol* 16, *PG* 91. 192A and *Ep* 2, *PG* 91. 396 D.

Inward versus outward freedom

When speaking of freedom, Feofan almost always means ‘inward freedom’ of the human spirit as distinguished from ‘outward freedom,’ which he sadly believed to be a phantom.¹⁵⁰ In interpreting St. Paul’s advice to slaves in I Corinthians 7. 21-22, he follows the tradition of the Eastern patristic exegesis¹⁵¹. In his commentary he even speaks of some ‘divinely ordained limits of slavery.’¹⁵² The Slavonic rendering of verse 21: ‘*но аще и можешу свободенъ быти, больше поработи себе*’ is quite close to NRSV: ‘Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever,’ words which are exactly the opposite of the libertarian rendering of the *New American Standard* version: ‘But if you are able also to become free, rather do that.’ In *Nachertanie* Feofan clearly endorses the concept of different rights on the basis of social class.¹⁵³ In this position, he goes contrary to St Isaac’s and St Maximus’ lofty notion of human equality, which they believed to be founded in the Divine image and self-determination.¹⁵⁴ This is yet another example of the conflict between Feofan the mystic and Feofan the traditionalist. We shall have the occasion to return to this issue again in chapter V.

¹⁵⁰ *Chto est* ‘...’, pp. 274-275, 262. Cf. ‘On the Character on Men’, §18 (*The Philokalia* I, pp. 332, also 334, 337).

¹⁵¹ Mostly relying on Theodoret of Cyrus, Chrysostom, Patriarch Photius and Theophylact of Ochrida. See Episkop Feofan, *Tolkovanie pervogo poslaniya ap. Pavla k Korinfyanam* [Commentary on I Corinthians], (Moscow, [n. pub.], 1876), pp. 238-242. Hereafter *Korinf.*

¹⁵² *Korinf.*, p. 242.

¹⁵³ See *Nach.*, pp. 518-519. See also the relevant sections in chapters I and V of this thesis.

¹⁵⁴ Thus St Isaac taught: ‘Do not attempt to distinguish between the worthy and the unworthy. Let all people be equal in your sight for a good cause...’ See ‘Ascetical Homilies’, §172 in *Dobrotolyubiye* II, p. 705. St Maximus is even more emphatic: ‘No deiform soul is in its essence of greater value than any other deiform soul.’ See ‘First Century on Theology’, §11; also ‘On the Lord’s prayer’, (*The Philokalia* II, p. 297).

Manifestations of the life of the human spirit

Being primarily preoccupied with the interior spiritual life of the individual Feofan constantly explored and analysed those expressions of the human spirit which are directly related to the contemplative life. Among the 'more tangible manifestations' of the life of the human spirit, Feofan singles out the fear of God, conscience, and thirst for God. Fear of God implies recognition of the existence of the Supreme Being and demands of all humans a realisation of their dependence upon God and their responsibility to please, reverence and be accountable to Him. It is 'the natural creed' which is 'written within' the human spirit.¹⁵⁵ Conscience guides the human spirit in its path of duty,¹⁵⁶ playing a major part in ensuring the genuine freedom of the spirit.¹⁵⁷ Acting as 'practical consciousness' and aware of law and freedom, it 'determines the mutual relation' of the two latter entities.¹⁵⁸ In its manifold activities it operates as a legislator, custodian of the law, judge, and 'recompenser.'¹⁵⁹ The concept of 'thirst for God' in Feofan is nothing other than 'the intense longing' or 'eros' in the Fathers of *The Philokalia*.¹⁶⁰ Feofan portrays it as an intense aspiration for absolute good and a total dissatisfaction of our spirit with all earthly realities. 'Having come from God, it seeks God, longs to taste Him, and, dwelling in a living union and commingling with Him, it finds its rest in Him.'¹⁶¹ Yet the spirit, as expounded in

¹⁵⁵ *Chto est* '...', p. 32.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

¹⁵⁷ *Nach.*, p. 279.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

¹⁵⁹ *Chto est* '...', p. 33.

¹⁶⁰ See for example St Hesychius the Priest, 'On Watchfulness and Holiness', §§113, 201 (*The Philokalia* I, pp. 181, 198).

¹⁶¹ *Chto est* '...', p. 33. Cf. Ps.-Macarius in *Dobrotolyubiye*, I, p.156.

Nachertaniye, Put' and *Chto est'* serves not only as a vehicle for the 'living union' and 'commingling' with God, or as the seat of man's conscious spiritual self-determination and uniqueness, but as the divine agent through which God restores the original unity within the human person, sanctifying and ultimately deifying both body and soul. The supreme integrating role of the spirit in the very being and the life of the human person is even more apparent in Feofan's reflections (in *Sobraniye Pisem*) on the crucial distinction between the human spirit and the human soul, which we already discussed at some length at the beginning of this chapter and will examine further in the following section devoted to Feofan's concept of the soul.

SOUL

The becoming of the human soul

Feofan's psychology (his teaching on the human soul) is integrally linked with his cosmology, and it would prove difficult to properly evaluate it without some recourse to his teaching on the origin of the world.

Feofan's cosmological reflections span the realms of mystical spirituality, philosophy and dogmatic theology. In his cosmology he also 'combined patristic asceticism with romantic psychology and *Naturphilosophie*'¹⁶² and in this approach, according to his own admission, he again followed Avsenev and Schubert (both Avsenev and Feofan held Schubert's major work, *Geschichte der Seele*, in high

¹⁶² *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, p. 399. On the influence of the German *Naturphilosophie* in Russia see V.V.Zenkovsky, *Istoriya Russkoi Filosofii [The History of Russian Philosophy]*, 2 vols (Paris: YMCA Press, 1948), I (part 1), pp. 128-142.

esteem.¹⁶³) In one of the letters written in his reclusion, Feofan develops – with direct reference to Schubert and Avsenev – intriguing thoughts on the metaphysical nature of the forces at work in the material world and on the World-Soul as the substance of these forces.¹⁶⁴ He writes:

Here is how I understand the world. Atoms form the foundation of the material world. But not all atoms are the same – they of themselves can neither move nor join together. Everything is accomplished by the forces acting within them. What kind of forces are they? I assume a ladder of immaterial forces of a spiritual nature. Mutual attraction, chemical affinity, crystallisation, plants, animals – are produced by appropriate immaterial forces which manifest themselves in ascending order. The substance of all these forces is the World-Soul. Having formed this immaterial Soul, God put into her the ideas of all creatures, and she instinctively, as they say, manufactures them at God's sign and stimulation.¹⁶⁵

Thus Feofan assumes that there is a certain 'hierarchy of being' or gradations of the Soul 'from the lowest to the highest.'¹⁶⁶ There is a striking similarity between Feofan's reflections and the theory expounded by Plotinus, but there is also a crucial difference: in Feofan, man was created by the direct action of the Holy Trinity. The human being is only partly a creature of this World-Soul, and there is a distinction in principle between humans and all other creatures: 'The souls which are lower than the spirit and man are immersed into the World-Soul. But the human soul cannot be submerged there.'¹⁶⁷ It is noteworthy that Feofan's teacher Avsenev, in his later years, questioned this naturalistic teaching of Schubert, which he earlier enthusiastically

¹⁶³ See Avsenev, *Iz Zapisok*, pp. 67-69 and Feofan, *Sobraniye Pisem*, II, p. 109.

¹⁶⁴ Schubert held that 'in every organic being... and in the world itself there is an immaterial soul which directs and governs everything,' see Krebs, p. 17; for Schubert's key statements on the issue see his *Geschichte* II, pp. 148, 149-156.

¹⁶⁵ *Sobraniye Pisem* II, pp. 107-108.

¹⁶⁶ Feofan cited in *Smirnov*, p. 213.

¹⁶⁷ *Sobraniye Pisem* II, p. 109.

taught to Feofan at Kiev Academy. In fact, Avsenev finally dismissed it as inadequate and dubious and, as we have seen, made attempts to eliminate it from his writings.¹⁶⁸

Feofan, on the contrary, persisted in upholding Schubert's teaching. He found it helpful, in particular, for explaining the composite nature of the human person. Moreover, this adherence to Schellingian philosophy of nature was rather characteristic of the Russian religious thought of the time. (Suffice it to mention the prominence of the concept of World-Soul, though in quite different interpretations, in Solov'ev's philosophy and even in the twentieth century in the work of Sergei Bulgakov.)

Feofan goes on in this 'romantic theory' of the origin of the world and the human species to reconcile the elements of his dualistic¹⁶⁹ theory of the origin of the human person; i.e., his teaching on the human spirit and his concept of the animal soul as a creature of the World-Soul. He allows direct divine intervention into the processes within the World-Soul:

When it came to creating man, the earth was not given the command: 'Let it bring forth.' But within the mystery of the Holy Trinity were uttered the words: 'Let us create.' First was formed the body from the earth. This was a living body with the soul of an animal. Into this soul God breathed His own *spirit*. This spirit, uniting with the animal soul, raised it one stage higher above the soul of animals.¹⁷⁰

From that time on, according to Feofan, human beings have originated in the same manner: 'Souls are produced by natural generation from parents in the same manner

¹⁶⁸ See D. Pospekhov's 'Biograficheskie zametki' [Biographic notes] in *Iz Zapisok*, p. X. Cf. V.D. Kudryavtsev's (1828-1891) critique of the notion of the World-Soul in his *Sochineniya* [The Works], 1st edn, pp. 339-341 which Feofan had in his library. On Kudryavtsev see V.V. Zen'kovsky, *Istoriya Russkoi Filosofii* II (part 1), pp. 72-88.

¹⁶⁹ See *Sobraniye Pisem* I, 162-163.

as the souls of all animals.’¹⁷¹ The crucial difference, Feofan insisted, lies in the fact that each human soul is transformed by the Spirit and elevated to the height of the human status.

One should also take note of the fact that while Feofan taught that souls originate ‘in a natural way from parents,’ his view cannot be regarded as traducianist in the same sense as is that of Tertullian’s materialist form of traducianism. Feofan always upheld the non-materiality and simplicity of the soul. He defended with masterful style the incorporeal nature of the human soul in his famous debate with Bishop Ignaty Bryanchaninov (another notable representative of the Russian ascetic tradition), who believed the soul to be of material nature.¹⁷² Feofan objected forcibly: ‘The soul is not an abstract force, as it appears to the new teaching, but is an actual and real power which truly exists among other realities.’¹⁷³ ‘The soul is a spirit, a real force, which, by its, so to speak, physical side, acts upon and brings into motion the whole body; and as a spirit being above matter it dominates and rules within us.’¹⁷⁴

Feofan did acknowledge some similarity between his reflections on ‘the powers of metaphysical nature’ and the Leibnizian theory of monads,¹⁷⁵ although he definitely would not have shared with Leibniz his theory of the pre-existence of souls. Feofan was not categorical when stating his views about the soul’s origin. When responding to the question of the soul’s source, he replied flatly: ‘Souls do not pre-exist. But as

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., II, p. 108.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., VII, p. 110.

¹⁷² See Episkop Ignaty Bryanchaninov, *Slovo o Smerti*, 1863. For Feofan’s detailed criticism of Bryanchaninov’s views on the subject see Feofan’s *Dusha*, pp. 7-13, 45-62, 158-209. For Florovsky’s appraisal of the debate see *Puti Russkago Bogosloviya*, pp. 394-395.

¹⁷³ *Dusha*, p. 179.

¹⁷⁴ *Dusha*, p. 180.

to how they come about I do not know.’¹⁷⁶ In contrast to Leibniz, Feofan was eager to stress the principal difference between man and the rest of the created order. For Feofan, as we have seen in the previous section of this chapter, it was not only ‘consciousness and reason’ that distinguished man from animals, but ‘consciousness and freedom’ – the spirit which is to master the rest of man’s being. There is nevertheless a certain ambiguity in Feofan’s reflections on the nature of the human soul. This ambiguity is inherent in the synthetic approach which he follows in his desire to reconcile certain Pauline, patristic and romantic ideas and thus to illustrate the mystery of the transformation of an animal into a spiritual person – the mystery of the ‘inspired animal’ [*животное одуховленное*].¹⁷⁷

It is worth reminding ourselves that Feofan never intended to build a dogmatic or philosophical system. We are forced to extract statements regarding the nature of the human soul from the whole body of his writings. He was first and foremost a teacher of practical spirituality, and the spiritual dimension of life was his chief concern. He stressed that fact in dealing with the issue of man’s origin, ‘One needs to explain not just how man’s animal life originates, but, more importantly, how man comes to be a spiritual person in an animal body with an animal life and soul.’¹⁷⁸ All his statements on the subject are imbued with this very concern – be it in his letters to a materialistically inclined scientist friend, or in a treatise refuting the materialist form

¹⁷⁵ See *Sobraniye Pisem* II, p. 115. In essence these theories anticipated the genetic code concept in modern biology.

¹⁷⁶ *Sobraniye Pisem* VII, p.110.

¹⁷⁷ See *Sobraniye Pisem* I, pp. 98, 163. Cf. also Sergei Zarin, *Asketizm po pravoslavno-khristianskomu ucheniyu* [Asceticism According to the Orthodox Tradition] (St Petersburg, [n. pub.], 1907), p. 379 where Zarin discusses the tendency in the fathers to reconcile biblical and philosophical terminology. Hereafter *Zarin*.

of traducianism, or in a book aimed at counteracting Protestant influences.¹⁷⁹ He summed it all up in the phrase ‘the inspirited soul’ [*одуховленная душа*]: the soul which is animal by nature transformed and filled with the spirit.¹⁸⁰ Yet, how did he envisage this transformation?

In all of his reflections on the nature of the human soul, we find three categories of statements or three types of emphases:

- a) that the human soul is of the same nature as the soul of animals;
- b) that it is higher than the animal soul and distinctly different from it;
- c) that it is a spiritual being, honoured by God’s image.

How are we to reconcile these statements? The picture becomes more intelligible and Feofan’s own position clearer when the meaning of the terms used and the context in which each particular statement is made are clarified. Thus, what does Feofan mean by the ‘soul’ in general and by the ‘animal soul’ in particular? We shall consider each of these three types of statements individually.

I. First, by animal nature, as we have seen, he, in fact, never meant materiality of the soul.¹⁸¹ The animal soul for him was that animating ‘immaterial power’ within man which is a part of the Schubertian hierarchical ‘system of forces’ within the ‘World-

¹⁷⁸ *Sobraniye Pisem* I, p. 100.

¹⁷⁹ See *Sobraniye Pisem* II, pp. 111-116; *Dusha*, p. 180; *Chto est’...*, pp. 31-32.

¹⁸⁰ See *Chto est’...*, p. 32. The same emphasis and the same terminology is found in Schubert’s teaching on the soul. He taught that the soul and the body are ‘penetrated’ by the spirit or ‘inspirited’ [*vergeistigt*], see Schubert, *Geschichte* II, p. 565 cited in Krebs, p. 115; and held that it is the ‘exclusive privilege of man to have the inspirited soul [*Geistseele*].’ See Krebs, p. 126.

¹⁸¹ See for example Feofan’s letter to Yelagin where he emphatically dismisses the idea of the materiality of the soul. *Sobraniye Pisem* VII, p. 110.

Soul.’¹⁸² A closer look at the manner in which Feofan develops his argument helps us to see how he envisaged the transformation of the ‘animal’ into the ‘human soul.’

Feofan believed that beyond and beneath the divisible physical atoms are the indivisible metaphysical atoms – ‘immaterial forces of a spiritual character.’¹⁸³ He describes his concept graphically: ‘In the world, or in its composition, one must discern besides the elements a system of forces which are arranged in an ascending order from the lowest to the highest.’¹⁸⁴ At the lowest level there is ‘a sort of chemical soul’; then, at a higher level, ‘a vegetable soul’; and, finally, ‘an animal soul.’¹⁸⁵ Each higher class of God’s creations contains within itself ‘the forces’ of the lower classes.¹⁸⁶ (Feofan echoes Schubert and Avsenev here.) When God was creating the first man, he ‘created an animal in the form of a man with an animal soul. Then God breathed into him His Spirit and from an animal a man appeared – an angel in the image of man.’¹⁸⁷ Feofan uses the expression ‘animal soul’ when he has in mind the initial or ‘hypothetical’ state of the human soul, ‘prior to’ its elevation by the Spirit. Yet in other places he refers to the ‘animal soul’ as the ‘lower aspect’ of the interior life: i.e., that within the human person which is responsible for the temporal or the earthly side of human existence.¹⁸⁸

It seems that the differentiation between the ‘lower’ and the ‘higher’ aspect or between soul and spirit in the human person is a modification of the ancient

¹⁸² *Sobraniye Pisem* I, p. 162.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* II, pp. 114-115.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* I, p. 162.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* II, p. 109.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* I, p. 162.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 98. Cf. Avsenev’s psychology course where he says that ‘the human spirit encloses within itself [заключает в себе] an animal soul.’ See *Iz Zapisok*, p. 45.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 98, 99, 162. Cf. Avsenev who taught that ‘those attributes of sense perception

Aristotelian distinction between the animal and rational soul. While the soul testifies to our similarity with the animal kingdom, the spirit distinguishes humans from the rest of nature and makes us ‘incomparably superior to animals.’¹⁸⁹ Feofan was convinced that ‘if we insist on the distinction between the spirit and the soul and transfer the characteristic of the human person to the spirit, then the whole of Darwin’s theory collapses by itself.’¹⁹⁰ Yet, as we have already mentioned, he himself admitted the provisional or functional nature of this distinction in his theory. He makes this especially clear in the letter to Father Arseny:

Usually we say soul-soul. But as a matter of fact we ought to say soul-spirit or spirit-soul. If by the word ‘soul’ I meant spirit-soul I would never have said that the soul is of one origin with the soul of animals: for the spirit is from God – and it is only taking the soul apart from the spirit that I am saying this.¹⁹¹

Thus, while Feofan attached great significance to the distinction between the two terms, in his theory the soul-spirit relationship is a relationship of most intimate interpenetration. In the final analysis ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’ are imperfect terms for aspects of the incorporeal dimension of the inseparable whole of the human person.¹⁹² ‘The spirit in the soul or the soul in the spirit,’ he states.¹⁹³ Feofan describes the spirit as ‘the soul of the human soul,’¹⁹⁴ and he refers to the soul as ‘a part of that same power designated as spirit.’¹⁹⁵ This is another example of Feofan’s synthesis of the Eastern

which we share with animals can be designated as animal soul.’ See *Iz Zapisok*, p. 55.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 98.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 100.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 98.

¹⁹² On the equally unsatisfactory nature of the dichotomist and trichotomist schemes see Kiprian Kern, *Antropologiya Sv. Grigoriya Palamy* [The Anthropology of St Gregory Palamas] (Paris: YMCA Press, 1950), p. 323.

¹⁹³ *Sobraniye Pisem* I, p. 109.

¹⁹⁴ *Chto est*..., p. 49.

¹⁹⁵ *Sobraniye Pisem* I, p. 162. Comparing Feofan’s reflections on this issue with those of his

Orthodox pneumatological conception of the human person with the romantic notion of the spirit. It is his own new development of the characteristic Byzantine themes of 'co-inherence' and 'participation in God'.

II. Second, when Feofan is emphasising the distinct difference between the human and the animal soul, he is not negating what he has been claiming previously (namely, the animal nature of the human soul). Rather, he has in mind not the origin, not 'the initial stage' or 'the lower part,'¹⁹⁶ but 'the final outcome' of the transformation and the elevation of the soul by the spirit: the 'spirit-filled soul' [одуховленную душу]:

Animals do have a soul, but it is the soul of an animal. Whereas human beings have a human soul which is superior just as human beings are superior to all other creatures. Animals are given one status, but humans another status.¹⁹⁷

The parallel between Feofan's explanation of this distinction and Palamas' reflections is illuminating. In his *Topics* Palamas writes:

The soul of animals consists of nothing except that which is actuated by the body. The soul of each man is also the life of the body that it animates. Yet the soul has life not only as an activity but also as its essence, since it is self-existent; for it possesses a spiritual and noetic life that is evidently different from the body's and from what is actuated by the body.¹⁹⁸

Thus, for Palamas as for Feofan, the principal distinction of the human soul is its possession of the 'spiritual and noetic' life. Yet we must not forget that Palamas

teacher Avsenev, one again observes a striking similarity. 'The differences of the life of the soul,' writes Avsenev, 'and the life of the spirit are hardly so great that it would require to identify them as distinct individual realities ... they may rather be only different degrees of development of one and the same indivisible spiritual essence and distinctive activities of one and the same spiritual power.' See *Iz Zapisok*, p. 57.

¹⁹⁶ *Chto est'...*, p. 31.

¹⁹⁷ *Sobraniye Pisem* I, p. 162. Cf. Schubert who held that 'man not only has a soul, which is of the same kind as the soul of animals, but he also has that which was created by the Spirit.' See *Geschichte* II, p. 491.

¹⁹⁸ Palamas, 'Topics of Natural and Theological Science', §§31-32, (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 359.)

adhered to a dichotomist model (soul-body) and Feofan distinguished between body, soul, and spirit. As we observed earlier, Feofan is not totally consistent in maintaining his trichotomism: there is another broader use of the term *soul* in him which needs to be taken into account.

III. This third usage of the word ‘soul’ is found in those passages in which by ‘soul’ Feofan means all the dimensions of the interior life of man. In such instances, the word *soul* even includes those specific characteristics which he, in all of his major writings, attributes to the human spirit; namely, consciousness and freedom. Thus, in his letter to P. A. B. he defines the human soul as a spiritual being honoured by God’s image, which is not ‘a manifestation of some other power,’¹⁹⁹ but an independent and ‘unique personality’ endowed with freedom and intelligence and an intrinsic capacity for communion with God.²⁰⁰ Yet, this broad use of the all-encompassing meaning of the soul is rare in Feofan. The soul is almost always the second subordinate ‘element’ of the human trichotomist makeup. We find the clearest expression of this in *Chto est*’ in Feofan’s teaching on the structure of the human soul and in his emphasis on its subordinate status.

The structure of the soul

In *Chto est*’, one finds a highly detailed description of Feofan’s understanding of the structure and activities of the human soul. He emphasises the multiplicity and diversity of actions and movements within the soul, presenting a dynamic picture. He envisages the soul as being in a state of eternal motion: ‘For the soul is in constant motion and

¹⁹⁹ ‘as, for instance, a rainbow’ see *Sobraniye Pisem*, 1, p. 160.

has no power of remaining in one place.’²⁰¹ It is impossible, moreover, to understand its structure by observing it in its totality. Its activities should be divided into categories and each category should be then examined separately. Feofan does not claim to be original in his description of the structure of the soul. In fact he says that ‘people long ago have looked closely at the soul and divided its activities into three kinds – those of thoughts, desires and feelings; having designated each one as a specific aspect of the soul – the intelligent [‘*мыслительная*’], the appetitive [‘*желательная*’] and the emotional [‘*чувствующая*’] parts.’²⁰² In endorsing this theory, Feofan follows the tripartite division formulated by Plato²⁰³ and on the whole accepted by the Greek Christian Fathers.²⁰⁴ In his monograph, Špidlík provides a comprehensive coverage of Feofan’s development of the patristic teaching on the structure and the faculties of the soul.²⁰⁵ There is therefore no need to do his valuable work again. For the specific purpose of our study we need only to highlight his important differentiation between ‘intellect’ and ‘reason’ (as an attribute of the soul) and consider his use of the word *heart* before we examine his teaching on the status of the human body.

²⁰⁰ *Sobraniye Pisem* I, p. 160.

²⁰¹ *Chto est* ‘...’, p. 18. Cf. *On the Character of Men*, §166.

²⁰² *Ibid*... . In Platonic philosophy the emotional part of human nature is described as ‘incensive’ or ‘irascible’ part.

²⁰³ See *Republic*, Book IV, 434D-441C.

²⁰⁴ See for instance Maximus the Confessor, *Second Century of Various Texts*, §25 (*Dobrotolyubiye* II, 193).

²⁰⁵ Špidlík, pp. 16-29.

Distinction between intellect and reason

Faithfully following the tradition of the Greek Fathers²⁰⁶, Feofan distinguishes between the spiritual intellect $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ [$\gamma\mu$ or $\rho\alpha\varsigma\gamma\mu$]²⁰⁷ and discursive reason $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$ [$\rho\alpha\varsigma\sigma\upsilon\delta\omicron\kappa$]²⁰⁸ which, as a faculty of the soul, is to be subjected to the spiritual intellect.²⁰⁹ He warned of the danger of confusing the terms ‘intellect’ [$\rho\alpha\varsigma\gamma\mu$] and ‘reason’ [$\rho\alpha\varsigma\sigma\upsilon\delta\omicron\kappa$].²¹⁰ Yet in his own works he is not always consistent in the use of such terms as $\gamma\mu$, $\rho\alpha\varsigma\gamma\mu$ and $\rho\alpha\varsigma\sigma\upsilon\delta\omicron\kappa$. Most frequently, as we have already observed, Feofan signifies the Greek $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ by the word ‘spirit’ [$\partial\gamma\chi$],²¹¹ occasionally by the word ‘reason’ [$\rho\alpha\varsigma\gamma\mu$],²¹² and sometimes by the word ‘mind’ [$\gamma\mu$].²¹³ He usually renders the Greek $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$ (discursive reason) by the Russian word $\rho\alpha\varsigma\sigma\upsilon\delta\omicron\kappa$,²¹⁴ yet there are many instances where he prefers to use ‘reason’ [$\rho\alpha\varsigma\gamma\mu$] in the sense of discursive reason $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$.²¹⁵

In his exposition of the two terms above, Feofan was eager to emphasise that when the spiritual intellect ‘falls away from God,’ and is left to itself, ‘void of direct communion with God, without seeing Him, not contemplating Him,’ it becomes blind. ‘Outside of experientially acquired genuine Christianity,’ the intellect has no

²⁰⁶ See Kallistos Ware, ‘*Nous* and *Noesis* in Plato, Aristotle and Evagrius of Pontus’, *Diotima*, 13 (1985), pp. 158-163, especially pp. 159-161.

²⁰⁷ *Nach.*, pp. 214-228.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 228-249.

²⁰⁹ *Chto est’...*, pp. 18-22.

²¹⁰ *Nach.*, p. 228.

²¹¹ *Sobraniye Pisem* I, p. 98.

²¹² *Nach.*, p. 227.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 228-249.

²¹⁵ *O pravoslavii s predosterezheniyami ot pogreshenii protiv nego* [On Orthodoxy with a Warning About Sinning Against It] (Moscow: Izdatel’skii otdel Moskovskogo Patriarkhata, 1991),

knowledge of spiritual things, it only demands to know them and has some idea of them – yet only hypothetically and not clearly.²¹⁶ Departure from God leads to the loss of supremacy of the spiritual intellect, which then becomes subjected to the discursive reason. Another highly significant concept in Feofan's ascetical teaching and in his tradition as a whole is the concept of the heart. In chapter V we will consider at length its meaning and function in Feofan's teaching on divine-human communion. Here we shall limit ourselves to some of the more conceptual and, so to speak, technical observations.

Heart and mind

In the first part of his monograph on Orthodox asceticism,²¹⁷ Zarin notes that, while Feofan correctly renders all the major characteristic traits of the ascetic teaching of the Fathers, in some instances he does not present a clear analysis of the principal ascetic terms. This, as Zarin further observes, is true in particular in regard to the terms used to describe the highest aspect of the human person – the intellect [*νοῦς*] and the heart [*καρδία*], and the two corresponding strands within the ancient patristic tradition which have come to be known as the 'spirituality of the mind' and the 'spirituality of the heart.' In his writings, Feofan reflects both of these trends, yet, as Zarin rightly points out, he does not explain how they are related to each other and

p. 28. Hereafter *O pravoslavii*.

²¹⁶ *Nach.*, p. 216.

²¹⁷ An excellent, though somewhat dated, critical historiographic survey of the major works on asceticism in Russian and Western nineteenth century theological literature. See Zarin, (part 1), pp. 26-30.

‘to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.’ In Feofan’s writings they coexist ‘side by side’ without being reconciled and brought to integral unity.²¹⁸

Nevertheless, in fairness to Feofan it must be pointed out that while he does not identify the ‘heart’ with the ‘intellect’ (or ‘spirit’), in those of his major works²¹⁹ in which he expounds his teaching on the heart, he seems to have believed these terms to be interchangeable (and parallel to the Pauline notion of the ‘inner man,’ as is evident from statements in his commentaries on the Pauline Epistles.)²²⁰ Feofan could certainly find support for the idea of the interchangeability of *νοῦς* and *καρδία* in the works of Maximos,²²¹ Peter of Damaskos,²²² Gregory of Nyssa,²²³ and other Eastern Fathers.²²⁴

Furthermore, while Feofan describes the heart as ‘the root and the centre of life’²²⁵ (in which are reflected the activities of all the forces of the human being), and further develops the teaching of Nikiphoros the Hesychast on ‘descending with the intellect into the heart,’²²⁶ – the ‘heart’ in his teaching is at the same time the attribute of the soul: the realm of feeling (both spiritual and bodily) or the ‘incensive aspect’ of the soul.²²⁷ Feofan does not differentiate between the heart as ‘the sphere of

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

²¹⁹ such as *Nachertanie*, *Put’* and *Chto est’...*

²²⁰ See his commentary on Romans 1.21 in *Rim.*, p. 97 and on Ephesians 1.18 in *Tolkovanie poslaniya sv. ap. Pavla k Yefesyanam [Commentary on St Paul’s Letter to Ephesians]* 2nd edn (Moscow, 1893), p. 95; see also Zarin, pp. 578-579.

²²¹ See ‘Fourth Century on Love’, §73 (*The Philokalia* II, 109).

²²² See ‘Conscious Awareness in the Heart’ in Book II, ‘Twenty-Four Discourses’, XXIV (*The Philokalia* III, 269).

²²³ *Advers. Apoll.* col. 1181B.

²²⁴ E.g. Palamas, ‘Three Texts on Prayer’, § 3 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 344); see also J. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, pp. 137-138 and Zarin, pp. 378-380.

²²⁵ *Chto est’...*, p. 29.

²²⁶ *Put’*, pp. 206-210, cf. Nikiphoros the Monk, ‘From Nikiphoros Himself’ in ‘On Watchfulness and the Guarding of the Heart’ (*The Philokalia* IV, pp. 204-206). See also *Nach.*, p. 313.

²²⁷ *Chto est’...*, pp. 18-32; *Nach.*, pp. 306-313; *Put’*, pp. 238-239.

emotions' (or the heart as the attribute of the soul) and the heart as 'the moral and spiritual centre of the human person.'²²⁸ Perhaps the imprecision and repetitiveness in the section on the heart in *Nachertanie* reflects Feofan's struggle with the problem of the inter-relatedness of the two above meanings of the term and the more general problems of excessive schematization.²²⁹ Some of Feofan's descriptions of the heart are almost identical with his definitions of the human person. He describes both as 'the focus of spiritual, 'soulish' and bodily powers.'²³⁰ Feofan (as we shall see in chapter V) is committed to these latter holistic definitions in all of his interpretations of the Hesychast tradition of prayer, and they surely present a much more consistent and coherent picture of the human person than some of his isolated statements regarding the heart and the soul in *Nachertaniye* and many of his ambivalent statements on the status of the human body.

B O D Y

The eastern ascetic writers are often deeply ambivalent in their attitude to the body and in their understanding of the body-soul relationship. John Climacus – the famous ascetical theologian of the East, much revered in Russia – following Gregory of Nazianzus,²³¹ exclaims in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*:

²²⁸ See esp. *Nach.*, p. 306 where he unites these two meanings of the term.

²²⁹ See *Ibid.*, pp. 306-325.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 306, cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

²³¹ *Or.* XIV, c. VI-VII, *PG* 35. 865.

By what rule or manner can I bind this body of mine? By what precedent can I judge him? Before I can bind him he is let loose, before I can condemn him I am reconciled to him, before I can punish him I bow down to him and feel sorry for him. How can I hate him when my nature disposes me to love him? How can I break away from him when I am bound to him forever?²³²

One possible reason for this ambivalence is the double inheritance –i.e., the Hebraic and the Hellenic – of the patristic authors: on the one hand, the Hebrew organic unity of the self, the idea of the self as equated with bodily life; and on the other hand, the Greek equation of the self with the soul. Another shaping factor is the Eastern Orthodox interpretation of the punitive consequences of the Fall: i.e., that which was added to human nature as a result of the lapse.²³³

Špidlík observes that while the Russian ascetics accepted from their ancient teachers a stern verdict on the body, their practices were not identical to those of their Eastern predecessors. He contends that on the whole, they did not go to such extremes in mortification of the flesh as were accepted among some ancient anchorites.²³⁴ Nevertheless, it must be said that there did exist some extreme cases of mortification of the flesh (‘*злострадания тела*’, described in the Greek tradition as *κακοπαθείας*²³⁵) and that the early monks of Kiev were known as ‘severe ascetics’.²³⁶

It is true that in the times of St. Sergius (1314/19 - 1392), as a rule, the monks in the Trans-Volga forests were healthy and strong men accustomed to hard physical

²³² *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 15, in *CWS*, p. 185.

²³³ See the section of this chapter on human nature.

²³⁴ Such as the extreme practices of St Anthony of Egypt (251-356) and St Pachomius (ca. 292-346) if we are to believe the incidents recorded in their hagiographies. See *Vita Antonii*, c. VII, PG 26, 852B and *Vita Pachomii*, n. 35 (c.V), also Zarin, pp. 642-643 and Špidlík, p. 12.

²³⁵ See Zarin, p. 615.

²³⁶ See *The Paterik of the Kievan caves monastery*, trans. by Muriel Heppell, with a pref. by Sir Dimitry Obolensky (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1989), especially on the self-denial of Feodosii, *Discourse* 8, pp. 33-35 and the Venerable Isaakii the Cave-dweller, *Discourse* 35, pp. 205- 207; see also Bolshakoff, *Russian Mystics*, p. 9.

work.²³⁷ (Even St Joseph of Volokolamsk, representing an alternative school of monastic discipline, taught that health and vitality of body and soul are special gifts of grace granted to us so that we ‘could work for God in truth and joy.’²³⁸) Yet life in the monasteries of both St. Sergius and Volokolamsk was extremely austere.²³⁹

However, nineteenth century ecclesiastical life in Russia was characterised by a growing rift between adherents of the two opposing interpretations of the value of asceticism and tradition: the defenders of the austere, ascetic Orthodoxy and the promoters of what Florovsky describes as the ‘lighter’ or ‘more lenient’ Orthodoxy. Among the latter were V.I. Askochensky, Dm. I. Rostislavov and Count Dm. A. Tolstoy), with Feofan, Bishop I. Bryanchaninov and N.V. Yelagin representing the former camp.²⁴⁰

Feofan knew personally and was deeply rooted in the richness and diversity of the ancient ascetic tradition with all its paradoxes and antinomies. In his discussions on the status of the body within the human person, he vacillates between holistic and dualistic notions, reflecting the typical ambivalence of his tradition.²⁴¹ Yet it must be made clear that Feofan’s ascetic scorn for the body in its fallen state (which has certain Platonic and Stoic overtones) is on the whole very different in nature and intent from the dualism of Plato. He insisted that the body, too, is to be redeemed and

²³⁷ See Ioann Kologrivov, *Ocherki po Istorii Russkoi Svyatosti* [Essays on the History of the Russian Sanctity] (Brussels: Zhizn’ s Bogom, 1961), p. 96.

²³⁸ Cited in Špidlík, pp. 12-13.

²³⁹ See for instance Bolshakoff, *Russian Mystics*, pp. 13 and 31.

²⁴⁰ *P.R.B.*, p. 400.

²⁴¹ In his treatment of the theme of the body in *Put’* Feofan makes references primarily to Climacus *The Ladder* (see for instance *Put’* p. 288), Abba Dorotheus (*Put’*, p. 289) and Isaac the Syrian, *Homily* 65, according to the numbering in P. Bedjan’s edition of the Syriac *First Part* (see *Put’*, pp. 248, 294, 296).

resurrected: 'The soul by itself is not a human person and life in the soul is an incomplete human life.'²⁴²

It is in *Nachertaniye* that we find Feofan's descriptions of the human body as not only 'the vessel of soul and spirit',²⁴³ but as 'the most immediate instrument of the soul',²⁴⁴ – a vehicle for the realisation of our earthly destiny and the means of educating ourselves for eternity.²⁴⁵ He speaks there of the body as 'the organ of intercourse with everything external',²⁴⁶ and 'the only means of the soul's manifestation externally in this world'.²⁴⁷ Yet he hastens to point out that, nevertheless, 'at the same time the body is something external to the soul – it is that which the soul must separate from itself and, regarding as its own, not to fuse with itself'.²⁴⁸

The conscious struggle with the flesh²⁴⁹ is the way of attaining true personhood – the liberation of the spirit. Feofan argues that when man fell, the soul became weak, lost control of itself, 'fell into the flesh and was merged with it to such an extent that

²⁴² See Feofan's comm. on I Corinthians 15.32 in *Korinf.*, p. 512. In this affirmation of the unity of the human individual Feofan seems to echo the famous words of Irenaeus of Lyons: 'Neither is the soul of itself a human person, but a soul of a person and a part of man.' See *Adv. haer.*, lib.V. c. 6, n. 1. Cf. also Sylvester Malevansky, *OPDB* III, pp. 194-195.

²⁴³ *Nach.*, p. 479. Cf. St Di^och^os of Photiki, 'On Spiritual Knowledge', §78 where he says: 'For the body is ... the soul's dwelling place.'

²⁴⁴ *Nach.*, p. 325.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 479.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 479. Cf. Symeon the New Theologian, 'Catechetical Discourse' XXVII (*Prepodobny Simeon* I, p. 242): 'While she [the soul] remains in this body - she sees through it and through it acquires the knowledge of material things.'

²⁴⁷ *Nach.*, pp. 325-326.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 326. Cf. St Peter of Damascus, 'The Fourth Stage of Contemplation', (*The Philokalia* III, p. 125): 'We must rule not only over external things but also over the body, through our non-attachment to it.'

²⁴⁹ Feofan does not distinguish and often uses interchangeably the two terms 'body' [*тело*] and 'flesh' [*плоть*]. See for instance *Nach.*, p. 326. For a helpful explanation of the distinction between these two terms in the writings of the *Philokalia* see *The Philokalia* I, p. 361.

it can be conscious of itself in no other manner but in and through the flesh.²⁵⁰ As a result of this ‘confluence [слияние] of consciousness with the body,’²⁵¹ the soul inevitably began to forget the needs of the spirit and to perceive as its own all the needs, instincts and cravings of the body.²⁵² But in the life of the saints the body truly becomes the means for attaining higher goals²⁵³: ‘By mortifying the body they restored sensation to their deadened spirit.’²⁵⁴

In his desire to stress the supremacy of the spirit Feofan imperceptibly swings to the other extreme of separating the incorporeal and corporal dimensions of the human person. Without referring specifically to any particular name in his tradition, Feofan says that the saints ‘regarded the body or animal life as an alien entity’²⁵⁵ and in their sleep they could achieve a state in which the ‘body would separate from their person and the commingling of consciousness with the body would terminate.’²⁵⁶ We find similar curious descriptions of the body as something external to the human person in a number of passages in *Chto est*. Thus, for instance, writing about the importance of preserving our soul in spiritual purity, Feofan comments:

I recall the words of St. Basil, who says: ‘*our* body, whatever we have besides our body, starting with clothes, is that which *surrounds* us.’²⁵⁷ And what are we? We are the soul (with the spirit). It is there that we need to withdraw,

²⁵⁰ *Nach.*, p. 326.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

²⁵² Cf. with the phrase in the text *On the Character of Men*, §95: ‘When the soul is in the body it is at once darkened and ravaged by pain and pleasure.’

²⁵³ By these ‘higher goals’ Feofan understands complete dispassion (*Put*, pp. 312-313) and contemplation (*Nach.*, pp. 382-383; *Chto est* ‘...’, p. 40).

²⁵⁴ *Nach.*, pp. 328.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 328-329.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 328-329. He even adds that ‘that is why departing to sleep they used to say [to their body]: ‘off with you, ass...’. See *Ibid.*. And in another instance: ‘Even when the body gets its necessary rest - your inward self should not get idle and inert along with it - but you should regard it as a working animal at rest.’ See *Ibid.*, p. 482.

²⁵⁷ *Hom. in illud attende*, 3, PG 31, 204A. Cf. also Špidlík, p. 11.

having detached ourselves from all that exists outside of us, and from the body itself.²⁵⁸

Other passages convey even more strongly the Platonic idea that the union between body and soul is not beneficial for the soul, and bodily existence is not the ideal mode of being:

Do your very best to lighten the flesh and refine its corpulence. By this the soul will free itself from the constraints of matter, it will become more agile and lighter. The material body predominating over the soul, communicates to her its immobility and coldness.²⁵⁹

In a letter to one of his correspondents he makes a rather striking statement about bodily existence:

We, remaining here, weep for the departed, but they experience relief right away: that state is more pleasing. Those who experienced 'clinical death' and then were brought back to the body found it to be a very uncomfortable dwelling place.²⁶⁰

This is different from what we find in Palamas' *Topics of Natural and Theological Science*, in which the author writes: 'Through the spirit the soul possesses such a natural union of love with its particular body that it never wants to abandon it.'²⁶¹

And it is hard to reconcile the above statements with Feofan's own presumed injunction that 'we ought to live as God created us'²⁶² and with his remark in his commentary on I Corinthians that 'the soul by itself is not a human person and life in the soul is an incomplete human life.'²⁶³

²⁵⁸ *Chto est* '... , p. 54.

²⁵⁹ *Put* ' , pp. 107-108.

²⁶⁰ *Sobraniye Pisem* I, 181.

²⁶¹ 'Topics', §38 (*The Philokalia* IV, 363).

²⁶² *Chto est* '... , p. 8.

²⁶³ Com. on I Corinthians 15.32 in *Korinf.*, p. 512.

Feofan's inconsistency in his attitude to the body and his struggle with this irreconcilable dilemma of the Eastern ascetic tradition is further illustrated by passages which offer a positive portrayal of the intimate 'bonding' of body and soul, and of the resulting 'inclusion' of the body in 'the personality of the soul' (a notion suggestive of Leontius of Byzantium). For instance he writes in *Chto est*, 'Since, through the most intimate association with the body, she [the soul] accepted it [the body] into her personality [личность], she regards all the bodily needs as her own.'²⁶⁴ However, just a few pages further on, Feofan speaks of the body as 'a coarse curtain behind which the soul is hiding.'²⁶⁵ Yet again, one needs to recognise that Feofan was not a dogmatician in the Western sense of the word and was never interested in constructing a speculative theological system. His writing is often unsystematic and repetitive. In some instances, pursuing a homiletical purpose, he repeats certain common sayings of his predecessors simply to make his point.

The same inconsistency which one discovers in his reflections on the body – soul relationship, one also finds in his teaching on handling the natural bodily needs. We have already observed that in *Chto est* each constituent of man's being – the spirit, the soul and the body – is described as having its peculiar 'powers' and needs as well as specific ways to fulfil them.²⁶⁶ However, in the whole corpus of Feofan's writings, calls to inhibit and constrain the flesh, to suppress and 'curtail the fulfilment of the

²⁶⁴ *Chto est* '... , p. 16. Cf. Leontius of Byzantium who also taught that the body is 'enhypostasized into the soul'. See his *Contra Nestorium et Eutychium*, PG 86. 1277CD. For the development of this theme in V. Lossky see his *MT*, pp. 122-123.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²⁶⁶ *Chto est* '... , p. 7.

most natural needs of the body,²⁶⁷ alternate with appeals to moderation and balance.²⁶⁸

Thus in *Nachertaniye* he instructs that since the body ‘does not have a separate purpose apart from us’²⁶⁹ and does not ‘possess independence within the human person,’²⁷⁰ one should master one’s body and exercise dominion over it. At the same time, he admonishes his readers that as ‘the most immediate instrument of the soul,’ the body is worthy of great attention and watchful care. In *Nachertaniye* one also finds perhaps the most balanced outline of the major duties of a Christian to his body.²⁷¹ This outline reflects the ancient principles found in Evagrius, Diadochus and Maximus:

- a) a Christian must preserve the life of the body;²⁷²
- b) he should train and exercise his body, maintaining its vitality, strength and agility;
- c) he should always direct the training and tempering of the body towards the aims of Christian perfection, keeping it in constant alertness, under ‘healthy pressure’ and engaged in activity.²⁷³

It must also be acknowledged that Feofan consistently taught (as did Palamas before him) that ‘by nature the body is clean.’²⁷⁴ He advocated a balanced approach to moral

²⁶⁷ Feofan, cited in Smirnov, p. 109, see also *Put*, pp. 247-250.

²⁶⁸ *Nach.*, p. 327, also *Sobraniye Pisem*, IV, p. 73. Cf. St Diadochus, ‘On Spiritual Knowledge’, §45: ‘We should ... regulate our food according to the condition of the body, so that it is appropriately disciplined when in good health and adequately nourished when weak. The body of one pursuing the spiritual way must not be enfeeble’ and *ibid.*, §56: ‘Eve is the first to teach us that sight, taste and the other senses, when used without moderation, distract the heart from its remembrance of God.’ See also Zarin, pp. 650-651.

²⁶⁹ *Nach.*, p. 480.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 480. Cf. Symeon the New Theologian, ‘Catechetical Discourse’, XXXXIII [Prepodobny Simeon I, 350]: ‘The body of itself does not have a will or a determination of its own.’

²⁷¹ *Nach.*, pp. 480-482.

²⁷² Cf. Evagrius, *Extracts from the Texts on Watchfulness*, §1: ‘A monk ... should treat his body as if it was going to live for many years.’

²⁷³ Cf. St. Maximus, ‘Fourth Century on Love’, § 63 (*The Philokalia* II, 108): ‘Engage the body in ascetic practice according to its capacity, but apply your whole effort to the intellect.’

²⁷⁴ *Put*, p. 228. Cf. Palamas, ‘In Defence of Those who Devoutly Practice a Life of Stillness’, ‘Answer’ §1 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 332).

purity, insisting that it is possible to achieve it in married life as well as in virginity,²⁷⁵ though he regarded the latter state as superior to the former and spoke of the ‘spiritual heights’ of the virgin state. It is also significant that in his discussion of virginity he distinguished between ‘bodily’ purity and inward moral purity – i.e., the purity of the heart.²⁷⁶ The overall balance of Feofan’s approach to the body and his concern to stress that ‘the body by nature is clean’ and that ‘our nature in its pure form is worthy of love’ definitely set him apart from the pessimism, extreme rigidity, and the general suspicion towards life associated with the asceticism of Ignati Bryanchaninov.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ *Put*, 250. In one of his letters (№ 595) Feofan says: ‘Man’s desire for woman and woman’s desire for man is natural.’ See *Sobraniye Pisem*, IV, p. 73. Cf. also Palamas, ‘To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia’, §20 (*The Philokalia* IV, pp. 300-301). Cf. Palamas in Feofan’s *Dobrotolyubiye*, V, p. 260.

²⁷⁶ *Put*, p. 250. Feofan’s reflections on the chastity of soul and body demonstrate his highly personalistic and holistic understanding of this aspect of Christian ethics and his creative development of the insights of his teacher Avsenev and such of his notable predecessors as John Climacus. Feofan taught that chastity represents the sphere wherein the duties of body and soul are interdependent. Violation of the principles of chaste living inevitably leads to degeneration of both. He believed that sins against chastity deplete the supplies of energy in the nervous system and consequently damage the vitality of the human body. See *Nach.*, p. 482. Cf. Climacus, *The Ladder*, Step 15. Chaste living, Feofan insisted in *Nachertaniye*, is the condition of vitality of the body, whereas violation of chastity ‘inflicts suffering on the human person’ [including, specifically, the potential of the nervous system]. *Nach.*, p. 482. In bodily unchastity (sexual promiscuity) people lower themselves and become debased to the level of animal shamelessness, losing any sense of human dignity. In the unchastity of the soul – by which Feofan meant obsessive infatuation – one comes out of one’s self and, lives as if in another person. *Ibid.*, p. 483. This obsessive desire can reach such proportions that a person mentally identifies himself totally with the object of his passion. *Ibid.* Hence, the unchastity of the soul is the loss of one’s individual identity, an infringement of the sovereignty of one’s personhood and individuality. The similarity, between these Feofan’s reflections and the development of the same theme in Avsenev is striking. Speaking of obsessive infatuation Avsenev also observes: ‘Это последнее стремление разительно представляется в тех сумасшедших от любви, которых душа как бы навсегда оставила свою личность и облеклась личностью любимого лица.’ See Avsenev, *Iz Zapisok*, p. 147.

²⁷⁷ See for instance the recently published Bryanchaninov’s brochure on human nature *Slovo o cheloveke* (St. Petersburg: Yeparkhial’noye dukhovnoye uchilishche, 1995), pp. 27-28, 68-70, esp. 62-63 where he expounds his negative teaching on the human body; see also his *Slovo o smerti*, 1863 found in the 3rd volume of his *Asketicheskiye opyty* (Moscow, 1993) reprint, and *The arena : an offering to contemporary monasticism*, trans. from the Russian by Archimandrite Lazarus, intro. by Archimandrite Kallistos (Ware) (Jordanville, N.Y. : Holy Trinity Monastery, 1991).

Summarising what our general sketch of Feofan's anthropology has shown, we need first of all to emphasise the eclectic character of Feofan's teaching on the human person as well as his strong commitment to a holistic definition of personhood. We also need to note Feofan's expressly pneumatic model of the human person and his stress on personal uniqueness as founded in self-consciousness and self-determination. In his desire to defend the Christian view of the human person in the face of materialistic and Darwinian interpretations, Feofan insisted on the necessity of the distinction between the human spirit [πνεῦμα] and the human soul [ψυχή] while recognising the inadequacy and relativity of these terms. Following the majority of the Greek fathers, he believed the human spirit to be the seat of the *Imago Dei* and consequently located such fundamental characteristics of the human person as consciousness and self-determination not in the soul but in the spirit as the supreme integrating agent of the human composite. Thus, in his teaching, the human spirit is not only the seat of the divine image, but, by the same token, it is the basis of uniqueness or the foundation of spiritual individuality. The spirit has the power of manifesting itself in each human being in a unique way. It also becomes a vehicle for communion with God and fellow men and, as a result, serves as a foundation for the corporate or *sobornoe* dimension of the human person. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that Feofan's notion of the spirit as the seat of the divine image is in disagreement with such Greek Fathers as Irenaeus and Palamas, who insisted that the body and the soul together constitute the image of God. It also contradicts Feofan's own equally strong affirmation of the human person as the 'confluence and the indissoluble

unity of spirit, soul and body' and his assertion that the 'soul includes the body in its personality.' We have seen that Feofan's vacillation between holistic and dualistic notions reflects the ambivalence endemic to his tradition, yet his ascetic resentment of the body in its fallen state (which clearly has a certain Platonic and Stoic tinge) is on the whole different in nature and intent from the dualism of Plato because, according to Feofan, the body too is to be permeated by the Spirit, redeemed and resurrected.

Feofan's statements on the 'inspiring' of the soul [*одуховление души*], especially when viewed within the context of his cosmology, represent one of the examples of his synthesis of patristic themes with certain Leibnizian notions and Schubertian teaching on the 'spirit in the process of becoming.' The Pauline emphasis on the spirit, the Ps.-Macarian motif of the 'Spirit filled soul' and Schubert's motif of *Geistseele* thus converge. Feofan seems to have been borrowing not only cosmological, but also psychological elements from Schubert and his Russian disciple Avsenev. We have not been able to find either in Ps.-Macarius, or in the later authors within the Ps.-Macarian tradition the notion of the 'transformation' of the 'animal soul' into the 'human soul' or the teaching on the soul and spirit as different 'degrees' of development of 'one and the same spiritual reality.' This is clearly a Schellingian motif which has been ignored by Špidlík and other students of Feofan.²⁷⁸

Yet, it must be stressed, that while an analysis of the conceptual basis of Feofan's view of the human person is important for our further consideration of his teaching on the divine-human communion (to which we shall turn in the next chapter), he himself regarded his speculative reflections on the human soul as unsatisfactory,

²⁷⁸ Florovsky is the only one who makes a brief mention of this aspect of Feofan's teaching in his

and, in view of the nature of his writings, they certainly do not represent the most significant aspect of his teaching. His 'philosophical instruments' were limited, while 'practical' concerns of spiritual renewal were much more pressing.

CHAPTER V

INDIVIDUAL PERSON IN COMMUNION:

THE UNIQUENESS OF EACH DIVINE-HUMAN ENCOUNTER

As for the application of the principles [of asceticism] there must be a great variety of approaches due to the endless diversity of inward states. It is absolutely impossible to establish one rule for all. ... And it is for this reason that asceticism, being unitary in itself, manifests itself externally through an infinite diversity of forms.

Feofan, *Put' ko Spaseniyu*, p. 265.

How essential is Feofan's tripartite anthropological model for his personalist interpretation of the Hesychast teaching on divine-human communion? How does Feofan reconcile his teaching on total submission to the divine will with his stress on individual freedom and distinctiveness? We have seen that at the heart of Feofan's understanding of the human person lies his dynamic concept of the spirit as the 'sovereign' of soul and body and as the 'temple filled with the Triune God.' Thus, life in the spirit is portrayed as the foreordained norm – the ideal mode of human existence. Personhood rooted in such attributes of the spirit as consciousness and self-determination is an expressly relational category in Feofan. God's Spirit and man's spirit have a special 'kinship,' as well as both the desire and capacity for intimate fellowship and mutual 'co-inherence.' Hence, liberation of the spirit and conscious struggle with the passions of the flesh, which quench the spirit and deprive it of communion with God, is the way of attaining true personhood. Feofan unfolds this

premise fully in the exposition of the central theme of his spiritual teaching – the theme of *Богочеловечие* (divine-human communion). It is this theme of divine-human communion, as Feofan presents it, which we shall study in this chapter. We shall see how Feofan develops this theme as a highly personal interaction between divine grace and the human capacity for self-determination which responds to the prompting of grace in two major acts of freedom: the act of conscious spiritual awakening or *metanoia*, which leads to genuine self-knowledge, and the act of self-surrender, which leads to acquiring a ‘Godlike nature’ and living ‘in God.’ We shall also see how Feofan develops these principles of Hesychast teaching on inter-penetration of the human and the divine in their application to the rich diversity of individual personalities, stressing the crucial importance of the development of individual consciousness in one’s unique experience of communion with God.

I. COMMUNION IN THE SACRAMENTS

The crucial role of the human will

How does the Holy Spirit exert His sanctifying influence on an individual person? By which of her or his personal faculties or powers does a person collaborate with the Divine Agent? ‘The successful working of the Spirit,’ writes Ps.-Macarius, ‘depends on man’s will.’¹ He continues: ‘The will of man, therefore, is like a support inserted

¹ H. 37, §10.

into his nature. When the will is lacking, God Himself does nothing.’² In Feofan’s reflections on the nature and the functions of the human will, one finds a compelling development of this Orthodox teaching on the interaction [*συνεργία*] of grace and human freedom, as we shall see later in this chapter.

In accordance with his tripartite structure, Feofan distinguished between *freedom* (or the power of self-determination),³ which belongs to the human spirit, and the *will*,⁴ which he classified as an attribute of the soul.⁵ He held that ‘every free action, generated in consciousness and freedom (hence in the spirit), falls into the soul where it is prepared for realisation and then implemented by such powers of the soul as reason, will and emotion.’⁶ Feofan located the will in the desiring sphere of the soul. He described it as ‘the mistress’ of all the powers of soul and body and of the whole life of the human person.⁷ He believed that ardour (‘the thirst for action’) is located at the core of the will.⁸ The soul exercises free choice through the will by reacting to desires within itself. After the Fall, while ‘our nature remained the same, and the parts and the powers of our being stayed the same, with the same laws and needs, *our consciousness and freedom bent their steps in the wrong direction.*’ This negative inclination brought about the disorder of the parts and the degradation of the

² Ibid.

³ In Greek, *ὑπερθεξουσσιότης*, and its related patristic concept of *γνώμη* which is defined as a ‘mode of use’ of the human faculty of willing which belongs to the person himself and not to his nature. See Thunberg, pp. 213-219.

⁴ In Greek, *θέλησις* or *θέλημα φυσικόν* - natural will as in Maximus, see PG 91. 12C.

⁵ For a comprehensive survey of the Eastern patristic teaching on the human will and the capacity of self-determination, see Zarin, pp. 79-85.

⁶ *Put*, p. 225. Cf. St. John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, PG 94. 945 AB.

⁷ *Chto est* ‘...’, pp. 23, 25.

⁸ *Chto est* ‘...’, p. 23.

powers of our being, engendering such destructive forces as passions⁹ and self-will [*самость*].¹⁰ Feofan emphasises the fact that this process of fragmentation and the emergence of self-will with all its ‘buttresses’ is also unique to each individual [*у одного преимущественно в одном роде, у другого в другом*] and that self-will manifests itself in infinite diversity of forms [*в многообразнейших видах*].¹¹

Relying on the teaching of Diadochus, Feofan insists that ‘*energising grace*’ liberates the heart from its former bonds, setting it free to choose a new kind of life.¹² Feofan understands this to be the ‘highest point of the activity of energising grace. It breaks everything that is old and corrupt in the consciousness and the emotion[s], and vividly portrays only the new and the best, leaving man in that condition, astonished and free to choose the new or to revert again to the old.’¹³ When the desire for God and free searching is thus awakened by an action from outside, grace ‘descends through the sacraments’. Uniting with the liberated capacity for self-determination, it ‘gives birth to a powerful zeal.’¹⁴ Feofan regards the moment of the merging of sacramental grace with the human will as the moment of birth of the new Christian life.¹⁵

⁹ *Chto est* ‘...’, pp. 71-72.

¹⁰ In Greek, *φιλαυτία*. See, *Put*’, pp. 89-91, *Chto est* ‘...’, p.74. Cf. also Zarin, p. 341.

¹¹ See *Put*’, p. 91.

¹² In *Put*’ (pp. 180-181) Feofan illustrates this by a passage from Diadochus where he says that ‘grace at first conceals its presence in those who have been baptised, waiting to see which way the soul inclines; but when the whole man has turned towards the Lord, it then reveals to the heart its presence there with a feeling which words cannot express, once again waiting to see which way the soul inclines.’ See ‘On Spiritual Knowledge’, §85 (*The Philokalia* I, p. 285).

¹³ *Put*’, pp. 84-85.

¹⁴ *Put*’, p. 14.

¹⁵ *Put*’, p. 17.

The initial task of grace: restoration of the capacity for free choice towards God

Through grace God in His entirety penetrates the saints in their entirety, and the saints in their entirety penetrate God entirely, exchanging the whole of Him for themselves, and acquiring Him alone as the reward of their ascent towards Him.

St Gregory Palamas, 'The Declaration of the Holy Mountain', §2 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 421)¹⁶

All of Feofan's spiritual writings, and especially *Put' ko Spaseniyu*, abound in descriptions of the operation and the effects of grace on the being of man. They are full of compelling illustrations of the Orthodox understanding of the intimate inter-penetration and delicate interplay of grace and human freedom. Due to the pastoral nature of his writings, Feofan does not provide a formal definition of his concept of grace, although in *Put'* we come across his distinction between such varied forms of grace as:

- 1) the 'universal prevenient' [*всеобщая предваряющая*] or 'summoning' [*зовущая*] grace, which is granted to those who have never been energised or illumined [*возбуждаемы*] by it;
- 2) the 'extraordinary actions of saving grace' which 'awaken' sinners dwelling in sinful sleep;
- 3) and the 'energising' [*возбуждающая*] grace which is acquired by such 'ordinary means' as the sacraments.¹⁷

Feofan's description of grace as 'energising' [*возбуждающая*] is fitting and is also typical of the Eastern understanding of grace as God's 'uncreated energies' or

¹⁶ Cf. St Maximus, *Ambigua* 7, 20, 41 PG 91. 1076C, 1088C, 1237D-1240A, 1308B.

personal 'acts of his power' in relation to human beings, according to the Palamite doctrine of divine energies.¹⁸ (It must be noted, however, that this interpretation of grace as uncreated energies is nowhere explicit in Feofan's work.)

In *Put* Feofan is greatly concerned to show the dynamic nature of grace and to stress that the operation of grace is a personal initiative on the part of God.¹⁹ Following the Ps.-Macarian tradition, he describes grace as the Holy Spirit's descending into the heart of man, and as a 'fire of zeal with power':

Let no one dream that he can himself bring about such life-giving power: one must pray about it and be ready to accept it. The fire of zeal with power – that is the grace of the Lord. The Spirit of God, descending into the heart, begins to act within it not only with consuming zeal, but also with all-efficacious zeal.²⁰

The Christian life is not a natural life and its beginning is, therefore, an event of a supernatural origin.²¹ Yet, as we have already observed in the previous section, the action of the Holy Spirit which brings about the 'all-efficacious zeal' is not

¹⁷ *Put*, p. 82-83.

¹⁸ See Kallistos Ware, 'The Hesychasts: Gregory of Sinai, Gregory Palamas, Nicolas Cabasilas' in *The Study of Spirituality*, ed. by Cheslyn Jones, et al. (London: SPCK, 1986), p. 251, where he observes that the 'Palamite doctrine of energies is in fact an Eastern theology of grace.' For a thorough discussion of this subject see John Meyendorff, *St Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), pp. 86-118. Cf. also Philo's distinction between God's *ousia* [essence] which is inaccessible to us and his powers or *dynamis* through which He relates to us, in A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, p. 21. Cf. M. Jugie, 'Palamas Grégoire' and 'Palamite (Controverse)', *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, edited by A. Vacant, et al. (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1932), 11(2): 1777-1818, see also I. Trethowan, 'Lossky on Mystical Theology', *Downside Review* 92 (Fall 1974): 239-247.

¹⁹ In his commentary on the famous passage in Romans 3.24 'justified by his grace as a gift,' Feofan says that 'grace here means [God's] loving-kindness [благость и человеколюбие]. ... By grace is meant that the source or the cause of the economy of our salvation is in God; and that redemption is the means to that.' See *Tolkovanie poslaniya sv. Apostola Pavla k Rimlyanam*, 2nd edn (Moscow: Afonsky Russky Panteleimonov monastyr', 1890), p. 227. Hereafter *Rim*.

²⁰ *Put*, p. 14. Cf. Ps.-Macarius, H. 26, §23 (CWS, p. 172).

²¹ Cf. Palamas, 'The Declaration of the Holy Mountain', §2 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 420) where he emphatically states that 'If anyone declares that perfect union with God is accomplished simply in an imitative and relative fashion, without the deifying grace of the Spirit and merely in the manner of persons who share the same disposition and who love one another, ... then he must know that he has fallen unawares into the delusion of the Messalians.'

accomplished without the co-operation of the free will of man. God's grace awakens free desire within a person and provides him with the drive to engage in ascetic exploits of purification.²²

Feofan saw the first task of grace as the healing and re-orientation of consciousness and as the restoration of the capacity for a free Godward choice.²³ He believed that, at the stimulation of grace, the old order of self-pleasing and sinful life which had been established in the consciousness would be 'instantaneously' destroyed and the new, better divine order would be shown to the spirit of sinful man.²⁴ Feofan was also eager to stress the all-embracing nature of God's grace. Commenting on the statement 'through whom we have obtained access to this grace' (Romans 5.2), Feofan explains that the phrase '*to this grace*' embraces the whole economy of salvation in the Lord – all spiritual blessings granted by faith: the knowledge of God, the blessings of God's grace in the sacraments, strength for every good work, God's special protection and communion with God and all heavenly forces.'²⁵ Yet from all these manifestations of grace, Feofan singles out the sacraments as the most direct means. His spirituality, like the spirituality of Diadochus, is deeply sacramental. Thus, to the question of where and how to acquire grace which conceives new life, Feofan replies that it is 'in the sacraments that the acquisition of grace and the sanctification

²² See *Put*, p. 14.

²³ *Put*, p. 226.

²⁴ *Put*, p. 84. Explaining this further in *Put* (p. 179) Feofan cites Diadochus who says that the 'Holy Spirit at the outset gives the soul a full and conscious taste of God's sweetness, so that the intellect will know exactly of what the final reward of the spiritual life consists.' See 'On Spiritual Knowledge', §90 (*The Philokalia* I, p. 289.)

²⁵ *Rim.*, p. 289, italics in Feofan's text.

of our being by it is performed.’²⁶ For Feofan, then, the sacraments are the divinely ordained means of ‘deification’²⁷: ‘Here [in the sacraments] we submit to divine action or present to God our degenerate nature and by His action He changes [претворяет] it.’²⁸ Feofan taught that of all the sacraments there are two which are primarily related to the beginning of the Christian life; namely, the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. As we shall see in our next section, in his teaching on God’s working in the soul through the sacrament of baptism and on the spiritual effects of baptism on the human person Feofan is creatively developing some of the central themes and insights found in the teachings of Diadochus and Ps.- Macarius.²⁹

Baptism: ‘mechanical’ change or an event of an ethical nature?

‘Grace, indeed, is unceasingly present and is rooted in us and mingled with our nature from our earliest years. It is as something natural and real which adheres to a person as though it formed one substance. Still, it operates in a person in various ways, depending on one’s cooperation as far as this is given.’

Ps.-Macarius, *Homily* 8, § 2.

Which specific emphases are especially significant in Feofan’s interpretation of the ancient Orthodox teaching on the role of grace in baptism? What crucial role did Feofan assign to the human will and how consistent was he in maintaining his personalist interpretation of baptism? Feofan identifies baptism with regeneration or

²⁶ *Put*’, p. 17.

²⁷ Means of attaining *theosis* or becoming a sharer in the divine nature. Cf. Palamas, ‘The Declaration of the Holy Mountain’, §2 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 420).

²⁸ *Put*’, p. 17.

²⁹ See for example *Put*’, pp. 20, 178-179.

new birth³⁰ and develops his teaching on an ethical and psychological plane. In baptism the Christian becomes a new creature.³¹ In *Put* Feofan refers to the comparison employed by St. Paul in Romans 6.4, in which St. Paul compares all the baptised to the resurrected Saviour. Feofan states that in this passage St. Paul means that the baptised acquire 'the same kind of radiant and renewed being as the humanity which appeared in the Lord Jesus through His resurrection in glory.'³² Referring to II Corinthians 5.15 and Romans 6.4, 6, 10, Feofan claims that it is 'by the power of baptism' that the whole activity of man is re-oriented from self and sin to God and the truth.³³ Although the bent towards sin³⁴ in our 'deranged and fallen nature' is not completely eliminated at baptism, it no longer has authority over us.³⁵ Pointing to the explanation of the effects of baptism offered by Diadochus of Photiki,³⁶ Feofan states that, after baptism, grace moves into the heart and rules there. As for sin, it is now 'driven out of the heart as an enemy from a fortress and it settles outside in the parts of the body whence he makes his multiple periodical raids [*'действуем раздробленно набегами'*].'³⁷

It will be helpful to distinguish here between the Eastern Orthodox understanding of what actually happens at baptism and the medieval Catholic notion

³⁰ *Put*, 19. Cf. Diadochus, 'On Spiritual Knowledge', §76 where he speaks of new birth 'through baptism' (*The Philokalia* I, p. 279).

³¹ *Put*, p.18. Cf. II Corinthians 5.17.

³² *Put*, p.19.

³³ *Put*, p.19. This is in agreement with the stand taken by Diadochus against the position of the Messalians, who taught that sin and evil dwell in our hearts even after baptism; see Diadochus, 'On Spiritual Knowledge', § 76 (*The Philokalia* I, p. 279). For a helpful evaluation of the two positions see A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, p. 125-131.

³⁴ Literally '*сила, влекущая ко греху*' [the power drawing to sin], see *Put*, p. 20.

³⁵ *Put*, pp.19-20.

³⁶ See Diadochus, 'On Spiritual Knowledge', § 76 (*The Philokalia* I, p. 279) where he asserts that 'from the moment that we are reborn through baptism, the demon is outside, [but] grace is within'.

of ‘habitual grace’ as a supernatural substance imparted to the soul *gratia gratis faciens*, or ‘grace which makes pleasing’: the notion which is attributed to Aquinas.³⁸ For Feofan, baptism as a new birth is a restoration of the human spirit and ‘the return of supremacy to the spirit over the soul and the body.’³⁹ In his thorough and discerning study, Stragorodsky explains that according to the Orthodox teaching, ‘the righteousness of the newly baptised consists only in the restoration of the original disposition [*первозданного расположения*] of the soul and of the whole nature of man in general.’⁴⁰ Claiming Feofan’s support, Stragorodsky totally dismisses the possibility of representing the righteousness received at baptism in terms of ‘some fourth power which would settle in the soul and act there apart from man himself.’⁴¹ Stragorodsky cites Feofan’s exposition of Romans 6.4 as characteristic of the Orthodox understanding of the new birth as an event of an ethical nature, which takes place with the free and conscious participation of man himself: ‘The renewal of life in man is not a *mechanical* process (sin is not driven out of the soul by God’s grace as something independent from the will of man and it is not replaced by righteousness, also apart from the will, as Stefan Yavorsky tried to explain this⁴² - S.S.); but it takes place in baptism ‘*according to the inner willing changes or decisions*, because *the*

³⁷ *Put*’, p. 20.

³⁸ See his *Quaestiones Disputatae*, XXVII *de Veritate*, I, 69, 127, 300, 522.

³⁹ *Pis'ma k odnomu litsu*, p.76, cited in S. Stragorodsky, *Pravoslavnoe ucheniye o spasenii*, 2nd edn (Kazan’: Tipo-litografiya imperatorskogo universiteta, 1898), p. 201. Hereafter Stragorodsky.

⁴⁰ Stragorodsky, p. 201.

⁴¹ Stragorodsky, p. 201.

⁴² Stefan Yavorsky (1658-1722) known for his Latin learning and pro-Catholic views was *locum tenens* of the office of Patriarch during the reign of Peter the Great. On Yavorsky’s theology and ecclesiastical activity see Yu.F.Samarin, ‘Stefan Yavorsky and Feofan Prokopovich’ in *Sochineniya*, V (Moscow: [n.p.], 1880).

*baptised has chosen thus to live.*⁴³ Yet while Feofan contested the conception of the operation of grace as ‘mechanical’, some of his own statements on the subject (inspired by passages in Ps.-Macarius⁴⁴) can be interpreted to mean that he understood the nature of sacramental grace as a supernatural ‘element’ which in baptism is ‘fused’ or ‘melted into’ our ‘natural make-up’. In fact, in *Chto est*’ he directly states: ‘[Baptism] commingles divine grace with our nature, in such a way that the baptised comes out of the font as a manufactured article from a workshop, as, for instance, a handbell in which silver is fused with copper.’⁴⁵ ‘In Holy Baptism a new element [смесь] is fused to our natural make-up, a supernatural element which remains hidden and acts hiddenly within us.’⁴⁶ This description of baptismal grace as an ‘element’⁴⁷ seems to contradict his other dynamic descriptions of grace as the ‘energising acts of God’s Spirit’ and undermine the force of his highly personalist interpretations of the relationship between grace (as divine action) and the human freedom referred to above.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, while Feofan taught that this ‘hidden grace’ reworks everything that is natural in us and ‘gives to us much directly from itself,’ it should never be overlooked that he also stressed that its activity and the displays of its power depend heavily on our willingness to interact with it.⁴⁹ He

⁴³ *Rim.*, p. 334, cited in Stragorodsky, p. 199.

⁴⁴ See for instance his statement in H. 8, §2 which I cite at the beginning of this section.

⁴⁵ *Chto est*, p. 92.

⁴⁶ *Chto est*, p. 92. Feofan also writes of the sacramental grace of baptism being periodically ‘renovated’ or ‘replenished’ [подновляется] within us through communion with the Holy Mysteries of the Body and the Blood’ see *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴⁷ Cf. Ps.-Macarius, H.8 §2.

⁴⁸ In Diadochus one also finds the descriptions of grace as being ‘hidden’ within the human person. Yet Diadochus develops this theme in terms clearly denoting a relationship between divine and human persons, cf. ‘On Spiritual Knowledge’, § 77 (*The Philokalia* I, p. 279).

⁴⁹ *Chto est*, pp. 93-94. Cf. St. Symeon Metaphrastes who writes: ‘Grace does not make a man incapable of sin by forcibly and compulsorily laying hold of his will but, though present, allows him

likened our co-operation with grace to the process of friction in the physical realm by which we can generate electrical current and ignite fire⁵⁰ and emphasised that God enters free creatures only when they yield themselves to Him. When they shut themselves off, He does not, however, violate 'their self-determination'. God continues to guard and sustain them but does not enter inside.⁵¹

Infant baptism and individual self-determination

The same concern to safeguard the principle of individual self-determination lies at the basis of Feofan's bold interpretation of the operation of grace within the infant who is not yet 'conscious of himself and is not acting personally' in the sacrament of baptism. Feofan creatively develops the Diadochian theme of the delicate, pedagogical ways of grace which, in the words of Diadochus, leads the soul 'from ignorance to spiritual knowledge';⁵² and of the providence of God, who as a mother hiding from a child, 'recedes in order to educate us.'⁵³ Feofan goes a step back to the stage of infancy and reflects on the same theme as though by inference from the teachings of Diadochus:

Grace descends on the soul of the infant and *alone* produces everything in it as if freedom is also involved. Grace works exclusively on the basis of the future willing decision of the child, who, though not yet conscious of himself and not acting personally, upon reaching conscious age will readily dedicate himself to God; and having discovered within himself the workings of grace, will accept it of his own desire and will be glad that it dwells within him; that he will give thanks for what has been done on his behalf and will confess that, had he been granted consciousness and freedom, he would not have acted or wished

freedom of choice, so as to make clear whether the man's own will inclines to virtue or to evil.' See his 'Paraphrase of the Homilies of St Makarios of Egypt', part VI, 'The Freedom of the Intellect', § 118 (*The Philokalia* III, pp. 337-338).

⁵⁰ *Chto est* '...', p. 94.

⁵¹ *Chto est* '...', p. 74.

⁵² *On Spiritual Knowledge*, §69.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, §§86-87.

otherwise.⁵⁴

It is important to notice here that while the change effected by baptismal grace is understood as an actual change of the quality of spiritual life,⁵⁵ the beginning and the outcome of the work of grace in Feofan's teaching is dependent on such highly contingent factors as the assurance [*uverenie*]⁵⁶ of the godparents or the parents at the time of baptism, the future 'free and conscious' decision of the child and the crucial role of parents during the formative period between baptism and the beginning of the age of consciousness.⁵⁷

Feofan taught that in infancy the spiritual life, 'conceived by the grace of baptism,' acts in a person, 'as though without his knowledge,' ... as though it is not his own'; but 'from the moment of consciousness and self-determination it becomes his own not only by grace but also by freedom.'⁵⁸ He also pointed out that the infant's life of grace is 'mysteriously acted upon' not only by the sacraments, but also by the whole 'churchliness'⁵⁹ combined with the godliness of the parents.⁶⁰ Yet he attached decisive significance to the influence of parents on the soul of the infant and warned that 'all those extremely strong barriers, the powerful and effective spiritual acts, can

⁵⁴ *Put*', p. 21. Cf. St. Peter of Damascus who expressed the idea that the guidance could possibly be accomplished by the 'angel that is given in divine baptism to guard the soul of every believer, to act as his conscience . . .', Book 1, 'The Treasury of Divine Knowledge' (*The Philokalia* III, p. 76).

⁵⁵ Feofan further states that 'the new disposition poured in by the grace of baptism is not only mental or imputed but is real, that it is the same as a seed of life.' See *Put*', p. 24.

⁵⁶ *Put*', p. 21-22.

⁵⁷ *Put*', pp. 23-24, 60-61. Cf. Alexander Schmemmann who brings the teaching on infant baptism into the context of the corporate ecclesiastical community, emphasizing the corporate nature of the decision for infant's baptism. See his *Vodoyu i Dukhom* [Of Water and the Spirit], tr. from English (Paris, 1986), p. 91.

⁵⁸ *Put*', p. 22.

⁵⁹ By the influence of 'churchliness' [*церковность*] on young children Feofan meant carrying them frequently to the church, putting them to the cross, to the Gospel and to icons, see *Put*', p. 26. This belief in the ability of icons to serve as a vehicle of the Spirit is indicative of the Orthodox understanding of matter not as evil, but as 'Spirit-bearing'.

be destroyed and deprived of fruition by the unbelief, negligence, wickedness and ungodly life of the parents.’⁶¹ Thus, in the final analysis, according to Feofan, it is the upbringing [*воспитание*] which determines whether the baptismal grace is lost or retained. ‘The upbringing is the cause of everything good and evil.’⁶² ‘The home upbringing is the root and the basis for everything that follows.’⁶³ Feofan clearly emphasises here the ‘nurture factor’ over against the will and the genetic heritage of the child and even over against his notion of the ‘grace of baptism.’⁶⁴ This stance demonstrates a good measure of psychological realism and pedagogical astuteness on the part of Feofan, as well as a concern to safeguard the principle of individual self-determination in the whole issue of infant baptism. One observes the same emphasis on the dynamism, fragility and contingency of divine-human co-operation in his development of the Orthodox teaching on the Eucharist.

The mystery of the Eucharist and the initiative and the will of the individual

The second sacrament directly related to the beginning of the Christian life is the Eucharist. Feofan develops his teaching on the Eucharist primarily in reference to the individual person, placing it within the broader context of the process of spiritual growth. It is worth mentioning, however, that Feofan did recognise the Eucharist as an event of cosmic magnitude and significance. In this recognition he was most likely

⁶⁰ *Put*’, p. 25.

⁶¹ *Put*’, p. 26.

⁶² *Put*’, p. 60.

⁶³ *Put*’, p. 63.

⁶⁴ In this particular stress Feofan follows Chrysostom’s teaching on the spiritual education of children, as I have indicated in the chapter II of this thesis. See also Feofan’s compilation of

inspired by the texts attributed to Theognostos of Alexandria which he included in the third volume of his *Dobrotolyubiye*. Feofan taught that the Eucharist lies at the heart of the whole divine economy of salvation as ‘divine food’ for Christians⁶⁵ and a real sacrifice:

Something frightful in nature like thunder, earthquake or storm makes the whole creation tremble. Yet what takes place in the church at the time of the Divine sacrifice is the most awesome event in heaven and on earth; but it happens invisibly, spiritually in the presence of the infinite Triune God, the holy Angels, the whole assembly of the celestial church, in the eyes of faith of all labouring and living on the earth – invisibly, but none the less really.⁶⁶

Yet, Feofan’s primary concern was the inner spiritual reality of things as they relate to the practical needs and situations of individual persons. He encouraged everyone to attend the liturgy as often as possible. Yet, he also taught that since we partake of the Eucharist by faith,⁶⁷ there is a possibility of partaking in the Eucharist ‘as though in the spirit’ [*как бы причащение в духе*], for those who cannot be physically present at the liturgy.⁶⁸ On this particular point Feofan owes much to such ancient spiritual masters as Nikitas Stithatos and St Gregory of Sinai.⁶⁹ But as an experienced spiritual guide, Feofan cautioned: ‘We must remember that this [partaking of the Eucharist in

Chrysostom’s teachings on the subject: ‘Svyatago ottsa nashego Ioanna Zlatoustago uroki o vospitanii’ in *Put’*, pp. 328, 332, 333-334.

⁶⁵ *Put’*, p. 263.

⁶⁶ *Put’*, p. 264. Cf. with the description found in the text ‘On the Practice of the virtues’, §14 (traditionally attributed to St. Theognostos of Alexandria, in *The Philokalia* II, p. 362) where the Eucharist is described as the ‘awesome and most holy mysteries, which even angels venerate’. Also, one observes a striking similarity between Feofan’s description of the Eucharist and that found in the ‘Discourse on Abba Philimon’ (*The Philokalia* II, p. 351).

⁶⁷ *Put’*, p. 263.

⁶⁸ *Put’*, p. 263.

⁶⁹ Feofan is alluding to the imagery employed by Nikitas Stithatos, ‘On the Inner Nature of Things’, §38; ‘On Spiritual Knowledge’, §16 (*The Philokalia* IV, pp. 117, 144) and Gregory of Sinai, ‘On Commandments and Doctrines’, §§ 111-112 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 237, see also editorial intro. note on p. 211).

the spirit] is wholly God's gift. When, to whom and how it should be granted depends on the Lord Himself.'⁷⁰

Feofan's description of the relationship between the preparation for the Eucharist [in Russian, *завенуе*] and the partaking of the Eucharist demonstrates his view of the interaction between grace and the free will of the human person as an ontologically real, yet highly fragile co-operation; hence the emphasis on 'how to retain this grace.'⁷¹ His entire teaching on the Christian life as it is presented in *Put'* is a panoramic portrayal of one life-long ascetic exploit-ascent to communion with God. It is difficult to overstate the importance which Feofan assigns to the initiative of the individual in the work of salvation. He speaks of the effort to be conscious of the Eucharist (when one cannot attend the liturgy) as a way of 'attracting grace,' because in this remembrance 'the spirit is warmed and taken up to God.'⁷² *The acquisition of grace, the practice of 'завенуе', inner striving and spiritual and bodily exploits* are the key phrases in Feofan's description of the way of salvation.⁷³ The grace of the sacraments cannot be appropriated without these ascetic exercises which prepare a person for the reception of grace. In a letter to one of his

⁷⁰ *Put'*, p. 264.

⁷¹ *Put'*, pp. 23, 60, 64 cf. p.171; cf. also St Symeon the New Theologian, 'Practical and Theological texts', §82 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 41). While preparation for the experience of the Eucharist [*завенуе*] in the Orthodox Church includes fasting, it is on the whole a much broader concept which involves deep prayerful self-examination, repentance, self-correction and bodily as well as spiritual purification. Though being a part of fasts it is a much more intensive spiritual exercise which involves greater strictness in regard to food and sleep and is always accompanied by other 'godly activities' such as setting aside daily cares, reading of sacred books and regular church attendance, all leading to cleansing or purification [*перечистка*] of the whole life (*Put'*, p. 259). Although some of Feofan's statements about *завенуе* as a condition for 'worthy partaking' of the Eucharist (*Put'*, pp. 258, 260) could be interpreted as legalistic, Feofan tried to make it clear that *завенуе* is not 'imposed as a yoke on those who cannot fulfil it' (*Put'*, p. 259), he was clearly concerned about the development of the 'spirit of preparation' [*дух заветельный*] than the external side of the ritual (*Put'*, p. 260).

⁷² *Put'*, p. 264.

⁷³ *Put'*, p. 264.

correspondents, describing preparation for the Communion as an ‘enthusiastic preparation for a banquet,’ he writes in a figurative style: ‘If you will care to deck yourself and to prepare in such a way that the King will like you, He will caress you [*будете им приласканы*] and you will receive something priceless.’⁷⁴ And he concludes: ‘What I am trying to say by this is that you need to examine yourself, to denounce and to throw away what is bad, but to hold on to that which is good, to correct and to perfect it.’⁷⁵ Foremost in this preparation is the mending of the relationship (i.e., repentance) as the mystery of the Eucharist is a personal encounter and ‘re-unification’ with the Lord.⁷⁶

Repentance is brought about through the awakening of grace, but the ‘grafting of the branch onto the vine’ is accomplished in the holy Eucharist.⁷⁷ Feofan develops his Eucharistic theology in highly personalist terms: ‘Here [in the Eucharist] the Christian becomes one with the Lord.’⁷⁸ In Feofan’s writings the contemplative life goes hand in hand with the ordinary sacramental life of the whole church. Yet, as has been noted at the beginning of this section, one does not find in his works the conscious emphasis on the communal aspect of the Eucharist which is so central in Khomiakov and such modern Orthodox writers as Bishop John Zizioulas.⁷⁹ In *Put’*

⁷⁴ *Chto est’...*, p. 125. Cf. Ps.-Macarian example of the king and a poor maiden whom the king adorns and invites to the banquet, in H. 27, §3 (CWS, p. 175). While Feofan employs the same imagery, yet he shifts the emphasis to show the importance of the initiative of the individual and of the part played by the individual. Cf. also ‘The Discourse on Abba Philimon’ (*The Philokalia* II, p. 356).

⁷⁵ *Chto est’...*, pp. 125, 126.

⁷⁶ Cf. St. Theognostos, ‘On the Practice of the Virtues’, §§70-71 (*The Philokalia* II, p. 376).

⁷⁷ Cf. St. Theodoros the Great Ascetic, ‘A Century of Spiritual Texts’, §67 (*The Philokalia* II, p. 27).

⁷⁸ *Put’*, p. 168. Cf. St. Peter of Damascus, ‘Spurious Knowledge’ (*The Philokalia* III, p. 201).

⁷⁹ Apart from the passage (*Put’*, p. 264) cited at the beginning of this section which indicates Feofan’s understanding of the cosmic dimensions of the mystery of the Eucharist. Cf. A. S. Khomiakov, ‘The Church is One’ [‘Tserkov’ odna’] in *Polnoe Sobranie sochinenii*, (Moscow: Universitetskaya tip., 1890),

Feofan begins his section on *The approach to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist* with the parable of the prodigal son, thus placing the Lord's Supper in the context of the father-son relationship.⁸⁰ It is, moreover, within the framework of this same relationship that Feofan views the confession of sins. It is not a formalistic ritual to him. Rather, he directs individuals to 'private confession to the Lord' which a Christian should make every day before going to sleep.⁸¹

We should not wait for a certain time of preparation for communion [заведение] but should hasten to cleanse through repentance every sin which burdens the conscience. It is good not to keep it on your soul even as long as one day and still better not even an hour, for sin drives away grace, deprives of courage and prayer, hardens you and makes you cold all the more, the longer you keep it.⁸² 'To make confession every moment ... is the same as rubbing one's eyes when walking along a dusty road.'⁸³

The idea of constant self-purification as a condition for the indwelling of Christ permeates Feofan's reflections on the subject. Thus, speaking of the partaking of the cup in the Eucharist, he says, 'From now on you begin to carry Christ within you. Diligently take every care to reassure Him and not to let Him go.'⁸⁴ What is implied by these words? To fully understand them, it is helpful to keep in mind that, following the teaching of the Eastern Fathers, Feofan understands salvation as a life-long process consisting of such stages as conversion, purification (or self-correction), and finally, sanctification.⁸⁵ It is during the last stage of sanctification that the 'goal

II, pp. 21-56, and John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985).

⁸⁰ *Put*, p. 167.

⁸¹ See *Put*, p. 164.

⁸² *Put*, p. 261.

⁸³ *Put*, p. 262. Cf. St. Symeon the New Theologian, 'Practical and Theological Texts', §75 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 40).

⁸⁴ *Put*, p. 171.

⁸⁵ Cf. Nikitas Stithatos, 'On the Inner Nature of Things', §1 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 107): 'Love for God begins with detachment from things human and visible. Purification of heart and intellect marks the

of all labours and exploits' is finally achieved; that is, Christ settles in the soul and communes with man.⁸⁶

The gradual nature of Christ's taking possession [*вселение*⁸⁷] of the soul makes clear the necessity of preparing 'a worthy dwelling place for Him.'⁸⁸ It is only when passions are driven out and all virtues are planted in the soul that Christ can make man's soul a secure dwelling place for Himself:

He [Christ] visits him [a Christian] from the moment of holy baptism and will communicate with him even more intimately in the holy Eucharist. But helping him in the life of holiness, He does not yet abide in him completely, for until all virtues are settled in the soul through the fulfilment of the commandments, traces of passions still remain within it – the odour of sin which is unpleasant to the Lord. Christ does not rest in him, as if not trusting him, and is still only preparing for Himself a peaceful dwelling place. And when the soul is sanctified by virtues, then He confidently enters it as a home and dwells peacefully, undisturbed by the unpleasant (to Him) movements of sin and passions.⁸⁹

These ideas of the gradual indwelling of Christ and of the 'sanctification of the soul by virtues' can be better understood when one remembers that, according to Feofan,⁹⁰ in the initial stages of conversion, only the spirit of man ('the conscious and free power') is purified and united with God. 'All the other parts, being impure, remain outside of Him and alien to Him.'⁹¹ Even though He is willing to fill the whole of man, yet He does not do

intermediate stage... . The final stage is consummated in an irrepressible longing for the supranatural gifts of God and in a natural desire for union with God and for finding one's abode in Him.'

⁸⁶ *Put'*, p. VIII.

⁸⁷ Literally *moving in*. See *Put'*, pp. 175, 179.

⁸⁸ *Pis'ma k odnomu litsu*, p. 26 cited in Stragorodsky, p. 213. Cf. Zarin, p. 114.

⁸⁹ *Pis'ma k odnomu litsu*, pp. 26-27 cited in Stragorodsky, p. 214.

⁹⁰ Feofan makes reference to St Anthony and Ps.-Macarius, though he does not provide an exact citation. See *Put'*, p. 187.

⁹¹ Cf. Ps.-Macarius, H. 50, §4 (CWS, p. 246) where he writes of 'only one part of man' as being initially touched by grace; also Diadochus, 'On Spiritual Knowledge', §77 (*The Philokalia* I, p. 279) where he speaks of grace as being initially 'hidden in the depths of the intellect'; and Evagrius, 'On Prayer', § 64 (*The Philokalia* I, p. 63) where he asserts that while angels and demons produce 'thoughts,

so, for man is impure.⁹² Feofan does not understand impurity in the ritualistic sense, but rather as an indication of a lack of harmony between the various dimensions of the human person. The human being is still in the state of inner moral, psychological and physical discord and henceforth is incapable of complete and harmonious communion. It is precisely this holistic understanding of the divine-human union, which presupposes the dynamics of the gradual process – the need for purification of every dimension of the human person. As Zarin puts it: ‘Everything that can be sanctified belongs to eternity.’⁹³ Feofan’s extensive and detailed portrayal of the psychological and ethical aspects of each stage of personal reintegration, emphasising the uniqueness of the experiences of each individual aspirant, represents one of his significant contributions to Russian Hesychast

ideas and speculations in the intellect through changes in the body, the Lord does the opposite: by entering the intellect. He fills it with whatever knowledge He wishes; and through the intellect He calms the uncontrolled impulses in the body.’

⁹² *Put*, p.187. It is illuminating at this point to contrast Feofan’s characteristically Orthodox description of ascetic preparation for Christ’s indwelling in the soul with the Protestant view, which is so aptly expressed in the hymn *Longing for Holiness* written by the Anglican Bishop Dr. Handley C.G.Moule roughly contemporaneous with Feofan. In the hymn Bishop Moule exclaims:

I seek no more to alter things, or
mend,
Before the coming of so great a
Friend;
... ..
Come, not to find, but make this
troubled heart
A dwelling worthy of Thee as Thou
art;

In Bishop Feofan’s passages cited above, we observed the emphasis on the gradual nature of Christ’s taking possession of the soul, dependent upon the individual’s co-operation and conditions for total re-unification, but Bishop Moule’s hymn speaks of the determination to abandon any attempt to attain moral purity on one’s own. Nevertheless, these two examples of Orthodox and Protestant spirituality actually do not contradict each other but only demonstrate a characteristic difference of emphasis. The stress on the need for purification in the Orthodox tradition does not imply that God is looking for external acts or merits on the part of man to attest to his worthiness, but rather that God is concerned to find within a person (and develop through ‘harmonious co-operation of the divine and the human elements’) an ability to perceive the need for God and the capacity to receive God. (See *Longing for Holiness* by Handley Carr Glyn Moule, 1841-1920. In 1901, Bishop of Durham; Founder of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, 1881, and Nor^risian Professor of Divinity, 1899. Cf. Stragorodsky, p. 215; cf. also Zarin, pp. 86-88.)

anthropology. We have considered the manner in which Feofan develops the above concerns when he describes the interplay of grace and human self-determination in baptism and the Eucharist. Yet, it is impossible to do justice to Feofan's teaching on spiritual and personal individuation without the examination of his teaching on the development of self-consciousness [*обретение полного сознания себя самого*]⁹⁴ and the acquisition of self-knowledge (inward movement) in one's ascent (upward movement) to complete union with God. Feofan portrays the human part of the entire process of salvation as consisting of two major acts⁹⁵ of freedom: initially the movement towards oneself, and then a second movement from oneself to God. In the first act of freedom, man gains self-knowledge and the previously lost authority over his own being⁹⁶; in the second, he offers himself in sacrifice to God – the 'whole burnt offering of freedom'⁹⁷ – and attains complete union with God. It is in the exposition of this theme that Feofan unfolds most fully his arguments for defining spirituality as the very foundation of personhood and his reasons for insisting that 'в ком нет движений и действий духа, тот не стоит в уровне с человеческим достоинством' ['those who do not manifest the actions and the movements of the spirit have not attained the level of human dignity'].⁹⁸

⁹³ Zarin, p. 53.

⁹⁴ *Put'*, p. 46, *Nach.*, pp. 188-210, especially pp. 203-207.

⁹⁵ Literally 'two turnings' [*два новопрома*].

⁹⁶ Cf. Ps.-Macarius, 'The Seven Homilies', Homily IV, chapter 19 (in the Russian edition *Prepodobnago ottsa nashego Makariya Egipetskogo Dukhovnye Besedy, Poslanie i Slova*, 4th edn, Svyato-Troitskaya Sergieva Lavra, 1904, p. 395): 'Если угодно тебе, человек, войти в себя самого и возвратить себе славу, какую имел ты прежде, и какая утрачена преслушанием.'

⁹⁷ See *Put'*, p. 132.

⁹⁸ *Chto est* '...', p. 34: '...the one who does not manifest the movements and the actions of the spirit has not attained the true measure of human dignity.'

II. ACQUISITION OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE:

THE 'FIRST ACT OF FREEDOM'

The stress on the moral aspect of self-knowledge in the Christian spiritual writers goes back to Philo and Plotinus, both of whom interpret self-knowledge as a stage in the quest of the soul for God alone – a pursuit which involves the desire for purification and self-improvement.⁹⁹ The ascetic writers of the Christian East taught that the human soul by itself is incapable of self-knowledge.¹⁰⁰ It can be acquired only under the guidance of grace through humility and spiritual discernment.¹⁰¹ In the monastic spiritual tradition of the Christian East the themes of self-knowledge and self-examination were expounded by Ps.-Macarius,¹⁰² St. Mark the Ascetic,¹⁰³ St. Symeon the New Theologian, Nikitas Stithatos¹⁰⁴ and Gregory Palamas.¹⁰⁵ In the Russian tradition, it was St. Tikhon of Zadonsk – one of Feofan's favourite 18th century authors – who developed the theme of self-knowledge as humility and

⁹⁹ See e.g. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* i. 43-44 and Plotinus, *The Enneads*, I.6.8-9. For a recent analysis of the development of the concept of self-knowledge in Philo and Plotinus see Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, pp. 20-25 and 37-44.

¹⁰⁰ See Ps.-Macarius, H. 11, 4.

¹⁰¹ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Moysis*, PG 44, 416 D. For an insightful historical survey of the exposition of the theme of self-knowledge by the writers of the Christian East see Tomáš Špidlík, SJ, *The Spirituality of the Christian East: A Systematic Handbook*, trans. by Anthony P. Gythiel, Cistercian Studies Series 79, Cistercian Publications, Inc., Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1986, pp. 87-94.

¹⁰² H. 31 §6 (CWS, p. 196); H. 9 §11 (CWS, p. 87); H. 30 §8 (CWS, p. 193); H. 48 §3 (CWS, p. 239).

¹⁰³ See his 'Letter to Nicolas the Solitary' (*The Philokalia* I, p. 151) and 'On the Spiritual Law' § 53 (*The Philokalia* I, p. 114).

¹⁰⁴ See his 'On the inner nature of Things', §§ 35-40 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 116-118) where in §35 he directly states: 'Know thyself': this is true humility... ' (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 116).

¹⁰⁵ See his 'Answer In Defence of Those who Devoutly Practise a Life of Stillness', namely § 9 (*The Philokalia* IV, pp. 338-340.)

‘poverty of the spirit’.¹⁰⁶ However, St. Tikhon drew mainly on the Holy Scriptures, whereas Feofan creatively incorporated a whole range of patristic as well as scriptural interpretations into his teaching on the acquisition of self-knowledge.

What exactly did Feofan understand by ‘self-knowledge’, and what means for its acquisition did he propose? As we can see from the development of this theme in *Put*, Feofan understood the attainment of self-knowledge in accordance with the Philokalic tradition; i.e., as an essential stage in the redemptive process of restoring the primal dignity and glory to the human person and as an integral part of divine-human communion. The process involves comparison of oneself with the Archetype combined with prayerful self-examination in the light of the Scriptures. By these means, one discerns the danger of one’s predicament and acquires through grace an outsider’s view of oneself. Feofan further elucidates this patristic theme of spiritual growth by combining the teachings of the ancient spiritual masters with his own original insights into the psychology of human spiritual development. He insists that self-knowledge is acquired through a gradual, voluntary development of independent spiritual self-consciousness. This expressly psychological approach coupled with deep rootedness in the patristic heritage represents one of Feofan’s most valuable contributions to Russian nineteenth century Hesychasm. We do not find these specific emphases and such wide use of the patristic tradition in either Ignaty Bryanchaninov or in the Startsi of Optino. Let us take a closer look at each of the five principal constituents of Feofan’s teaching on self-knowledge. We shall also attempt to identify authors who awakened Feofan’s interest in the subject.

¹⁰⁶ See *Tvoreniya izhe vo svyatykh ottsa nashego Tikhona Zadonskago*. 5 volumes, 4th ed., Moscow,

Attaining the full stature of personhood

In the first chapter of *Put*, Feofan distinguishes between Christian life prior to the age of consciousness and mature Christian life. He goes to great lengths in his desire to demonstrate that the development of consciousness and the acquisition of self-knowledge are essential conditions for attaining the full stature of personhood and beginning the conscious and independent Christian life. He ascribes the creative role in this process to the 'light of Christ' or the 'new principle of grace' implanted in the heart of the infant at baptism.¹⁰⁷

Feofan neatly compares the process of the shaping of mature spiritual independence in a human person with the formation of individual solar systems in the universe. He notes a similarity between the light of Christ in an infant and the 'unfocused' light of the first day of Creation and, correspondingly, between developed individual consciousness and the suns as the foci of the planets. This theme is of special relevance for our study. Hence the length of my quotation:

In the natural course of the development of his [reasoning] powers, each inevitably comes to the realisation that he is a human being. But if at the very first moment of the awakening of his powers and their action (that is in baptism) a new Christian principle of grace is grafted onto his being; and if, henceforth, at every stage of the development of these powers this new principle not only simply refuses to give up the first place but rather always prevails, as though giving shape to everything; then, coming to consciousness, man at the same time will find himself acting according to Christian principles - he will find himself a Christian.

And this in fact is the major goal of Christian upbringing, so that as a result a person would say within himself that he is a Christian.

If, having attained the full consciousness of himself [*пришедши в полное*

1875, I, p. 190; II, p. 262; IV, p. 195; II, p. 265.

¹⁰⁷ See *Put*, pp. 46-47. For the analysis of Feofan's interpretation of the operation of grace within the infant at baptism see the section of this chapter on *Infant baptism and individual self-determination*.

сознание себя самого], he will say: I am a Christian bound by my Saviour and God to lead a certain life to be worthy of blessed communion with Him and His elect in the life to come; then, having attained self-determination, or having come to the stage where he himself can intelligently order his life [*возникши к своеличному разумному учреждению жизни*], he will make it a matter of primary importance - to preserve and keep aflame of his own accord the spirit of godliness in which, formerly, he walked under someone else's direction.

There should be a special moment when it is necessary to deliberately renew in the mind all Christian obligations and to place upon yourself their yoke as an indisputable law. In baptism they have been accepted unconsciously and have then been kept rather by someone else's mind, upon someone else's disposition, and in simplicity. Now we should consciously place upon ourselves the kindly yoke of Christ, choose the Christian life and devote ourselves exclusively to God, in order to serve Him with enthusiasm all the days of our life. It is only at this stage that man of himself personally begins the Christian life. It was within him before, but it could be said that it was not of his spontaneous action as if not in his name.

Now he himself [*он сам, от своего лица*] will begin to act on his own behalf in the spirit of a Christian. Then the light of Christ was in him as the light of the first day [of Creation] unfocused and spread. But as the light had to be given centres by drawing it to the suns – the foci of the planets, this light likewise needs as it were to gather around consciousness – the point of departure in our life.

Man becomes a complete person when he attains self-knowledge [*приходит к самопознанию*] and reasonable independence, when he becomes an absolute master and manager of his thoughts and actions and holds certain thoughts not because others shared them with him but because he himself finds them to be true.

In Christianity man still remains man. Therefore he must be intelligent here also, but he should apply his intelligence to the benefit of the holy faith. He should apply his reason to make certain that the holy faith which he professes is the only true way of salvation and that all other paths which disagree with it lead to ruin. It is man's honour not to be a blind confessor [*не слепым исповедником быть есть честь человеку*], but a confessor who is conscious that, acting in this manner, he does what is right. All this he will accomplish when he consciously places upon himself the noble yoke of Christ. It is only at this stage that his personal faith or his good life of faith gains firmness and steadfastness.¹⁰⁸

This important passage sums up Feofan's understanding of the dynamics and the secrets of successful spiritual growth or what some modern Christian psychologists

¹⁰⁸ Put', pp.46-47.

describe as the process of ‘individuation’¹⁰⁹. Feofan stresses the fact that the chief aim of Christian upbringing is to lead an individual to conscious and independent Christian life. This is impossible without the full development of self-consciousness and the acquisition of self-knowledge. One has to reach a clear perception of oneself as a distinct person capable of making independent decisions in one’s own name and on one’s own behalf. Feofan describes consciousness as ‘the point of departure in our life.’ He emphasises spiritual maturity – the independent ability to ‘keep aflame the spirit of godliness.’ It should spring from ‘spontaneous action’ and express itself in service to God ‘with enthusiasm.’ In the concluding phrases of the passage, Feofan points out that man has the honour of consciously professing Christ of his own free volition, that one must be an intelligent Christian, and that every person is responsible for determining the truth for himself. What specific influences, we may ask, shaped Feofan’s understanding of this subject?

Feofan’s reflections on the spiritual aspects of child development and on the role of grace in the life of a child prior to the age of consciousness are founded in the tradition of the 4th and 5th century monasticism. The two authors whom Feofan regarded as the best expositors of the above themes are Ps.-Macarius and Diadochus of Photiki.¹¹⁰ Ps.-Macarius states that ‘grace, indeed, is unceasingly present and is rooted in us and mingled with our nature *from our earliest years*’¹¹¹, that ‘the newly born baby possesses within itself the image of the mature man’ and is ‘gradually

¹⁰⁹ See V.I. Slobodchikov, ‘Real’nost’ sub’ektivnogo dukha’ in *Nachala khristianskoi psikhologii*, pp. 128-129.

¹¹⁰ See *Put’*, pp. 178-183.

¹¹¹ Ps.-Macarius, H. 8, §2 (CWS, p. 81), italics mine. Feofan cites this statement by Ps.-Macarius in *Put’*, p. 179.

gaining maturity.’¹¹² There is a similarity between Diadochian and Feofan’s descriptions of the initial and the final stages of spiritual growth. Diadochus taught that ‘the heart of those who are beginning to experience the energy of the Spirit is only partially warmed by God’s grace. But when we begin wholeheartedly to carry out the commandments of God, all our organs of perception will become fully conscious of the light of grace’.¹¹³ Feofan, for his part, taught that prior to the age of maturity the ‘light of Christ’ is present in a person, but ‘as the light of the first day [of Creation] it is unfocused and spread.’ It needs ‘as though to gather around consciousness’. That is accomplished when we ‘consciously’ place upon ourselves the ‘yoke of Christian obligations’ as an ‘indisputable law’.¹¹⁴ In his emphatic claim that ‘it is man’s honour not to be a blind confessor,’ Feofan is faithful to the teaching of such Syriac spiritual masters as Abba Isaac, who writes: ‘The human person is never regarded simply as a passive object under the action of divine grace, but is expected personally to direct all of his powers to the participation in his salvation.’¹¹⁵

The same stress on the conscious personal experience of God is also characteristic of such authors of later Byzantine spirituality (500 - 1400) as St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Gregory of Sinai and St. Gregory Palamas¹¹⁶, with

¹¹² ‘Paraphrase of the Homilies of St Makarios of Egypt’, part III. ‘Patient Endurance and Discrimination’, §50 (*The Philokalia* III, 306).

¹¹³ ‘On Spiritual Knowledge’ §88 (*The Philokalia* I, p. 287).

¹¹⁴ *Put*, pp. 46-47.

¹¹⁵ Zarin, *Asketism*, p. 85. In the foot-note No. 71 on the same page Zarin adds: ‘Abba Isaac the Syrian clearly teaches that the grace not only never inhibits or suppresses human freedom, but on the contrary restores it and opens a real possibility for its actualisation. Having accepted the Spirit of adoption, he (the Christian) ‘abides’ in the ‘mystery of freedom’ (ἐν μυστηρίῳ τῆς ἐλευθερίας) and enjoys spiritual grace.’ Isaac the Syrian, Λ. LXV. σ. 386. cf. Λ. XXI. σ.124, cited in Zarin from the edition of N. Theotokes.

¹¹⁶ See e.g. St Symeon, ‘Practical and Theological Texts’, §76 (*The Philokalia* IV, p.40); St Gregory of Sinai, ‘On Commandments and Doctrines’ §§23, 91 and 97 (*The Philokalia* IV, pp. 216-217, 231, 232-

whose writings, as we have seen in chapter II, Feofan was thoroughly acquainted. (It must also be noted again that in any analysis of the influences which shaped Feofan's understanding of this subject, one should not overlook Feofan's special interest in the teachings of St. John Chrysostom on the spiritual direction of children¹¹⁷ which we considered in chapter II). Always true to the spirit of the patristic texts, Feofan never slavishly follows their style or imagery. Neither was he satisfied with the extent to which the subject is treated in the writings of his precursors. His depth of treatment of the psychological aspects of the spiritual development of children and his focus on the formation of consciousness adds a new dimension to the Hesychast teaching on the human person. In *Put'* Feofan also shows the integral link between the development of the spiritual self-consciousness and the use of such ascetic instruments as introspection and self-examination.

Introspection: discerning the danger of your predicament

'Oh, that you would gather the scattered
*offspring*¹¹⁸ [of your mind] as a
shepherd gathers his flock or a lens
brings together scattered rays, and
would direct them at yourself.'

The Way to Salvation, 109.¹¹⁹

Feofan's teaching on introspection and his psychological insights into this ancient ascetic practice are valuable for our reconstruction of his teaching on the individual

233); and St Gregory Palamas, 'To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia' §§56, 60 and 'Those who Practice a Life of Stillness' §4 (*The Philokalia* IV, 316, 317 and 335). See also *The Study of Spirituality*, p. 236.

¹¹⁷ See Feofan's compilation of Chrysostom's teachings on the subject in *Put'* (pp. 315-346) borrowed mostly from Chrysostom's *Homily XXI* on St Paul's Epistle to Ephesians.

¹¹⁸ *Italics mine.*

¹¹⁹ Cf. Ps.-Macarius, H. 31,2.

person. It seems that the closest parallels can be drawn between Feofan's reflections on the subject and those of St. Mark the Ascetic, Nikitas Stithatos and the author of the Ps.-Macarian Homilies. Thus, for instance, in his *Letter to Nicolas the Solitary* St Mark admonished:

Let us *realise our situation* and correct our way of life while we still have time for repentance and conversion. He who wishes to take up the cross and follow Christ must first acquire spiritual knowledge and understanding *through constantly examining his thoughts*.¹²⁰

We come across the same emphasis on introspection in the text of Nikitas Stithatos

On the practice of the virtues:

Dispel self-love and battle with your fallen self unsparingly. *Introvert your senses towards your soul*. ...mourn, sleep on the ground, fast, endure hardship, be still and, last of all, *know*, not the things around you, *but yourself*.¹²¹

As for Feofan, he employs such graphic Russian expressions as *углубление в себя* (i.e., introspection) and *занятие собою* (i.e., getting busy with oneself) in his description of the method of acquiring the gift of energising grace,¹²² in which he speaks of the need of laying oneself bare [*разверстие себя*] to grace¹²³ and intensifying within oneself the appeals of grace.¹²⁴ It is important not to overlook the fact that the dynamic character of the above Russian expressions highlights Feofan's stress on the importance of the constant initiative of the individual in the interaction with grace. He explains why introspection and acquisition of self-knowledge are not

¹²⁰ *The Philokalia* I, p. 151, italics mine.

¹²¹ §74 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 98), italics mine.

¹²² *Put*, pp. 101-133.

¹²³ Cf. St. Mark the Ascetic, 'On the Spiritual Law', §53 (*The Philokalia* I, p. 114) where he instructs: 'Reveal yourself to the Lord in your mind.'

¹²⁴ *Put*, p. 103.

easily available to a person dwelling in sin: 'Sin entangles the soul with many snares or hides itself from it with many cloaks'¹²⁵ so as to conceal its ugliness from the soul. Feofan distinguishes between three main shrouds of sin: a) *the predominance of the flesh* is the outer cloak; b) *dissipation and solicitude* comprise the middle cloak; and c) *self-deception, callousness and carelessness* are the deepest and the closest cloak to the heart.¹²⁶ When a person begins to seek 'the energising of grace,' it is only through a series of strenuous ascetic efforts, unravelling one by one the cloaks of sin, that he can progress in his inward journey. It is divine grace alone which can go straight to the last shroud of sin and tear it up; 'Under its influence man is stripped naked and stands before his consciousness in all his ugliness.'¹²⁷ By consciously distancing himself from the speculative approach and academic terminology, employing instead the directness of style characteristic of the best spiritual writers of the East, Feofan was able to achieve remarkable dynamism and psychological realism in his portrayal of the drama of inner spiritual self-discovery. It is crucial to observe in his compelling descriptions that while introspection and self-examination are always voluntary, they are never a solitary exercise. The Holy Spirit is always invisibly present and ready for a most delicate interaction with the human will. The journey towards self in Feofan is always a journey towards God.

Self-knowledge through grace: the given ability to gain an objective view of one's self

¹²⁵ *Put*, p. 107.

¹²⁶ *Put*, p. 107. Cf. 'the veil of sinfulness' in the 'Paraphrase of the Homilies of St Makarios of Egypt', Homily V 'Love', §94 by St. Symeon Metaphrastes (*The Philokalia* III, p. 327).

In the third section of *Put* (pp. 175- 204) which deals with the ways in which Christian life matures and gains strength within us, Feofan comments on the theme of the second Ps.-Macarian Homily: i.e., the manner in which sin has suppressed the natural activities of our being and superimposed the unnatural counterpart faculties of 'the man of the flesh.' Feofan shows dramatically the unique role of Divine grace in giving man the ability to acquire genuine self-knowledge and the realisation of the duplicity of human nature:

Having come, the Divine grace – at first through awakening, and then during the whole period of conversion – cuts through the duplicitous nature of man, leads him to the realisation of this duality, to seeing that which is unnatural and that which should be natural and brings man to a resolution to remove or to clean off all that is unnatural so that Godlike nature [*Богонодобное естество*] should appear in its full light.¹²⁸

Feofan goes on to point out that this new resolution is only a beginning. It is merely man's consciousness and his will that have rejected the old unnatural state, but the rest of his being still dwells in sin. Yet he is granted the unique ability to gain an objective view of himself. Feofan describes this experience by invoking rather startling images of Ps.-Macarian inspiration: 'At this point man has come out of himself as though from a stinking corpse and beholds which part of him gives off what kind of odious stench'.¹²⁹ Man clings to God with his consciousness and his will, but this divine-human union, though real, is incomplete because the rest of man's being is impure: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.'¹³⁰

¹²⁷ *Put*, p.107.

¹²⁸ *Put*, p.186.

¹²⁹ *Put*, p.186. Cf. Ps.-Macarian description of the heart as a 'great palace that is deserted and all kinds of stench, and odours from many cadavers come out of it.' H.15 §33 (CWS, p. 120).

¹³⁰ Matthew 5.8.

Feofan also describes this sinful state as a state of self-deception. He is convinced that man refuses to break away from sin because he does not know himself and the danger to which he subjects himself for the sake of sin.¹³¹ Hence he dwells in a state of deep self-delusion:

Such blindness is due to a lack of attention to self: man does not know himself because he has never entered within himself and has never given thought to himself and his moral condition. But largely this blindness is maintained by certain specific prejudices regarding self. Man by himself constitutes a certain web of ideas which systematically hide him away from himself. These are, as a matter of fact, our moral delusions or misconceptions which originate as a result of the interference of the heart in the affairs of the mind.¹³²

In *Nachertanie*, Feofan elaborates further on the causes of moral delusions and on this important notion of the human person as constituting a web of erroneous ideas which hide his true self from him¹³³. There is some general resemblance between Feofan's description of the state of self-delusion and the description found in the ancient text *On the Character of Men*.¹³⁴ Yet, Feofan's development of the idea does not have the Platonic dualistic connotations so characteristic of the text attributed to St. Anthony the Great. Feofan, in fact, further explains that one is not expected to silence the heart (here: one's emotions) altogether in this experience of introspection, but that its input should simply be governed by the sound judgement of the mind.¹³⁵ Moreover, Christ himself should be the constant focal point of the mind as the divine Archetype of the human person.

¹³¹ *Put'*, p. 110.

¹³² *Put'*, p. 110. Cf. V. Lossky cited in J. Dunlop, *Staretz Anvrosy*, p. 27.

¹³³ See *Nach.*, p. 202. See also section on the Spirit in chapter IV of this thesis.

¹³⁴ In the text attributed to St Anthony the Great we read: 'She [the soul] should come to know herself ...' ... '... drunken with ignorance, indifferent to her true self, not understanding what she is, she lets herself be dragged down by sensual pleasures... .' see §142 (*The Philokalia* 1. pp.350-351).

¹³⁵ *Put'*, pp. 110-111.

Self-knowledge through comparison: aspiring to attain likeness to the Archetype

Man must not reject even fear as an initial motive (albeit a lowly one) to virtuous living in one's quest for likeness to the Archetype.¹³⁶ Feofan taught that in order to see himself as he really is and to rid himself of prejudices and false notions about his spiritual condition, man must attack his mind with 'fearful sights of judgement' and 'eternal torment in hell.'¹³⁷ This, as Feofan observes in *Put*, will gradually help the individual to reach concentration in his thoughts and 'to stand face to face in the presence of your mind and conscience which will speak strongly against you, especially when, having compared yourself with what you are to be in Christ you will find that you are falling far behind your *archetype* [первообраз].'¹³⁸ This statement in *Put* is, perhaps, the only instance of Feofan's speaking of Christ as man's Archetype. In so doing, he refers indirectly to the Orthodox teaching on man as the image and likeness of God; to the hierarchical structure of the created order; and to the idea of "participation" in God – the themes which were expounded by Diadochus of Photiki, Nikitas Stithatos, St. Gregory of Sinai and Palamas.¹³⁹ Yet, while it is important to

¹³⁶ Cf. Matthew 25.41, 46; also *Vita Antonii* 6, PG 26. 848 C. See also Zarin. pp.168-177.

¹³⁷ *Put*, pp.114-115.

¹³⁸ *Put*, p. 114.

¹³⁹ See e.g. the highly intriguing passage by St. Diadochus of Photiki on the image and the likeness as the 'two gifts of grace' in his text 'On Spiritual Knowledge' §89 where he asserts that when 'the intellect begins to perceive the Holy Spirit with full consciousness, we should realise that grace is beginning to paint the divine likeness over the divine image in us. Artists first draw the outline of a man in monochrome, and then add one colour after another, until little by little they capture the likeness of the subject down to the smallest details. In the same way the grace of God starts by remaking the divine image in man into what it was when he was first created.' (*The Philokalia* I, p.

observe the link in Feofan's teaching between the concept of self-knowledge and the notion of the human person as the image of God, it is equally important to see how Feofan's teaching on the role of the Scriptures in the process of introspection further unfolds his pneumatic model of the human person and shows the centrality and the integrating function of the human spirit in the human person as a whole.

Self-examination and the 'two-edged sword' of the Scriptures

'For the word of God is living and active
and sharper than any two-edged sword,
and piercing as far as the division of soul
and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and
able to judge the thoughts and intentions
of the heart.'

Hebrews 4.12.

In the section of *Put* entitled *Ascent to the Vow of Committing Oneself to God*, Feofan reintroduces the theme of self-examination. He insists on the futility of introspection without the illumination of the Scriptures.¹⁴⁰ 'God's word' and man's 'spirit' have one and the same source and a special 'kinship' [*сродство*]; that is why 'the word' is capable of penetrating body and soul and reaching the spirit of man:

The energising power of God's word is all the more significant because it at once affects man as a whole: body, soul and spirit. The sound or vocalisation of the word strikes the hearing, the thought captivates the soul, but its invisible

288). Feofan refers to this passage in his *Vnutrennyaya Zhizn'* (Moscow, 1893), pp. 92-93. Cf. also St Gregory of Sinai's 'On Commandments and Doctrines' §31 where he speaks of man as a 'dim image of the ineffable and archetypal Trinity.' (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 218); and Nikitas Stithatos' 'On Spiritual Knowledge' §9 where he writes of the soul's ascent to God as to 'its archetype'. (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 142); also Palamas who writes of the 'humble in heart and poor in spirit' who are 'assimilated to their Archetype' in his letter 'To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia' §62 (*The Philokalia* IV, pp. 318-319). Cf. also J. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, p. 165.

¹⁴⁰ *Put*, pp. 151-152.

and mysterious energy touches the spirit, which – if it heeds the word, after it successfully passes those coarse barriers of body and soul – becomes aroused, and gaining in intensity breaks the cords by which it had been bound.¹⁴¹ The phrase ‘if it heeds the word’ highlights the necessity of a conscious and voluntary response on the part of the human person. One’s life should be thus ‘sustained by the word’ and constantly examined in the light of God’s moral principles – the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes¹⁴² – and in the light of the Christian principles of practical living as laid out in the Gospels, especially in Matthew, the Epistle of James, and the Pauline Epistles (for instance, Romans, beginning with chapter 12 and Ephesians, beginning with chapter 4).¹⁴³ Feofan sees the purpose of this self-examination as not only destroying the sinful ‘order of our heart and the number and the mutual combination of its inclinations,’¹⁴⁴ but as planting hope and establishing a new divine order¹⁴⁵ where the human spirit, restored to its rightful place, reigns supreme in unity with the Spirit of God. Thus the agony of introspection is at once a journey towards true personhood and an ascent to God. Feofan insists that the inward and the upward ‘movements’ are always conscious and voluntary acts of ethical and spiritual growth.¹⁴⁶ In his portrayal of this spiritual journey as ‘two movements’ of freedom, Feofan is using the imagery of those Eastern ascetic writers who described self-knowledge and contemplation of God as two interdependent phases in the quest

¹⁴¹ *Put*, p. 98.

¹⁴² *Put*, p. 151.

¹⁴³ *Put*, p. 152.

¹⁴⁴ *Put*, p. 153. Cf. Evagrius the Solitary, ‘On Discrimination’ §20 where he instructs the ascetics: ‘analyze in yourself the sinful thought that has wounded you, what it is, what it consists of ...’ (*The Philokalia* I, p. 49-50); and St Isaiah the Solitary, ‘On guarding the intellect’ §20 who writes: ‘Examine yourself daily in the sight of God, and discover which of the passions is in your heart.’ (*The Philokalia* I, p. 26).

¹⁴⁵ *Put*, pp. 156-157.

¹⁴⁶ See *Pis'ma o dukhovnoi zhizni*, pp. 123-124.

of the soul for God.¹⁴⁷ Although self-knowledge is a bitter fruit of the ‘first act of freedom,’ it is at the same time a glimpse and a foretaste of the ‘second act’ of acquiring a Godlike nature and living ‘in God’.¹⁴⁸ Yet, as we shall see, in this final stage Feofan’s major emphasis continues to predominate: the ‘conscious and voluntary attitude to God ... determines... everything’ [*сознательно-свободное отношение к Богу ... заправляет ... всем*].¹⁴⁹

III. ASCENT TO GOD: THE ‘SECOND ACT OF FREEDOM’

Thus far we have seen in this chapter that at the basis of Feofan’s teaching on the relationship between grace and human freedom lie the Eastern patristic concepts of *synergy* and mutual inter-penetration. We also observed that Feofan’s portrayal of the nature of grace is deeply personalist with the exception of several statements in his collection of adapted letters *Chto est’ dukhovnaya zhizn’*.¹⁵⁰ We saw that, following Diadochos of Photiki, Feofan attached great significance to the sacraments (as the vehicles of grace) and that in his own creative development of the teaching on the

¹⁴⁷ Thus, for instance, in the writings of Nikitas Stithatos which Feofan placed in the fifth volume of his *Dobrotolyubie* we encounter the idea of the inter-relatedness and the overlapping of the inward and the upward movements. We read: ‘... know, not the things around you, but yourself. Transcend the lowly state of visible things. Open your spiritual eye to the contemplation of God and recognise the delightfulness of the Lord from the beauty of creation.’ See ‘On the Practice of the Virtues’ §74 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 98); and in another place: ‘... you should in stillness scrutinise yourself and the inner reality of things with the utmost attentiveness and should seek to know more fully the God within yourself, for His kingdom is within us (cf. Luke 17:21).’ See ‘On the Inner Nature of Things’, §8 (*The Philokalia* IV, pp. 109-110), italics mine.

¹⁴⁸ *Put’*, p. 149 and 186. Cf. Meyendorff: ‘All along man’s road from his fallen state to union with God, divine grace helps him to overcome corruption, then to surpass himself, and finally shows God to him.’ *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, pp. 164-165.

¹⁴⁹ *Pis’ma o dukhovnoi zhizni*, pp. 123-124.

sacraments he never lost sight of the concrete individual person. We observed his personalist concerns in his insistence on the fragile and contingent nature of the effects of baptism, in his teaching on *зобение* [preparation for the Eucharist], in his reflections on the intimate inter-penetration of the human person and Christ in the mystery of the Eucharist, and in his descriptions of the gradualness of Christ's *вселение* [taking possession] of the human soul. Examining Feofan's teaching on self-knowledge and on the interior dynamics of the development of individual spiritual consciousness, we, once again, had an occasion to observe that Feofan's conception of the uniqueness of each individual person is rooted in his key distinction between the human spirit and the human soul and in his interpretation of the human spirit as 'consciousness and self-determination'. We have now come to the final stage in our examination of Feofan's panoramic portrayal of the restoration of personhood, to what Feofan called the 'heights of asceticism'. How does he develop his notion of inward spiritual freedom specifically in his teaching on the degrees of divine-human communion? How does he reconcile his emphasis on the most intimate inter-penetration between God and the human person with his stress on the preservation of human personal identity?

Mutual inter-penetration [‘взаимо-входимость’] and the preservation of personal identity [‘непоглощение лица’]

Feofan understands communion with God according to the Palamite interpretation; i.e., as ‘a living union’ between the human and divine persons¹⁵¹, as an experience of

¹⁵⁰ See, pp. 92-93.

¹⁵¹ See the ‘Declaration of the Holy Mountain’, §2 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 421); see also Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, pp. 137-140.

being favoured with 'the indwelling of God within you'¹⁵². Communion with God is clearly the dominant theme in *The Way to Salvation*, in which Feofan calls it 'the ultimate goal of the whole economy of salvation and of the whole Christian life.'¹⁵³ It is a fundamental human need which nothing else can supplant:

The seeking and zealous spirit will rest content only when it acquires God, tastes of Him and is sated. Therefore his foremost law is *seek God, seek His face*. What comprises this good is incomprehensible to man. He himself would not even think of such a height.'¹⁵⁴

By his very choice of scriptural expressions, Feofan is intending to portray the intimate and personal nature of the union between finite men and the Triune God:

I will dwell in them (II Cor 6.16), says the Lord, and this is with all the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Of God the Father and Himself the Lord says: *and We will come to him* (who is believing and loving) *and make Our abode with him* (John 14.23). Of Himself who is One: *I will come in to him, and will dine with him* (Rev 3.20); and still more clearly: *I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you* (John 14.20). Of the Holy Spirit the Apostle says: *the Spirit of God dwells in you* (I Cor 3.16).¹⁵⁵

As do the Fathers of the Philokalia, Feofan considers spirituality and dogma inseparable; his understanding of the union with God is solidly Christocentric¹⁵⁶ and Trinitarian.¹⁵⁷ Further developing this theme of divine-human communion in *Put*,

¹⁵² *Put*, p. 175.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Put*, pp. 175-176, italics in Feofan's text.

¹⁵⁵ *Put*, p. 176, italics in Feofan's text.

¹⁵⁶ See for instance his statement in *Nachertanie*, p. 464 where he insists: 'One must always remember that he is not striving for unity [with the body of Christ] merely for the sake of unity, but in order to achieve the ultimate goal of all Christian endeavours which is communion with God in our Lord Jesus Christ; considering that the Holy Church itself ... exists for no other purpose and that it remains true inasmuch as it fulfils this purpose.'

¹⁵⁷ Cf. e.g. Nikitas Stithatos who wrote of the 'indwelling of the Holy Trinity within us' in his work 'On the Practice of the Virtues', §1 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 79); and Gregory of Sinai who, in the text 'On Commandments and Doctrines' §55 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 222), called his disciples to 'imitate Christ'. See also Bishop Kallistos (Ware), 'The Hesychast Renaissance', in *The Study of Spirituality*, p. 257 where he describes this 'close link between spirituality and dogma' as one of the main features of 'Philokalic' spirituality.

Feofan reveals his grasp of both the nature of individual freedom and the manner in which God treats the individual:

The striving towards God in the mind and in the heart under the goodwill of God prepares man to receive God in truth; it is a union [*единение*], in which, without absorbing the powers and the personality of man, God is *acting* in him *to will and to work* (Phil 2.13); and man according to the apostle, *no longer lives himself, but Christ lives in him* (Gal 2.20). This is not only man's purpose but is the goal of God Himself. Every created being is held in God and by God. The free creatures are given up to themselves, yet not definitively and not completely, but so that they would also give themselves to the all-active God, without forming in God's kingdom a special domain independent of Him.¹⁵⁸

Thus Feofan maintains that in the union of the divine persons with each human being the distinctiveness of every individual is preserved.¹⁵⁹ Man is an active and conscious participant – God does not overpower the faculties or the personality of man.¹⁶⁰ The emerging picture is one of a delicate balance between divine action and human free choice. Yet the emphasis is on the “givenness,” or on the derived nature of man's freedom (‘the free creatures are given up [*уступлены*] to themselves’¹⁶¹) and on the divine purpose behind this ‘lease’ of freedom (‘so that they also would give themselves to the all-active God without forming in God's kingdom a special domain independent of Him’). The qualifying phrase ‘not definitively and not completely’ [*не окончательно и не в конце*] could be interpreted to imply a reduced concept of freedom: a concept which inspired Berdyaev's major criticism of Feofan's religious teaching. Yet it seems that here Feofan is highlighting the idea that a human person is not an autonomous being by the very design of the Creator. Berdyaev claimed that

¹⁵⁸ *Put'*, p. 176, italics in Feofan's text.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Ps.-Macarius, H. 15 §10, see also Zarin, p. 93, especially foot-note 118.

¹⁶⁰ *Put'*, p. 176, cf. also Nach., p. 36.

¹⁶¹ *Put'*, p. 176, cf. also *Ibid.*, p. 150.

Feofan, in contradistinction to Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, did not comprehend how terribly free is the human individual and how painful –even tragic – his freedom can be.¹⁶² While an examination of affinities and differences between Feofan's conception of human freedom and those of Dostoevsky and Nietzsche is beyond the scope of this study, one could argue that Berdyaev's criticism of Feofan's spiritual teaching could, by the same token, be levelled against the teaching of St. Paul who taught that Christians become 'slaves to righteousness'¹⁶³ and admonished that 'whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed.'¹⁶⁴ Neither is Feofan's interpretation of spiritual, 'inward' freedom in *Put'* and in *Chto est dukhovnaya zhizn'* any different from its interpretation in St. Symeon the New Theologian and Isaac the Syrian. Feofan argued that when human capacity for self-determination is not directed towards the 'fulfilment of God's will', suffering is inevitable and freedom to attain those heights of perfection which are accessible to human beings is limited. Yet, he also instructed that 'one should not tie oneself even to the holy rules, but should keep oneself in relation to them with complete freedom and apply them judiciously.'¹⁶⁵ We do find Feofan stating that:

[T]he rejection of our own freedom is the condition for the indwelling of God in us. A free creature acts of itself according to its reason and determination; but this should not be so. In God's kingdom there should not be anybody who acts of himself, but it should be that God acts in everything; this cannot take place while freedom stands on its own, denying and rejecting the power of God.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Nikolai Berdyaev, 'Mirosozetsanie Dostoevskogo' in *Filosofiya Tvorchestva, Kul'tury i Iskusstva*, vol. II, Moscow, 1994, p. 41.

¹⁶³ Romans 6.18.

¹⁶⁴ Romans 13.2.

¹⁶⁵ *Sobraniye Pisem*, vol. IV, p. 234.

¹⁶⁶ Feofan cited in P.A. Smirnov, p. 145.

Yet it seems that Feofan is not calling here for a suppression of one's power of self-determination, but rather has in mind the 'selfish inclination' of one's will, the 'cutting off' of the 'corrupt will' as in St Symeon¹⁶⁷ and the re-direction of our 'consciousness and freedom'.¹⁶⁸ In fact in *Put'* Feofan, echoing Isaac the Syrian, says clearly that in 'self-subjection [to God] freedom is not abolished, but lives on.'¹⁶⁹ Feofan describes this total surrender to the divine will as a dramatic act of self-giving which often evidences itself socially in giving away of possessions, subjection to public profanation and holy foolishness¹⁷⁰ – which, though not exclusively Russian, are regarded as characteristic features of Russian spirituality.

Self-determination and 'silent submissiveness'

Berdyaev's criticism is fully justified in regard to Feofan's interpretation of 'external freedom' and his views on personal and social ethics as laid out in his *Nachertanie*, his letters and apologetic treatises. It is there, as we have observed earlier in this thesis, that Feofan is propagating the idea of 'silent submissiveness' in the realm of one's external existence. The principle of individual freedom and of the legitimacy of diversity in the experience of communion with God is singularly and passionately upheld in *Put' ko Spaseniyu*, yet unfortunately, it is not brought into harmony with Feofan's practical views. In both his attitude to Christians of other confessions and in his social and political outlook, Feofan is openly authoritarian: 'Надо – свободу

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Symeon the New Theologian, *Practical and Theological Texts* §§ 44, 65 and 97 (*The Philokalia* IV, pp. 33, 37, 45); cf. also Zarin, p. 555.

¹⁶⁸ *Chto est'...*, p. 72.

¹⁶⁹ *Put'*, p. 307. Cf. Isaac the Syrian, *Hom.* 70, [D.Miller], p. 341.

¹⁷⁰ Feofan cited in P.A.Smirnov, p.145.

замыслов пресечь, [he instructed Yelagin – M.K.] - зажать рот журналистам и газетчикам. Неверие объявить государственным преступлением. Материальные воззрения запретить под смертною казнию.’ [‘The freedom of ideas must be suppressed, the journalists and the press should be silenced. All unbelief must be declared as treason and materialistic ideology should be forbidden under penalty of death.’]¹⁷¹ In Isaac the Syrian, the principle of indiscriminating love in his ascetic teaching overflows into his teaching on the ‘universal salvation of mankind.’¹⁷² We do not find that same principle present in Feofan. On the contrary, Feofan indefatigably insists on the eternal suffering of the wicked in hell.¹⁷³ The integrity and the inner coherence of *Put’ ko spaseniyu* stands in contrast to the self-contradictory and ambivalent nature of *Nachertanie* and *O Pravoslavii*. Feofan was never able to completely resolve this major division in his outlook. Even at the end of his life (30 October, 1891) Feofan still insisted on a ruthless attitude to the doubtful: ‘Какие это глупые студенты, что верят Л. Толстому. ... Ужели и о поклонении икон колеблется их верование?! ... К таковым будьте безжалостны. – Не разрешайте, если не обещают изменить свои мысли.’ [‘How foolish are those students to believe Leo Tolstoy. ... Is it true that their faith is wavering even over the veneration of icons?! To such ones show no mercy. – Do not give them absolution if they do not promise to change their views.’]¹⁷⁴ Some statements, though, indicate that his attitude toward Christians of other confessions and toward the Jews has become somewhat softer closer towards the end of his life.

¹⁷¹ *Sobraniye Pisem* VII, 143.

¹⁷² Which is distinctively different from Origen’s teaching on *apokatastasis*, see Isaac of Nineveh (Isaac the Syrian). ‘The Second Part’, 39 §17 cited in Hilarion (Alfeyev), *Mir Isaaka Sirina*, pp. 298-299, cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 306-307.

¹⁷³ See his ‘O vechnosti muchenii’ from *Pis’mo k raznym litsam*, Moscow, 1892, pp. 3-23.

In one of his letters written in March of 1889 we find him saying: 'Еврейку-лютеранку надо предоставить воле Божией благой.'¹⁷⁵ And his requests to pray for his 'всеокаянство' ['utter wretchedness'] (requests which become more and more frequent as he draws closer to the end of his life) also testify to the moments of triumph of Christ's spirit of love and humility in his soul. Feofan's correspondence reveals that he himself was not willing to follow the principle of 'silent submissiveness' and was genuinely agonising over taking a stand on politically sensitive moral issues (e.g. when in February of 1874 the Synod was contemplating more liberal forms of ecclesiastical judiciary):

Великое ли дело, что например, царь Константин одну жену в монастырь посадил, а на другой женился. Св. Тарасий пошумел, пошумел, и замолчал, - а Феодор Студит – прекратил с ним (св. Тарасием) общение. А кажись бы можно промолчать. Новая-то царица была племянница его. – Вот как стояли! – Как нам быть, никак не разгадаю. – А надо это решить.¹⁷⁶

This earnest search for solutions and Feofan's candid reflections make his ambivalent outlook all the more interesting – they demonstrate that the root of Feofan's inner conflict and his intolerance lay in the fact that, while perceiving the reality of life in all its contradictory multiplicity, he was struggling to enforce upon it one single unitary vision of harmony. He was never willing to give up his passion for reflection and understanding: 'Я все думаю, думаю...' ¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ *Sobraniye Pisem* V, 207-208.

¹⁷⁵ *Sobraniye Pisem*, II, 225.

¹⁷⁶ (ET): 'Is it such a great issue, that for instance, Constantine VI put his wife into a monastery and married another woman. Patriarch Tarasius at the beginning made a stir, but fell quiet, whereas Theodore the Studite suspended all communication with him (that is with St. Tarasius). It would seem that he could have kept silent too. After all, the new empress was his niece. – See how firmly they stood! What we should do, I cannot figure out. Yet it must be resolved.' In Feofan's letter to Yelagin, *Sobraniye Pisem* VII, 46.

¹⁷⁷ *Sobranie Pisem* VII, 46.

Communion and gnosis: the intelligent interplay of grace and freedom

In his development of the Hesychast teaching on different stages or degrees of communion with God in *Put'*, Feofan is careful not to exclude entirely the participation of the discursive powers of the mind.¹⁷⁸ In this effort, he distances himself from the tradition of Evagrian apophaticism with its emphasis on the need to transcend all rational thinking, words and images. Feofan emphasises that the 'spiritual life is intelligent life',¹⁷⁹ echoing the stress on understanding (*ἐν γνώσει*) or conscious and intelligent participation which one finds in Abba Dorotheus, Isaac the Syrian and other spiritual masters.¹⁸⁰

Anticipating a question about the rationale behind one's striving for a union with God when such a union is arguably already granted in baptism or in the experience of repentance (Gal 3.27; Col 3.3; Acts 17.27), Feofan reminds his readers of the need to distinguish between three different stages of communion with God:

- a) the communion of thought [*мысленное*] which occurs during the period of conversion;
- b) the hidden communion [*сокрытое*] during the period of the cleansing and testing of the heart;
- c) the communion which is obvious to the believer himself and to those around him [*явное для себя и других*].¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ See *Put'*, pp. 177-187.

¹⁷⁹ *Put'*, p. 178.

¹⁸⁰ See Abba Dorotheus, *Doctr.*, XIV, PG 88, c. iii, 1777 B; see also Isaac the Syrian, A. V, σ. 33; cf. Λογ. I, σελ. 6 (in the ed. of N. Theotokes). Feofan purposely included the works of these authors into his translation of *The Philokalia* for their stress on the interior dynamics of asceticism. See his introductory remarks to the second volume of *Dobrotolyubie*, pp. III-IV.

¹⁸¹ *Put'*, p. 177.

Feofan is concerned to establish that the indwelling of God in the human person does not consist only of man's thoughts of God or of God's goodwill towards man – to Feofan these are only instruments, or 'the means' for achieving true communion. In the true union Christ lives and acts within man.¹⁸² Feofan describes the last two stages (i.e., *b* and *c* above) as the stages of *actual communion*. Yet the 'communion of thought' (*a* above) continues into the second and the third stage since, as Feofan himself explains, 'The whole spiritual life consists of a transition from communion with God in thought to that which is actual, living, tangible and manifest.'¹⁸³ Thus Feofan highlights the patristic stress on the intelligent, personal nature of the experience of communion. This is also evident from his emphasis on reciprocity as one of the characteristic features of the divine-human communion. In his exposition of these three stages (which are similar to the three stages of the spiritual journey in Pseudo-Macarius¹⁸⁴) Feofan employs highly graphic language, even coining a new Russian term 'взаимовходность' (inter-penetrability) of grace and freedom, which is now standard in Russian theological dictionaries.¹⁸⁵ Feofan speaks of the first stage as the time when 'God is still outside of man and man is outside of God, they are not 'inter-penetrable', not in mutual contact [*не сопроникаются, не взаимно-входны*].'¹⁸⁶ But when the complete union is attained, the inter-penetration

¹⁸² *Put* ', p.176.

¹⁸³ *Put* ', pp.177-178. Cf. Gregory the Theologian, *Or.* XXVIII, c.XII, col.41.

¹⁸⁴ See Ps.-Macarius, H.15 §35, H.17 §4 and H. 32 §6. See also the important comments on the three stages in Ps.-Macarius by Bishop Kallistos (Ware) in the Introduction to *Pseudo-Macarius* (CWS), p. xiii.

¹⁸⁵ See P.I.Leporskiy, 'Blagodat' [Grace], in *Khristianstvo* III, p. 336.

¹⁸⁶ *Put* ', p.177. Here Feofan is using the terminology employed by St Maximus. He uses the Russian equivalent of the Greek term *περιχώρησις* in the sense of the human penetration into the realm of the divine. Cf. *Amb* 5, PG 91. 1053B. For an excellent analysis of the use of this term in Maximus see Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus*

(*perichoresis*) is mutual. Feofan's understanding of the divine-human communion depends to a great extent on that of Ps.-Macarius and Diadochus. He frequently cites both authors in his exposition of the subject in *Put*.¹⁸⁷ He also relies on such later Hesychast authorities as St. Gregory of Sinai and St. Nicephorus of Mt. Athos.¹⁸⁸ But how does he develop this theme of divine-human inter-penetration in application to the practical pursuits of contemplation?

Feofan likened the indwelling of grace in the heart to the burning of a flame and described prayer as the 'movement of the spiritual air' which fans the flame of grace in the heart.¹⁸⁹ This metaphor illustrates the unique role of prayer and indicates that it would be a mistake to attempt an assessment of Feofan's teaching on the dynamics of the interaction between grace and freedom without considering his teaching on prayer as the real means of divine-human communion.

Prayer – the instrument of spiritual individuation

‘Ибо не для всякого одна молитва’
[‘One prayer is not good for all’].
Put, p. 220.

Writing of prayer as practiced by adults, Feofan is eager to emphasise that all the rules of prayer and such accessories (e.g., a rosary)¹⁹⁰ are only aids and that the most

the Confessor, 2nd edn., Chicago, 1995, pp. 27-28. For Feofan's appraisal of the works of St Maximus see *Sobraniye Pisem*, VI, pp. 142-143.

¹⁸⁷ See *Put*, pp. 177-187 where Feofan cites Ps.-Macarian Homily 8 §2, H.9 §§1-7, H. 17 §4, H.2; and Diadochus, *On Spiritual Knowledge*, §§ 69, 77, 78, 82, 85, 87, 90.

¹⁸⁸ See *Put*, pp. 187-188 where Feofan cites Gregory of Sinai, 'On Commandments and Doctrines', § 41, and *Put*, p. 208 where Feofan, speaking of the interior concentration of all the powers of one's being within one's heart as the 'encounter of the [human] spirit with itself', refers to the description of the 'reunion' of the spiritual intellect with the soul by St Nicephorus. See 'On Watchfulness' (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 205).

¹⁸⁹ *Pis'ma o dukhovnoi zhizni*, p. 122.

¹⁹⁰ In Greek, κομβοσχοίνιον; in Russian четки. The use of which he, nevertheless, strongly

important factor is the 'intelligent standing before God in the heart.'¹⁹¹ However, he stresses the fact that set prayers are necessary to one's learning to pray and to bringing one into the atmosphere in which spontaneous or 'self-impelled' [*самодвижная*] prayer is possible. Before praying set prayers, one must, of course, think through them and when praying, pray 'as if they are coming from *our* mind and *our* heart.' When writing of making reverences [bows] as an important part of daily prayer (because, as he believed, they 'move and warm the heart'¹⁹²), Feofan at the same time emphasises 'intelligent' [*с размышлением*] reading of the Scriptures¹⁹³ (especially Psalms) and the fathers as the means of maintaining prayerful concentration on God.¹⁹⁴

More clearly and eloquently than any of his predecessors in the Russian spiritual tradition, Feofan demonstrates in his writings that, in Eastern Orthodox spirituality, communion with God through prayer, partaking of Christ and conscious realisation of His presence in the soul is the highest degree not just of spiritual development, but of overall personal development as well. In *Chto est' dukhovnaya zhizn'* he states emphatically that 'those who do not have the movements and the actions of the spirit within them have not attained the level of human dignity.'¹⁹⁵ The praying, contemplative person is the person at his or her highest. The notion of personhood and the teaching on prayer and contemplation are thus indissolubly linked.

recommended. See *Chto est'...*, p.174.

¹⁹¹ *Chto est'...*, p.173.

¹⁹² Feofan cited in Smirnov, p. 225.

¹⁹³ And observed that this is the most ancient Christian custom which was included in the monastic rule already by St Pachomius (ca. 292-346) and St Anthony (ca. 251-356). See *Chto est'...*, p. 172.

¹⁹⁴ Feofan cited in Smirnov, p. 256. See also *Chto est'...*, p. 172.

¹⁹⁵ *Chto est'...*, p. 34. Cf. Ps.-Macarius, H. 27, §1.4.

One may speak of the anthropology of Orthodox prayer in Feofan.

Feofan approaches the riches of the ancient Hesychast tradition of inner mystical prayer confidently, demonstrating maturity and balance in his method. Translating into Russian the Greek version of Lorenzo Scupoli's *Unseen Warfare*, edited by Nikodemus of the Holy Mountain, he, in the words of H.A.Hodges, 'alters Nicodemus freely – more freely and extensively than Nicodemus altered Scupoli'¹⁹⁶ and in the end provides a much more complete expression of the Hesychast teaching than the one found in the version by Nikodemus.¹⁹⁷ Translating the text on the *Three Methods of Prayer*, attributed to St. Symeon the New Theologian, Feofan altogether omits sections on the recommended 'breathing techniques' used in the Jesus Prayer, explaining in the footnote,¹⁹⁸ that these 'external exercises' can be misleading and confusing and, in the absence of an experienced spiritual guide, even potentially dangerous.

Obedience to the spiritual guide and the exercise of one's own judgement

'You must be a strict Mother Superior to yourself.'

Pis'ma k raznym litsam, p. 330.

¹⁹⁶ See H.A. Hodges, 'Introduction' in *Unseen Warfare being the Spiritual Combat and Path to Paradise of Lorenzo Scupoli as edited by Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and revised by Feofan the Recluse* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952). p. 60. Hereafter Hodges.

¹⁹⁷ See Hodges, p. 65 where he correctly observes that 'Perpetual prayer – the abiding sense of God's presence in the soul – spiritual warmth of heart... are the recurring themes in Feofan's revision of this book. Their introduction restores the balance of the traditional Christian teaching, which in Scupoli as in other modern Latin authors had become disturbed. It makes the *Unseen Warfare* a genuinely Orthodox work, a worthy modern companion to *The Philokalia*, with which, both in Greece and in Russia, it has shared the same editors.'

¹⁹⁸ See *Dobrotolubiye*., V, pp. 469-470.

Writing on the practice of the Jesus prayer Feofan emphasised: ‘кто сколько может’ [‘each [one should practice it] according to his abilities’].¹⁹⁹ He also demonstrated the same individual approach, the same boldness and maturity of judgement in his reflections regarding limitations and weaknesses of human spiritual guides. His interpretation in *Put*’ of the teaching of the ancient fathers on the necessity of submitting to a spiritual guide and the evolution of his own views on the subject are highly significant for our present study. While in *Put*’, Feofan, following the famous exhortations of SS. Barsanuphius and John,²⁰⁰ calls for unreserved obedience and total submission to the spiritual guide,²⁰¹ he is at the same time careful to emphasise that the spiritual guide should always adapt the general rules to the specific circumstances and individuality of each particular aspirant.²⁰² He also recognises the limitations of all human guides and teaches that in the case of a sincere seeker God would, if necessary, take ultimate control of all direction:

The Lord Himself watches over the one who thus submits to the guide. Pray, and the Lord will point the guide to you; submit to the guide and the Lord will teach him how to guide you.²⁰³

Revealing statements which demonstrate the evolution of Feofan’s views on this subject are found in his later letters to private individuals and are dated closer to the end of his life. The major thrust of these private exhortations is the paramount importance of developing mature self-determination and independent spiritual

¹⁹⁹ *Put*’, p. 245.

²⁰⁰ See *Put*’, pp. 291, 293 where Feofan refers to ‘Directions in Spiritual Work’ §§126, 76, Engl. trans. in *Writings from The Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), pp.366, 379; see also Saint Barsanuphius and Saint John, *Guidance Toward Spiritual Life: Answers to the Questions of the Disciples* (Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1991).

²⁰¹ *Put*’, pp. 194, 195, 293.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 201, 265.

judgement. Thus in his reply to Mitrophan R. Koryakin (June 16, 1888), Feofan says:

You wrote that 'one should not be without a guide.' The guide is a post by the side of the road, yet each should pursue the road of his own watching his steps and looking to the sides. Starets Paisi Velichkovsky spent his whole life looking for a guide and did not find one. He lived with two or three other ascetics and they were guided by mutual counsel. Please, exclude me from your list of suitable guides... and decide for yourself how to handle prayer and the lessons of the fathers.²⁰⁴

In another private letter (1891), Feofan further develops the same idea:

It is difficult to find a suitable guide. One cannot rely on anybody at the outset. What is left is to test everything and to hold on to that which is good. Let your own interior order, along with the written directions of the fathers and [your] gradually accumulated personal experience, indicate to you what you should hold on to.²⁰⁵

The most candid statement dealing with this issue is found in Feofan's letter to A.F.M. (June 15, 1893), one year before Feofan's death. There he once again enlists the support of Starets Paisi, this time citing the advice of Paisi himself:

It seems that you would like me to be your guide. I do not take it upon myself to guide anyone, yet when somebody seeks my advice and I have a good understanding of the matter I am always willing to help. You will not find the true guide as you define him. God's Starets Paisi ... spent his whole life looking for a guide ... and did not find one. But he settled the matter thus: 'One should seek guidance in God's Word and in the teachings of the holy fathers, especially the ascetics. But when you are perplexed ask those living champions of salvation for advice.'²⁰⁶

The implications of Feofan's statements that obedience to a spiritual guide is not necessarily unqualified and his emphasis on the need to develop one's own spiritual judgement agree in spirit and in principle with the teachings of such noteworthy authors as St. Symeon, the New Theologian, whose own spiritual father St. Symeon

²⁰³ Ibid, p. 197. See also Feofan's brochure *Chto potrebno pokayavshemusya i vstupivshemu na dobry Put' spaseniya*, 1st edn, Moscow, 1899.

²⁰⁴ *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letter № 188, I, 222.

²⁰⁵ *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letter № 804, V, 90.

the Studite (c. 917-986/7) was a lay monk,²⁰⁷ and St Peter of Damascus, who stressed that disciples must seek the advice of the spiritual guide *voluntarily* and emphasised the 'sovereign liberty of the human will.'²⁰⁸ The thinking of all these men was an important factor in the theological development of Feofan himself. Though Feofan was undoubtedly also greatly indebted to Paisi, Feofan surpassed him in his expression of the genius of the Hesychast vision of personhood. Paisi indirectly voiced the problem of spiritual guides, but Feofan addressed it and gave it the articulation which highlighted his principal anthropological concerns: 'Духовник – дело совести' ['the issue of spiritual guides is the issue of [the freedom of] conscience'].²⁰⁹ His interpretation of the prayer of the heart in *Put'* further demonstrates his deep commitment to an individual approach and unfolds his holistic vision of contemplation.

Prayer of the heart and the attainment of true mastery over one's being

The fifth volume of Feofan's *Dobrotolubiye* contains his valuable translation into Russian of the major texts of such thirteenth and fourteenth century Hesychasts as

²⁰⁶ *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letter № 486. III, 153.

²⁰⁷ See e.g. 'Practical and Theological Texts', esp. §33 (*The Philokalia* IV, pp. 30-31) where Symeon instructs: 'Implore God with prayers and tears to send you a guide who is dispassionate and holy. But you yourself should also study the divine writings ... so that you can compare the teachings of your master with them; for thus you will see and observe them as in a mirror. Take to heart and keep in mind those of his teachings that agree with the divine writings, but separate out and reject those that are false and incongruent. Otherwise you will be led astray. For in these days there are all too many deceivers and false prophets.'

²⁰⁸ See 'On Building Up the Soul Through the Virtues' (*The Philokalia* III, pp. 183, 72). Cf. Feofan, *Sobraniye Pisem*, Letter No. 751 (February 11, 1882), IV, 247. Cf. also the advice of SS. Barsanuphius and John on how to discern between personal wisdom of teachers, their doctrines and revelation of the Holy Spirit. See SS. Barsanuphius and John, *Guidance Toward Spiritual Life*, Answer 604, ed. Nikodemus Hagioreites [Volos, 1960], pp. 286-287.

²⁰⁹ *Sobraniye Pisem*, IV, 247.

Nicephorus the Monk, the Pseudo-Symeon, St. Gregory of Sinai and Palamas. The above texts describe in detail the method of connecting the ‘prayer of Jesus’ with the technique of descending with one’s intellect into the depths of the heart.²¹⁰ The ultimate purpose of these Hesychast exercises (which involve the whole of man in his psycho-physiological totality) is the coming to a conscious realisation of the presence of Christ in the soul.

In his interpretation in *Put*’ of this ancient ascetic practice of holding one’s mind in the heart²¹¹, Feofan retains the expressly holistic stance of such of his predecessors as Ps.-Macarius, Diadochus of Photike and Palamas.²¹² This is how he explains in *Put*’ the essence of the mystical experience of [внутри-пребывание] ‘staying within’ one’s heart: ‘When divine grace affects man in his heart, then his spirit descends there with its consciousness, being followed by all the powers of the soul and the body.’²¹³ Thus, the experience of ‘staying within’ one’s heart involves much more than simply ‘holding one’s mind in the heart’ for the purpose of contemplating the spiritual realm.²¹⁴ While it is surely important to notice here the prominence of consciousness, it is equally important to observe the manner in which

²¹⁰ See Nicephorus the Hesychast PG 147. 945-66, the Eng. transl. in *The Philokalia* IV, 192-206; Pseudo-Symeon (ed. I. Hausherr, in *Or. Chr. Per.* IX, 2, 1927) and St. Gregory of Sinai PG 150. 1313-36.

²¹¹ Which was first recorded by Nicephorus the Hesychast, see PG 147. 945-66.

²¹² See e.g. Ps.-Macarius, H. 15 § 20 where he writes that the ‘heart directs and governs all the other organs of the body. And when grace pastures the heart, it rules over all the members and the thoughts. For there, in the heart, the mind abides as well as all the thoughts of the soul and all its hopes. This is how grace penetrates throughout all parts of the body.’ See also H. 49 §4, H. 32 §10, H. 30 § 3; Diadochus, ‘On Spiritual Knowledge’ §§ 24-25, and Palamas, *Cap. Phys.* 38, PG 150.1148 A (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 363).

²¹³ *Put*’, p. 206.

²¹⁴ Feofan defined the ‘spiritual realm’ as the ‘sovereignty of the Trinity and the whole economy of salvation’, see *Put*’, p. 211. It is also noteworthy that Palamas cautioned that the statements by Nicephorus on ‘bringing the intellect down into the heart’ are not to be interpreted literally, see ‘In Defence of Those who Devotely Practise a Life of Stillness’ § 3 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 334, cf. also ‘Introductory Note’, pp. 192-193).

Feofan involves the physical dimension of man's being in the experience of 'bringing down the mind into the heart.'²¹⁵ In *Put* Feofan never separates the process of attaining contemplation with one's consciousness from the participation of the will, the emotional sphere and the physical side of man. He writes that 'the intense gathering of the powers of the soul *and the body* there [in the heart] are the essential means, the art, the exploit.'²¹⁶ All the organs and systems of the body should harmoniously enhance the concentration of the mental faculties on the work of prayer. But as for the relationship between this gathering of the powers of the soul and the body in the heart and the activity of the consciousness, Feofan believed that they 'presuppose each other and mutually generate each other' – hence the former cannot take place without the latter.²¹⁷

In *Put* Feofan also points out that it is necessary to distinguish between the experience of 'staying within one's heart' and mere reflection or the state of being deep in thought, even though they might look alike. 'The latter,' he believed,

occurs only in the place of the mind [*νυχθημεριον*], and is kept in the head, leaving the other forces unoccupied; while the former takes place in the heart which is the centre of all movements and which is lower and deeper than everything that is or happens within us.²¹⁸

This separation of deep thinking and 'staying within one's heart' becomes clearer when one keeps in mind the distinction in Greek philosophy and in the fathers between the discursive reason [*διάνοια*] and the spiritual intellect [*νοῦς*], which is capable of

²¹⁵ *Put*, p. 206.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, loc. cit..

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 207. Cf. Ps.-Macarius, H. 15 § 32.

simple and direct experiential knowledge.²¹⁹ While reflection involves only the discursive faculty of the mind, praying with one's mind in the heart engages all the powers of man's being in the experience of living communion with God. That is why Feofan insists that 'in its genuine form, staying within one's heart is the condition of man's true mastery of himself and consequently of true freedom and intelligence, hence of truly spiritual life.'²²⁰

Nothing demonstrates better the amazing inter-relatedness and inter-locking of Feofan's trichotomist anthropology and his tripartite theology of prayer than his own description of the degrees of inner prayer. The human spirit, soul and body participate in the journey through the degrees of bodily [*телесная*] or 'oral' prayer, mental or attentive [*внимательная*] prayer and finally the prayer of the 'spiritual feeling' [*молитва чувства*] or the prayer of the heart (not to be confused with emotional prayer):

There are various degrees of prayer. The first degree is bodily prayer, consisting for the most part in reading, in standing, and in making prostrations. In all this there must needs be patience, labour, and sweat; for the attention runs away, the heart feels nothing and has no desire to pray. Yet in spite of this, give yourself a moderate rule and keep to it. Such is active prayer.

The second degree is prayer with attention: the mind becomes accustomed to collecting itself in the hour of prayer, and prays consciously throughout, without distraction. The mind is focused upon the written words to the point of speaking them as if they were its own.

The third degree is prayer of feeling: the heart is warmed by concentration so that what hitherto has only been thought now becomes feeling. Where first it was a contrite phrase now it is contrition itself; and what was once a petition in words is transformed into a sensation of entire necessity. Whoever has passed through action and thought to true feeling, will pray without words, for God is God of the heart. So that the end of apprenticeship in prayer can be

²¹⁹ Cf. Gregory of Sinai, 'On Commandments and Doctrines' §§2-3 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 212) where he instructs: 'By knowledge of truth understand above all apprehension of truth through grace. Other kinds of knowledge should be regarded as images of intellections or the rational demonstration of facts.'

²²⁰ *Put*, p. 207.

said to come when in our prayer we move only from feeling to feeling. In this state reading may cease, as well as deliberate thought; let there be only a dwelling in feeling with specific marks of prayer.²²¹

This third degree of prayer is the Orthodox *apophatic* mystical union of the human person with God.²²² The prayer of spiritual feeling or the prayer of the heart in Feofan is the living union – the true *hesychia* (безмолвие)²²³ which leads to dispassion (απάθεια) – the reintegrated state of restored spiritual and bodily purity.²²⁴ It is a state of completeness and yet an experience of constant growth in perfection.²²⁵ It is the state in which man is of one spirit with God²²⁶ and yet this inter-penetration does not obliterate the personal identity or even overpower the self-determination of each individual person.²²⁷ It is in this very experience of participation and sharing that, in the words of Palamas, ‘God in His entirety penetrates the saints in their entirety and

²²¹ *Put*’, p. 242. English tr. from *The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology*, compiled by Igumen Chariton of Valamo, tr. By E. Kadloubovsky and E.M. Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 52. Cf. Diadochus of Photiki, ‘On Spiritual Knowledge’ §73 (*The Philokalia* I, p. 277) where one finds a somewhat similar description of the progression through degrees of prayer with the characteristic emphasis on spiritual feelings as the rewards of the last stage. Diadochus writes: ‘When a person is in a state of natural well-being, he sings the psalms with a full voice and prefers to pray out loud. But when he is energised by the Holy Spirit, with gladness and completely at peace he sings and prays in the heart alone.’ Cf. also the five degrees of prayer in St Peter of Damascus, different from Feofan’s three-fold model, though related to it, in ‘Conscious Awareness in the Heart’, XXIV, Book II, ‘Twenty Four Discourses’ (*The Philokalia* III, p. 277).

²²² The Orthodox term *apophatic* comes from the Greek *apophatikos* negative. In the *apophatic* union the experiential knowledge of God is obtained through negation. On the apophatic approach as the movement away from the inadequacy of symbols and concepts ‘towards an immediate experience of the living God’ see Bishop Kallistos (Ware) *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), pp. 13-15.

²²³ In accordance with the Philokalic spiritual tradition Feofan identified *hesychia* – the state of inner tranquillity – with the practice of pure prayer which he described as the ‘standing before God with one’s mind within the heart’ (*Put*’, pp. 310-311). In his descriptions of this mystical experience he was eager to stress the balance between spiritual feeling and understanding. He taught that only those are genuine *hesychasts* who enter into interior stillness ‘being drawn by the sweetness of God’s love’ and ‘who go through this experience of *hesychia* ‘intelligently’ (*Put*’, p. 310). Cf. John Climacus, ‘On Stillness’, Step 27, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (CWS, p. 270). Hereafter Climacus.

²²⁴ *Put*’, pp. 310-313. Cf. Climacus, Step 29 (CWS, p. 282-283).

²²⁵ *Put*’, p. 312.

²²⁶ *Put*’, p. 308, *Nach.*, p. 35. Cf. Ps-Macarius, H. 46 §6 and 1 Corinthians 6.17.

the saints in their entirety penetrate God entirely, exchanging the whole of Him for themselves, and acquiring Him alone as the reward of their ascent towards Him.²²⁸ It is the ultimate goal of the human spiritual quest, which, as Feofan reminds the reader of *Nachertanie*, has been described by the Eastern fathers as deification of man (*обожение*) or *theosis*.²²⁹ But in *Put'* Feofan prefers to use the language of Ps.-Macarius. He speaks of the prayer of the heart as a living union, *Богообщение* and *Богоселение*.²³⁰ Yet, what is most remarkable is that even in describing the climax of the spiritual journey, Feofan does not lose sight of the concrete individual persons in their diversity, their different spiritual capacities, temperaments and mentalities; highlighting again the universality and the supreme individuality of the experience of divine-human communion:

Восходить к сему изумлению *может всякий сам* через отрешенное и покойное углубление; ... [к]ак кто *возможет*, только должно сие делать, ибо здесь совершается в духе самое истинное и приличнейшее поклонение твари Творцу и Господу. Само собою разумеется, что чувство сие имеет разные степени; *но каждому свое, и каждый пусть совершает дело сие по силам своим*. Моисей восходит на самый верх горы и скрывается в облаке, *другие* стоят на полугоре, а *третьи* у подножья. ... Значит, никто не должен отказываться неумением или незнанием дела сего.²³¹

²²⁷ See *Nach.*, p. 36.

²²⁸ 'The Declaration of the Holy Mountain', §2 (*The Philokalia* IV, p. 421).

²²⁹ *Nach.*, p. 35 where Feofan refers to the statement by Gregory the Theologian on man's love towards God as the 'path to deification' in *Carmina moralia* PG 37, 957.

²³⁰ *Put'*, pp. 307, 317.

²³¹ (ET): 'Each should commune with God *in his own way*... yet this should be conducted for in this activity is being performed in the spirit the most genuine and the most appropriate worship by a creature of the Creator and Lord. It goes without saying of course that this experience has varied degrees, *but every person is different* [но каждому своё] and each one should conduct this activity *according to his own capacity*. Moses ascends to the very top of the mountain and is hidden in the cloud, others are standing on the slope halfway to the top and still others are worshipping at the foot of the mountain. This is a description of the three types of conditions or states which people experience as they ascend to the comprehension and realisation of the incomprehensibility of the infinite God. It also illustrates that no one should excuse himself on account that they are not able or not knowledgeable regarding this duty of theirs.' *Nach.*, p. 383, (italics in the above Russian text and in the ET are mine – M.K.). In this passage Feofan makes reference to the *Mystical Theology* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. See *Ibid.*

In this pointed stress on the individual *‘как кто возможет’*, *‘но каждому свое’*, *‘каждый пусть совершает дело сие по силам своим’* [‘each in his own manner’, ‘every person is different’, ‘each according to his own capacity’] we see Feofan’s practical Hesychast personalism at its highest.²³² Feofan offers us his candid reflections regarding spiritual guides and his reconstruction of the Hesychast teaching on the prayer of the heart and on the principles of spiritual warfare to remind us yet again that the ‘persons engaged in ascetic exploits are too different’ [*лица воюющие слишком различны*]²³³, that ‘one prayer is not good for all’ [*не для всякаго одна молитва*]²³⁴, and that in the final analysis ‘each individual is the best inventor of the rules of strife for himself’ [*лучший изобретатель правил брани – каждое лицо само для себя.*]²³⁵

²³² We have observed the same passionate concern in Feofan’s portrayal of the interior dynamics of the development of individual spiritual consciousness and in his insistence on the fragile and contingent nature of the effects of baptism, in his teaching on *зовение* [preparation for the Eucharist], in his reflections on the intimate inter-penetration of the human person and Christ in the mystery of the Eucharist, and in his descriptions of the gradual process of Christ’s *вселение* [taking possession] of the human soul.

²³³ *Put*, p. 284.

²³⁴ *Put*, p. 220.

²³⁵ *Put*, p. 284.

CONCLUSIONS

Feofan is the most arresting Russian monastic writer in the nineteenth century. He was the first in the Russian Hesychast tradition to demonstrate with unparalleled vividness and force the legitimacy of spiritual diversity, the uniqueness and the highly subjective nature of each religious experience. What is especially significant is that Feofan derives this emphasis on the infinite diversity of persons and their spiritual states from within the depths of the tradition generally perceived as intolerant towards non-conformity and dissent. He saw the basis for this emphasis on diversity in the very nature of the human person and in the manifold ways and delicate manner in which God deals with each individual. Yet, as we have observed, the paradox of Feofan's outlook was in his inability to extend the principle of inviolable spiritual freedom and diversity beyond the domains of his own tradition. He was never able to totally reconcile within himself the individualistic Hesychast mystic and honest scholar with the zealous ideologue of traditionalist Orthodoxy and tsarist autocracy.

Feofan gained truly wide recognition as a passionate advocate of Eastern ascetic spirituality and an authoritative teacher of Christian morality through the publication of his *Pis'ma o khristianskoi zhizni* (1860) and *Put' ko spaseniyu* (1868). These were his first two major contributions to the debate between the defenders of the austere ascetic

Orthodoxy and the promoters of the 'lighter' or 'more lenient' Orthodoxy fashioned after the moralistic Protestant models imported from liberal German universities.

The Russian tradition of *starchestvo* – and especially the school of Paisi Velichkovsky – were clearly major influences on Feofan's spiritual formation during his student years in Kiev. *Starets* Parthenii, who was the confessor of the Metropolitan and of the Lavra, was the first to point out to Feofan the essence of Hesychast spirituality: the unceasing prayer 'of the mind in the heart.' Yet, Feofan acquired the remarkable depth and the breadth of his personal spiritual vision through the rigorous study of Orthodox tradition.

While the Pauline teachings on the 'spiritual man' and on the supremacy of God's Spirit in the life of every Christian were definite influences shaping his theological stance, Feofan incorporates a number of distinctively Eastern patristic notions into his theology of personality and creatively develops them. He was captivated by the Ps.-Macarian and the Diadochian vision of the restoration of the divine image in the human person and gradual growth in the divine likeness. Both of these authors exerted a profound influence on Feofan. Throughout Feofan's writings we observe the prominence of the Ps.-Macarian emphasis on the spiritualisation of the whole human being and his distinction between the generality of men and the individual person; we also observe the stress on the diversity of religious experiences and on human individuality which is clearly present not only in Ps.-Macarius but also in Isaac the Syrian, whose writings had considerable influence on Feofan. Feofan emphasises as well the patristic notion of the freedom of the will as rooted in the divine image, and creatively develops the Diadochian stress on the conscious love for God in the heart and conscious awareness of Christ's presence in the heart. We have

observed that Feofan's insistence on the need for direct personal experience, and his teaching on consciousness and freedom as the essential attributes of human sovereignty and regal status are grounded (albeit not exclusively) in the works of St. Symeon the New Theologian and Nikitas Stithatos. We have seen, as well, that Feofan closely studied not only the Greek and the Syriac fathers but also his precursors in the Russian Hesychast tradition.

He held in high esteem the spiritual vision of such Russian hesychasts as Nil of Sora, Paisii Velichkovsky and St Seraphim of Sarov. He owes much to their influence on his initial theological formation, as he himself acknowledges in *Put'*. Moreover, Smolitch^s was right in observing that in his ethical teaching Feofan is also indebted to St Tikhon of Zadonsk. Yet, the originality of Feofan's own contribution to Hesychast personalism lies in the bold and creative use of the most significant patristic insights in his own expansive portrayals of every stage in the development of individual spiritual consciousness and in his graphic descriptions of the subjectivity of mechanisms and constituent elements of the process of spiritual warfare.

Feofan was also highly innovative in his synthesis of patristic and German romantic psychology. One must acknowledge the influence on Feofan of his psychology teacher Avsenev, especially in regard to the former's interest in the analogies between patristic and romantic psychology and his attraction to Schellingian *Naturphilosophie*. This early influence is apparent when one traces the complex roots of a number of anthropological elements in Feofan's thought (such as, for instance, his trichotomist teaching on the supremacy of the spirit in the human person, his teaching on consciousness and freedom as the attributes of the spirit and his stress on self-awareness as a uniquely human ability).

Nevertheless, as we observed, the principal difference between Avsenev and Feofan lies in the fact that Avsenev was immersed in Schellingian thought and looked to the Fathers for the support of Schubert's anthropological theories, whereas Feofan was rooted in the Fathers and looked to German idealist philosophy and romantic theories to find new ways of expressing the patristic vision of personhood. Yet Feofan was not able to avoid a certain eclecticism of views.

Feofan was more open to the Western Christian tradition than he would have liked to admit. He used extensively the commentaries of Thomas Aquinas (see e.g. Letter № 1159, *Sobraniye Pisem* VII, p. 170) and the works of the Catholic mystic Francis de Sales (see Feofan's correspondence with Madame V.V. Sh., the translator of Francis de Sales, e.g. Letter № 989, *Sobraniye Pisem* VI, pp. 122-123). He admired English exegetes (in all probability J.B. Lightfoot and B.F. Westcott) and used them in his New Testament studies. He borrowed somewhat questionable cosmological constructions from Lutheran Schellingian naturalists and theologians like Schubert, yet showed great vigilance in thoroughly reworking *The Spiritual Combat*, initially written by the Catholic mystic Lorenzo Scupoli.

At the time when some of the brightest minds in the Russian society were searching for a new identity and were contemplating a variety of other alternatives, he labored tirelessly to interpret and disseminate as widely as possible the fruits of the ancient patristic spirituality. He had no sympathy for Tolstoy with his rationalist approach to faith and his total rejection of historic Christianity. He fought against the secular utopian theory of human progress advocated by such populists as Herzen and Chernyshevsky. He dismissed the Radstockist-Pashkovite version of the Gospel as sectarian and hence lacking

the Holy Spirit and the saving power of sacramental grace. He had no respect for either the morose monastic religion of Ignati Bryanchaninov (with his questionable teachings on the human soul as an independent entity and the purgative sufferings of the righteous in hell) or the moralistic liberal version of Orthodoxy of Gerasim Pavsky and Ioann L. Yanyshev. From the depths of the patristic tradition and in the atmosphere of growing indifference towards religion in Russian intellectual life, Feofan's voice was a passionate and powerful rebuke to spiritual apathy. He acutely sensed the need to awaken the individual spiritual consciousness and the collective consciousness of the Church.

Feofan gave new expression to the Russian tradition of *starchestvo* both in terms of the manner and the intent of spiritual direction. He never received visitors as did St. Seraphim of Sarov and the startsi of Optino. He was an epistolary *staretz*. In his exhortations, especially closer towards the end of his life, he does not stress the need for absolute obedience to a spiritual guide. On the contrary, echoing the advice of St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Peter of Damascus and referring to Paisi Velichkovsky, he encourages his spiritual children to develop their own mature self-determination and independent spiritual judgement. At the same time his extensive correspondence also indirectly testifies of his own great passion for and need of human fellowship.

Feofan's genius was in his ability to portray with deep psychological realism the universals of Orthodox ascetic spirituality in their application to the infinite variety of individual personalities and situations. Throughout all of his spiritual writings one observes this double emphasis on the universal character of spirituality and on the expressed subjectivity of its specific manifestations. In this particular emphasis Feofan's

work anticipates the work of William James on the *Varieties of Religious Experience* (see Chapter Four of this thesis, section *Spirit*, p. 169, note 108).

As for the paradox of Feofan's own disregard for the legitimacy of religious diversity and individual freedom in his apologetic writings and his own practical views – this only highlights the truthfulness of his own powerful teaching on moral delusions, as well as raises the issue of the breadth of spiritual horizons and of the need for the triumph of Christ's teaching on indiscriminating love.

Taking into account the fact that the idea of the legitimacy of religious diversity is uncommon and alien in the popular religious consciousness in today's Russia (even towards dissent and non-conformity within the ranks of the Russian Church itself), Feofan's teaching on spiritual diversity acquires a new social significance. It demonstrates that Russian society does not necessarily have to borrow the ideas of religious tolerance from the Western intellectual tradition: they can, in fact, be found at the very heart of the Eastern spiritual heritage. It also stands as a prophetic warning to all those forms of Russian nationalism which have no regard for the inviolable nature of personal freedom and for the fact that man in himself has an irreducible value.

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This Bibliography is organised as follows:

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_____ 'The Understanding of Salvation in the Orthodox Tradition', in *For Us and Our Salvation: Seven Perspectives on Christian Soteriology* (Utrecht-Leiden, 1994), 107-131.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Bishop Feofan's writings and translations

<i>Chto est'...</i>	<i>Chto est' dukhovnaya zhizn' i kak na neye nastroitsya?</i> [What is Spiritual Life and How One May be Attuned to It], repr. 6 th edn. (Leningrad, 1991).
<i>Korinf.</i>	<i>Tolkovaniye pervago Poslaniya svyatago apostola Pavla k Korinfyanam</i> [Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians] (Moscow, 1876).
<i>Dobrotolyubiye</i>	<i>'Dobrotolyubiye' v russkom perevode, dopolnennoe</i> [<i>The Philokalia</i> , in Russian translation, with Additions] 2 nd edn., 5 vols. (Moscow, 1895-1900).
<i>Dusha</i>	<i>Dusha i Angel – ne telo, a dukh</i> [Souls and Angels are not Flesh but Spirit] (Moscow, 1891).
<i>Yefes.</i>	<i>Tolkovaniye Poslaniya k Yefesyanam</i> [Commentary on the Epistle to Ephesians], 2 nd edn. (Moscow, 1893).
<i>Gal.</i>	<i>Tolkovaniye Poslaniya svyatago apostola Pavla k Galatam</i> [Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians], 2 nd edn. (Moscow, 1893).
<i>Nach.</i>	<i>Nachertaniye khristianskogo nravoucheniya</i> [Outlines of the Christian Moral Teaching], 2 nd edn. (Moscow, 1895).
<i>O Pravoslavii</i>	<i>O pravoslavii s predosterezheniyami ot pogreshenii protiv nego</i> [On Orthodoxy with a Warning about Sinning Against It] (Moscow, 1991).
<i>Pis'ma o dukhovnoi zhizni</i>	<i>Pis'ma o dukhovnoi zhizni, yepiskopa Feofana</i> [Letters on Spiritual Life] 3 rd edn. (Moscow, 1897).
<i>Pis'ma o khrist. zhizni</i>	<i>Pis'ma o khristianskoi zhizni</i> [Letters on the Christian Life], 3 rd edn. (Moscow, 1908).

<i>Pis'ma k odnomu litsu</i>	‘Pis'ma k odnomu litsu v S.-Peterburg po povodu poyavleniya tam novago uchitelya very’ [Letters to a certain individual in St. Petersburg concerning the coming of the new teacher of faith], <i>Dushepoleznoye chteniye</i> , part 2, (1880).
<i>Pis'ma k raznym litsam</i>	<i>Pis'ma k raznym litsam o raznykh predmetakh very i zhizni</i> [Letters to Various Persons on Various Subjects of Faith and Life] (Moscow, 1892).
<i>Put'</i>	<i>Put' ko Spaseniyu</i> [The Way to Salvation], 8 th edn. (Moscow, 1899).
<i>Rim.</i>	<i>Tolkovaniye Poslaniya svyatago apostola Pavla k Rimlyanam</i> [Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans], 2 nd edn. (Moscow, 1890).
<i>Sobraniye Pisem</i>	<i>Sobraniye pisem svyatitelya Feofana</i> [Bishop Feofan's Collected Letters] 8 vols. (Moscow, 1898-1901).

Patristic writings and translations

<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum</i> , Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–).
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium</i> , ed. I. B. Chabot <i>et al.</i> (Paris: Reipublicae; Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1903–).
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum</i> (Vienna: Geroldi, 1866–).
<i>CSS</i>	<i>Cistercian Studies Series</i> , (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, in progress).
<i>CWS</i>	<i>Classics of Western Spirituality</i> , ed. R. J. Payne <i>et al.</i> (New York: Paulist, in progress).
<i>FK</i>	Φιλοκαλία τῶν ἱερῶν νηπτικῶν, vols. 1-5 (Athens: Astir, 1957-1963).

- GCS* *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller* (Berlin: Akademie, 1897–).
- Ladder* John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, (New York, 1982).
- NPNF* *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. P. Schaff *et al.*, (New York, 1887 – 1894).
- PG* *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 162 vols. (Paris, 1857-1886).
- Philokalia* *The Philokalia*, trans. G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, 4 vols. (London, 1979-1995).
- PL* *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris, 1844-1864).
- PTS* *Patristische Texte und Studien*, ed. K. Aland and W. Schneemelcher (Berlin, in progress).
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- MT* V. N. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge, 1991).
- NIDNTT* *The New International Dictionary of New Testament theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1975-1978)
- OPDB* Sylvester (Malevansky), *Opyt pravoslavnago dogmaticheskago bogosloviya (s istoricheskimi izlozheniyami dogmatov)* (Study of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, with Historical Exposition of Dogmas), 2nd edn., III (Kiev, 1889).
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The Church of St. Feofan (Emmanuilovka village, Schatski region, 5 minute ride from Vysha) - temporary location of the relics of St. Feofan the Recluse.



The shrine containing the relics of St. Feofan
(The church of St. Feofan, Emmanuilovka village).



Entrance to the main building. Feofan's quarters and his cloister were located in the two-storey wing (made out of brick) attached to the main building. (The Monastery of Vysha [*Vyshenskaya Pustyn'*], Vysha village, Shatskii region). Today this building houses department No. 5 of the local Psychiatric Clinic.



The annex-wing. The place of St. Feofan's seclusion. View from the side of the main entrance.



The annex-wing. View from the rear.



The Monastery of Vysha
(a section of the monastery complex, view from the Vysha river bridge).



The first of the two remaining cathedrals of the Vysha Monastery.
No services are held in this cathedral at present.



Side entrance into the first cathedral.



The second of the two remaining cathedrals. It is currently under restoration.



The Vysha church. This is the only church on the territory of the monastery in which daily services are held. The services are conducted by priests who come to Vysha daily with monks from the neighbouring village Bykova Gora.



Some structures on the territory of the monastery. Some of these buildings are used as apartments, offices for physicians and housing for inmates of the psychiatric clinic presently occupying the monastery complex.

