

## REVIEW ESSAY

# CHRISTIAN PRACTICE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR MODERN POLITICAL THEOLOGY

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### BOOKS REVIEWED

*The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy.* By Aristotle Papanikolaou. University of Notre Dame Press, 2012. Pp. 248. \$27.00. ISBN: 978-0-268-03896-0.

*Dissident for Life: Alexander Ogorodnikov and the Struggle for Religious Freedom in Russia.* By Koenraad De Wolf. Translated by Nancy Forest-Flier. Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013. Pp. 348. \$28.00. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6743-8.

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In the twentieth century, the Orthodox Christian diaspora played a critical role in the development of modern Orthodox theology. Forced to take up residence in the West, major figures like Sergius Bulgakov (1871–1944), Georges Florovsky (1893–1979), Vladimir Lossky (1903–1958), and Alexander Schmemmann (1921–1983) successfully reinvigorated Orthodox theology for succeeding generations.<sup>1</sup> Their works have become the standard readings in theological faculties and seminaries the world over. But despite the durable and multifaceted heritage of modern Orthodox theology, contemporary Orthodox Christians have been, for the most part, rather timid in thoroughly engaging themselves with matters political. Notable exceptions include Nicolas Berdyaev (1874–1948), who provides a far-reaching critique of both state sovereignty and the Orthodox Church’s historic role in supporting worldly realms of authority.<sup>2</sup> For his part, Bulgakov offers some penetrating insights in favor of the separation of church and state in the very brief chapter devoted to this topic, “Orthodoxy and the State,” in his classic treatise, *The Orthodox Church*.<sup>3</sup> Somewhat later in the twentieth century, the few noteworthy authors who have much more specifically engaged with broader political questions include the current archbishop of Albania, Anastasios Yannoulatos, and arguably the most important Orthodox political philosopher today, Christos Yannaras.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1 For a brief overview of the Russian émigré theologians, see Michael Plekon, “The Russian Religious Revival and its Theological Legacy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, eds. Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 203–17.
  - 2 Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*, trans. Donald A. Lowrie (1952; repr. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), 72–80.
  - 3 Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, trans. Elizabeth S. Cam (London: Centenary Press, 1935), 181–90.
  - 4 See Yannoulatos’s seminal “Eastern Orthodoxy and Human Rights,” *International Review of Mission* 73, no. 292 (1984): 454–66, and Yannaras’s short but programmatic piece, “A Note on Political Theology,” *St. Vladimir’s*

In the last decade or so however, several publications seem to signal the existence of directed efforts aimed at defining an Orthodox Christian perspective to the role of religion in a pluralistic and democratic society.<sup>5</sup> Aristotle Papanikolaou's *The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy* is one such study. *The Mystical as Political* is one of two recent publications from Orthodox Christian authors to emanate from the Christian jurisprudence research program conducted at Emory University's Center for the Study of Law and Religion.<sup>6</sup> The mere publication of *The Mystical as Political* is a very encouraging sign for its potential to flesh out novel and interesting political theologies on the basis of the Orthodox Christian tradition. And while Papanikolaou's attempt at delineating how and why Christians should implicate themselves in the modern democratic polity is far from faultless, *The Mystical as Political* does succeed in conveying the inherent value of drawing on the riches of Orthodox Christianity in order to articulate original and insightful points of view to the perennial questions of law and religion. In this sense, Papanikolaou's *The Mystical as Political* is an exemplary beginning to a discussion that is long overdue.

### PAPANIKOLAOU'S THESIS

Papanikolaou spells out early and clearly how the principle of "divine-human communion" (his preferred translation for *theosis*) has been the unifying theme for Orthodox thinking and writing on the subject of Christian participation in politics (1–2). He is correct in saying that "no good Orthodox would deny" such a principle (6). The importance of the ascetic tradition in working out the fulfilment of *theosis* in practice is also introduced quite early (3). At this point, there is a hint, but unfortunately only a hint, on how the ascetic tradition can and does, according to Papanikolaou, provide the ultimate guidance for a fruitful Orthodox civic involvement in the context of liberal democracies. So while the principal thesis is conveniently conveyed in abridged form as the title, *The Mystical as Political*, it is clarified only as Papanikolaou gradually unfolds the argument through the first two chapters. And on the whole, the style with which Papanikolaou develops his ideas makes the book a more demanding read than necessary.

In the first few chapters of the book, Papanikolaou again only gradually hints at what could possibly be meant by the subtitle *Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy*. In the introduction, he articulates the idea of engaging in politics as a transfer or reapplication of the "ascetics of divine-human communion" within "the political spaces [Christians] inevitably inhabit" (4–5). As a result, one can be led to believe that "democracy" is the defining feature of the political space Christians happen to inhabit, while "non-radical orthodoxy" is the preferred attitude towards that space. For all intents and purposes, Papanikolaou's prescription amounts to something more than passively enduring the current political space, but something less than thoroughly embracing all of its ideological underpinnings.

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*Theological Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1983): 53–56. Unfortunately, many of the works by Yannoulatos and Yannaras are available only in Greek.

5 See generally the following edited volumes: Alford Brüning and Evert van der Zwerde, eds., *Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2012); Emmanuel Clapsis, ed., *The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World: An Ecumenical Conversation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004). Stand-alone studies in English include Nikolas K. Gvosdev, *Emperors and Elections: Reconciling the Orthodox Tradition with Modern Politics* (Huntington, NY: Troitsa, 2000). For a more recent stand-alone contribution, see Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*, trans. Gregory Edwards (Geneva: WCC, 2012).

6 The other is John A. McGuckin's *The Ascent of Christian Law: Patristic and Byzantine Formulations of a New Civilization* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012).

Efforts to reshape the political space from the beginning would arguably be a response of the more “radical” variety. In chapter 4, where Papanikolaou discusses John Milbank and the school of Radical Orthodoxy (137–46), one starts to understand that Papanikolaou’s principal stand is against a specific traditionalist type of thinking, and not necessarily against all forms of innovative re-synthesizing of the political on the basis of theological concepts. In any event, the precise scope of Papanikolaou’s critique of the “radical” could use some clarification, especially in the context of his intended audience. Given the nature and scope of the book, it is difficult to conceive of the target audience as not including Orthodox Christians. But many Orthodox Christians would find it difficult to follow Papanikolaou, as he builds his argument on the basis of terminology that is, if not totally foreign, at least somewhat disconnected from the Orthodox Christian milieu.

Furthermore, Papanikolaou does not seize the opportunity to build some fruitful bridges between East and West. Orthodox Christian readers could have benefited from a less cursory and more contextual approach, in chapter 4, to authors such as Stanley Hauerwas and John Milbank, and with respect to the significance of the natural law tradition in the West. Another palpable weakness is that Papanikolaou never really explains how the various political theories of liberalism developed, and he does not underscore with any detail those theories that may be welcoming to the voice of religion in the public square. For example, a consideration of how the “mystical as political” thesis would actually function (or not) in the context of the deliberative mechanisms envisaged by Jürgen Habermas, where religious citizens are meant to participate in equal terms in the democratic process,<sup>7</sup> may have been a productive avenue to pursue.

In chapter 3, Papanikolaou insufficiently highlights some of the subtleties of Yannaras’s position on human rights. Papanikolaou seems to conform to the trend exemplified by Pantelis Kalaitzidis, who considers Yannaras’s body of work as representing an obstacle to a more fruitful engagement between Orthodoxy and modernity.<sup>8</sup> It may be true that Yannaras, as Papanikolaou asserts, considers the “modern notion of human rights” to be based on “anti-Christian presuppositions” (92). But this is only one aspect of Yannaras’s much more comprehensive critique, where most of what is currently being passed off as Christian, either within the Orthodox Church and or by other Christian denominations, is equally regarded by Yannaras as problematic, if not blatantly anti-Christian. Yannaras’s critique is not pointedly directed against fundamental rights per se. And Yannaras readily acknowledges the “precious achievement” of Western regimes of human rights protection.<sup>9</sup> Yannaras would likely agree with Papanikolaou that Christians should act like Christians in their relationship with the external world, but he would add that learning to act like Christians within the church is a precondition. In his defense, Papanikolaou does not really set out to deal with the internal Church perspective, and how the internal is inextricably linked to the external, especially if some kind of theological consistency is to be maintained between the two. Such a reflection may indeed lead to some pretty significant consequences, especially as regards the pressing need to completely reconfigure the Orthodox Church’s internal canon law through a process of

7 See generally Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1–25.

8 See Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*, 40–41, 59.

9 Christos Yannaras, “Human Rights and the Orthodox Church,” in *The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World: An Ecumenical Conversation*, 88.

codification, as set out in an article authored by the present ecumenical patriarch, Bartholomew I, some 40 years ago.<sup>10</sup>

### CHURCH OR POLITICAL COMMUNITY?

A recurring premise in Papanikolaou's argument is the distinction between the ecclesial and the political. This distinction is gradually introduced in the second chapter, characteristically entitled "Eucharist or Democracy?" (55–86). In general, Papanikolaou seeks to repudiate efforts on the part of certain Christian authors who conceptualize community exclusively on the basis of an underlying eucharistic criterion, a view that is deemed to be incompatible with the more inclusive notion of political community that one would readily observe within liberal democracies. His position gradually emerges somewhat awkwardly on the basis of a series of correctives brought to the ideas of others (namely, Stanley Harakas, William Cavanaugh, and Vigen Guroian). Once more, Papanikolaou's argument could have been significantly clearer if presented in a more straightforward manner.

The main point for Papanikolaou is that the ascetic tradition of the church (through the commandment to learn to love) tempers the legitimacy of past misguided efforts aimed at realizing eucharistic community coercively. As such, political and eucharistic communities must operate at different levels in order to maintain the ultimate credibility of Christianity which is premised on Christians really acting like Christians. From this perspective, Papanikolaou's most important contribution is not so much that he imagines an enhanced role for the ascetic tradition in the discussion, but that he confirms that the key methodological challenge to an Orthodox Christian political theology is to maintain credibility and doctrinal integrity. Said differently, Orthodox thinking on politics must be cohesively premised on both orthodoxy and orthopraxy, right doctrine and right practice.

As regards Papanikolaou's specific distinction between eucharistic and political communities, the argument works well in the context of an institutionalized understanding of the church. In effect, he develops his proposition as a response to the contention in favor of delineating a political community on the basis of the church's fixed boundaries. In doing so, Papanikolaou implicitly adopts some of the underlying premises of those he is arguing against, such as the rigorist assumption that the eucharistic community has visible boundaries that can be easily defined. In the context of a more apophatic approach to the perplexing question of the Church's limits, the eucharistic versus political community distinction becomes unnecessary for sanctioning a more favorable attitude to either liberalism or democracy. Whatever overly narrow restrictions were thought to be imposed by retrenching to the model of eucharistic community simply fade away. The ascetic no longer needs to explicitly adjust the ecclesial since the ascetic already forms an integral part of the ecclesial. The political then becomes the ecclesial precisely because the ecclesial embodies the mystical.

Papanikolaou takes at least one step in this direction when he acknowledges a "continuity" between "the good being realized in the eucharistic community" and the good that is "internal" to the political community (86). What this "continuity" means and how it can be expressed is the ultimate question—for which he does not really provide an answer. And perhaps there is no answer, at least not one that is either obvious or based solely on reason. However, the Orthodox tradition does have some experience with questions that transcend human formulations. And one of the most complete representations of

<sup>10</sup> Bartholomew Archondonis, "A Common Code for the Orthodox Churches," *Kanon* 1 (1973): 45.

communion and alterity (mystically) interpenetrating each other is the famous icon of the Trinity painted by Andrei Rublev (c. 1360–1427), which depicts the visitation of the three strangers to Abraham (Genesis 18:1–8) as both a eucharistic and trinitarian theophany.<sup>11</sup> The image in Rublev's *Trinity* is of three angels sitting circularly around a table that holds a single and large eucharistic chalice. Rublev's *Trinity* is probably unsurpassed in conveying the Orthodox Christian understanding of the sanctity of the other, without distinguishing between the ascetic and the ecclesial.

For his part, Vladimir S. Soloviev (1853–1900) fashioned an entire indigenous and autonomous liberal system, which clearly incarnates some form of “mystical as political,” on the basis of Godmanhood (*Bogochelovechestvo*) and all-unity (*vseedinstvo*). It would have been interesting for Papanikolaou to comparatively assess his ideas with the more radical Solovievian approach. It is reasonable to expect as much, since Papanikolaou favorably refers to Soloviev on several occasions (33–36, 53, 145) and, refreshingly, does not seem to share the broader Orthodox ambivalence towards Soloviev. While the nature and scope of this ambivalence is beyond the scope of this review, there is the hope that much of the creative genius of the Russian religious philosophers (a group that includes Soloviev) can be reconciled with the predominant neopatristic school of theology.<sup>12</sup> As regards the positive function of the state, Papanikolaou's definition is unsurprisingly reminiscent of the one proffered by Soloviev. Papanikolaou defines the function of the state as “maximiz[ing] the conditions for the possibility of free realization of the [divine-human] communion” (79), while in a similar, perhaps more secularized manner, the role of the state for Soloviev is to ensure “*the external conditions*” for the “*worthy existence and moral development*” of persons.<sup>13</sup> In the end however, Papanikolaou seems much more reluctant to adopt Soloviev's opposition towards the setting of specific limits and boundaries to either the church or salvation.

### ASCETICISM IN PRACTICE

In the fifth chapter, Papanikolaou extrapolates truth telling from the sacramental setting of confession to other more worldly settings (163–94). In this manner, he illustrates very creatively the practical ramifications of the “mystical as political” thesis. At the same time, however, this chapter confirms that Papanikolaou's ultimate prescription for the Christian implication in structures of liberal democracy is primarily process oriented. And process can be important, as the cases of historic injustices that he mentions (South African apartheid, the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue, and Greece-Turkey relations) readily demonstrate (163–64, 186–88). However, many domestic and international policy issues that often confront Christians do not embody any identifiable form of historical injustice. In such more general cases, kindness and truth telling seem to be, at least at the outset, rather inadequate in terms of developing substantive arguments which could guide Christian civic involvement.

If anything, Papanikolaou seems to reinforce a passive approach to civic involvement, which some could interpret as denying the church's capacity to renew and transfigure its surroundings.

11 Andrei Rublev, *Trinity*, c. 1425. Icon, 142 cm × 114 cm., Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. For more on Rublev's Trinity, see Gabriel Bunge, *The Rublev Trinity: The Icon of the Trinity by the Monk-Painter Andrei Rublev*, trans. Andrew Louth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007).

12 See Paul Ladouceur, “Treasures New and Old: Landmarks of Orthodox Neopatristic Theology,” *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (2012): 191–228.

13 Vladimir Solovyov, *The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy*, trans. Nathalie A. Duddington (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 394.

Whether intentional or not, his handling of the contemporary value of John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) further reinforces the perception of bias in favor of the status quo. For Papanikolaou, John Chrysostom represents a proponent of coercion in the promotion of virtue (23–25, 71, 79). Beyond the availability of evidence which contradicts that claim,<sup>14</sup> Papanikolaou overlooks the fact that Chrysostom’s most vital contribution to the political engagement of Christians is his vigorous theological condemnation of social inequality.<sup>15</sup> And Chrysostom’s writings on the subject often inspire a stinging critique of prevailing theories of political economy.<sup>16</sup> In the end, substance matters as much as process, and both can be inspired through an authentic, yet critical, engagement with the Orthodox Christian tradition.

#### A DISSIDENT SPIRIT AND THE CHALLENGE OF THE REPRESSIVE REGIME

Apart from sharing a common Orthodox background, there is a much more intimate connection between Papanikolaou’s book and the biographical account of the Russian activist Alexander Ogorodnikov. In fact, many of the ideas that Papanikolaou discusses resonate in some form or another within the life and work of Ogorodnikov, especially as regards the underlying Christian inspiration for social and political action. *Dissident for Life: Alexander Ogorodnikov and the Struggle for Religious Freedom in Russia* is actually the English translation of the original Dutch, first published in 2010. Its author, Koenraad De Wolf, is a Belgian freelance journalist who extensively interviewed Ogorodnikov in addition to conducting independent archival research. The resulting book represents the first time Ogorodnikov’s story has been told in such a comprehensive manner in English.

Born in 1950, Ogorodnikov was brought up in a conventional communist setting, with tremendous confidence in the absolute virtues of the Soviet regime. He took a leadership role in the communist youth movement (32–33), and was even recruited to join the main Soviet security agency, the KGB (38). Living and working within the communist system however, Ogorodnikov started to appreciate the “great gulf . . . between Communist ideals and practice” (45), and eventually resigned in protest from his position in the municipal athletics department after he was refused leave to take a university entrance exam (47). That decisive moment in 1970 marks the unassuming beginning of Ogorodnikov’s struggle against a regime determined to repress religious life. Refused admission to Moscow University, he started studying philosophy at the Ural State University but was soon dismissed for setting up a rather ambitious discussion group “whose purpose was to solve the unanswered questions of Marxist doctrine” (49). Ogorodnikov then, until 1973, attended the famous VGIK film school in Moscow, where he was at some point assigned to assist legendary filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky (1932–1986) (49–52). While studying film, Ogorodnikov continued to be exposed to metaphysical themes through the works of Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821–1881) as well as other nineteenth-century Russian religious philosophers (54).

14 For example, Georges Florovsky presents Chrysostom as an “opponent of force and coercion in any form” in his *Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century*, in *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, trans. Catherine Edmunds (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Buechervertriebsanstalt, 1987), 7:247.

15 John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, trans. Catherine P. Roth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 50, 55.

16 One such study explores economics through the lens of Chrysostom’s basic anthropological precepts: Nicoleta Acatrinei, *Saint Jean Chrysostome et l’Homo oeconomicus: Une enquête d’anthropologie économique dans les homélies sur l’Evangile de St Matthieu* (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2008).

Having established a reputation for himself in the underground press (62), Ogorodnikov sought in 1974 to create an informal network for the study and discussion of religion and philosophy (64), which was to be known as the Christian Seminar. In order to avoid KGB interference, new members of the Christian Seminar were sponsored by existing ones (67). At least three hundred members participated in Christian Seminar activities on a regular basis, with twenty to forty people attending each meeting (67). Topics discussed during meetings included Russian Slavophilism, the ascetic and patristic traditions of the church, and the ideas of Vladimir Soloviev (68–69). Another pioneering feature of the Christian Seminar was its ecumenical character (70). The Christian Seminar eventually expanded to include branches in several Soviet cities (67). But in due time, both Ogorodnikov and other Christian Seminar members began to be harassed and interrogated by the authorities (76–80). Ogorodnikov was eventually arrested and charged with leading a parasitic lifestyle in 1978 (94), marking the beginning of his confinement in the Soviet forced labor camp system, commonly known as Gulag.

In modern culture, the Gulag has established itself as one of the institutions which best portrays the general depravity of the entire Soviet system. In fact, enduring the Gulag has come to represent the most distinguishing aspect of Ogorodnikov's life story. The second part of De Wolf's book, characteristically entitled "Surviving in the Gulag" (95–170), justifiably forms the central core of the book. For nine years, Ogorodnikov experienced incarceration under the most deplorable conditions imaginable. The successive judicial processes that initially placed him in the Gulag, and consequently maintained him there, offend every notion of procedural fairness or natural justice known to humanity. In the Soviet justice system, the defense attorney's most meaningful contribution was confined to relaying messages between the accused and his family (101, 125). Given his continued activism even within the labor camp system, Ogorodnikov spent the majority of his confinement in isolation. The physical and psychological abuse Ogorodnikov endured in the Gulag is difficult to fathom, despite the very lucid and realistically human account conveyed by De Wolf.

#### RENEWAL OF DEMOCRACY IN POST-SOVIET SOCIETY

Much to his own surprise, Ogorodnikov was suddenly ordered to be released in 1987. Instead of living a peaceful and quiet life in some corner of the world, Ogorodnikov committed himself to rebuilding his life in Moscow, and he revitalized his engagement in support of renewing Russian democracy from within. In addition to restarting the Christian Seminar, Ogorodnikov became very active in various relief activities, human rights organizations, independent publications, and political movements. Ogorodnikov's activities since his release are featured in the third and final part of De Wolf's book (171–279), which effectively manages to impart a complete picture of Ogorodnikov's continued dissidence before, during, and after the Gulag internment. It is in this part of the narrative that the reader inevitably demarcates two very different visions for the function of the Russian Orthodox Church in post-Soviet society. On the one hand, Ogorodnikov seems to be promoting a pastoral, bottom-up approach to re-evangelizing Russian society, while the church hierarchy is tenaciously committed to a more institutional, top-down approach intent on fashioning alignments with the governing order at the highest level.

With respect to critically assessing the author's perspective in generating Ogorodnikov's biography, it should be noted that De Wolf is not a specialist in Soviet or Russian studies, nor does he claim to be one. This may be perceived as some kind of weakness, especially since Ogorodnikov's life story necessarily overlaps some very dramatic and complex periods in modern Russian history. From an academic perspective, De Wolf may be criticized for emphasizing some

aspects of Russian history over others, not sufficiently documenting his sources throughout the text, or even failing to undertake a more comprehensive examination of certain archival sources. However, such criticism ignores certain fundamental characteristics of De Wolf's project. While the book is not an autobiography in the classical sense, it is clear that De Wolf is attempting to present Ogorodnikov's personal perspective in a fair and candid manner. A Russian studies specialist undertaking the same project would have probably been much more preoccupied with evaluating Ogorodnikov in a more distant and detached manner and likely would have been more keen in situating Ogorodnikov within a more structured academic framework with respect to Soviet era dissidents or political prisoners generally. The resulting book might have been methodologically more rigorous, but not necessarily better. In the end, De Wolf's journalistic approach proves to be well suited to the goal of familiarizing Ogorodnikov and his life story to the widest possible audience.

Indeed, *Dissident for Life* is first and foremost a human-interest story, presented in an eminently readable form, that will be of interest to a diverse audience. De Wolf's account of the wider historical and cultural context of Russia is necessarily brief but nonetheless balanced and informed. Throughout the book, sufficient information is provided to allow the reader to undertake additional research on certain specific points. At the same time, the book never feels tiring or overloaded with unnecessary details. Most importantly, De Wolf has accomplished something extraordinarily unique: he has masterfully re-established the often missing link between Soviet and post-Soviet Christian dissidence. Paradoxically, the re-emergence of a powerful Russian Church hierarchy has done nothing to obviate the need for a continued dissidence inspired by an authentic Orthodox Christian ethos. This, of course, is made possible by the remarkable continuity and resilience of Ogorodnikov's activism, which extraordinarily endures well into the twenty-first century.

#### PAPANIKOLAOU AND OGORODNIKOV: A COMMON INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE

De Wolf does not, at least not comprehensively, set out to trace the underlying philosophical or theological foundation for Christian dissidence either generally or in the specific case of Ogorodnikov. Moreover, very limited reference is made to Ogorodnikov's more substantive writings. Nevertheless, some very basic building blocks that are useful in elaborating Ogorodnikov's intellectual lineage are indeed mentioned throughout the book, including the life and work of Fr. Alexander Men (1935–1990) (64–65), the religious philosophy of Vladimir Soloviev (69), and the more general apprehension concerning a close alliance between religion and state. These elements are actually very much connected to each other, as well as closely relating to Papanikolaou's declared sources of inspiration.

More specifically, Alexander Men, who was very much a disciple of Soloviev,<sup>17</sup> was in favor of the church severing its connection to the state<sup>18</sup> and “was disquieted by seeing a growing tendency among the clergy toward a conservatism characterized by a nostalgia for the past, hostility to everything foreign, anti-ecumenism, and opposition to any reform.”<sup>19</sup> Further, as previously mentioned, Papanikolaou frequently points to an indigenous liberal strand within the Orthodox tradition, where Soloviev is the obvious focal point, at least in terms of originality and breadth

17 Wallace L. Daniel, “Father Aleksandr Men and the Struggle to Recover Russia's Heritage,” *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 17, no. 1 (2009): 84.

18 *Ibid.*, 86.

19 Yves Hamant, *Alexander Men: A Witness for Contemporary Russia (A Man for Our Times)*, trans. Steven Bigham (Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1995), 194.



of written work. In many ways, De Wolf's biographical account of Ogorodnikov's life illustrates the deep roots of this indigenous Christian liberal tradition, even if it has not yet been able (or allowed) to effectively organize itself beyond the lonely dissident realm.

Papanikolaou's emphasis on the ascetic tradition of the church also fits in well with the historical and contemporary tribulations in Ogorodnikov's life mission. Ogorodnikov has paid a steep price for his dissidence, including physical and psychological injuries, failed marriages, and the infliction of harm on loved ones. Yet Ogorodnikov's dissidence is anything but passive. Inspiration, creativity, hard work, and teamwork are required to get every new initiative off the ground. And it takes tremendous patience and faith every time an initiative is derailed by ignorance or malevolence. The two books under review in this essay are much more complementary than it may initially appear. As a result, a certain synergistic benefit can be expected for the reader when they are read, or reread, one after the other. And together they provide the foundation for articulating a very compelling theological critique of Russian church policy in modern times.

Papanikolaou's foray into Christian political thinking is both timely and thought-provoking. For too long, the Orthodox position on civic participation has varied from simply nonexistent to haphazard. Papanikolaou has presented the Orthodox world with a serious effort geared towards initiating an important and long overdue discussion. And, in the process, he has set an important benchmark as contemporary Orthodox Christians begin to more confidently engage with both their faith and the world around them. De Wolf's contribution is equally worthy of praise. He has managed to condense, in a very readable manner, monumental chapters of modern world history in order to tell the story of a man who put his faith in the service of others. Not only is De Wolf's authoritative account captivating from a general human interest perspective, but it is an indispensable reminder of the worldly and domineering nature of the impulse to constrain freedom of religion and democracy in both Soviet and post-Soviet eras. While the lonely dissident response is a difficult and costly affair, it does manifest, in a visible and concrete manner, a conscious effort to courageously discern the deeper meaning of Christian politics and Christian political action.

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