

HOW EXACTLY IS SPIRIT PRESENT IN CREATION? THE HESYCHAST RECEPTION OF NATURAL THEOLOGY, AND ITS MODERN IMPLICATIONS

Natural theology (NT) was always one of the main Christian approaches to all problems concerning the working of the Spirit in creation. The term *theologia naturalis* originating in stoics and st. Augustin (in *De civ. Dei*) meant traditionally the theological discourse based on the thesis that the knowledge of created world, natural phenomena and laws of nature includes religious contents and enables one to draw conclusions on God in His actions and His relation to the world. It is this approach that provided usually the basis for Christian understanding of the Universe, relation of Christian theology and science, treatment of ecological problems, etc. However, its history in the East and West of Christianity shows considerable distinctions. For the most part, its ideas were developed in the West (with the important exception of Pseudo-Dionysius) and had there much more influence, while its reception in Orthodoxy was usually more reserved. In this text, I focus mainly on the reception of NT in the Orthodox tradition of hesychasm, chiefly, in theology of St. Gregory Palamas. I discuss the roots of rather skeptical and critical character of this reception and try to show that the tradition in question developed a different approach to the problems of NT and all the big theme of the Holy Spirit in creation. The special interest to this tradition is justified by the fact that in recent decades it was widely recognized as the core of Orthodox spirituality. Hesychasm is the school that reproduces the authentic experience of communion with Christ and union with Divine energies, and the acquisition of such experience is the aim of Christian life, in Orthodox view.

Natural theology in the Orthodox patristic and ascetic discourse

Be it in Western or Eastern Christian thought, the status of NT is ensured by scriptural foundations, the core of which includes one Old-Testament text: *For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the maker of them is seen* (Wisd. 13,5), and one New-Testament one: *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Godhead* (Rom 1,20). There are liturgical foundations as well such as the prayer to the Holy Spirit saying: "... the Spirit of Truth ... that is present everywhere and fills everything". However, immediate origins of NT are in Greek philosophy. Undoubtedly, NT belongs to those numerous elements of Christian theology that came from Greek thought and then went through the intricate process of Christianization and integration into the Christian mode of thought. This mode formed in the époque of the Councils had two basic distinctions from the Greek mode, Person (conceived as Divine Hypostasis) and dogma. But NT was developed and took roots in Christian thought as early as in the pre-Nicaean period when Christianization was still superficial. The theses of NT can be found in the majority of pre-Nicaean theologians and first of all, in Clement of Alexandria and Origen. In Origen, the foundations of NT are brought to a very logical and systematic form. His cosmology is typical for Late Antiquity being based on the ideas of the order and law-governed nature of the world. These ideas

already include the principle of hierarchy that will play such a prominent role in the future. Christianization means here essentially that the Aristotelian Prime-Mover is replaced by biblical God-Creator, and this replacement implies the self-evident Christian version of Hellenic NT: “Can be anything more pernicious than contemplating the ordered structure of the world not to think about the Creator of this world?” (Contra Celsum, 4). This version was adopted and developed by Pseudo-Dionysius and then accepted basically in the West. In comparison with Origen, Dionysius accentuates more strongly the hierarchical principle turning it into the universal structural paradigm of all reality, and he formulates more precisely the basic postulate of NT: “Knowledge of existing things must make true philosophers to ascend to Him Who is the Cause of both the things and their knowledge” (Epistle 7, To Polycarp the hierarch).

NT in Western thought of Modern Age is the direct development of pseudo-Dionysius’ position. With the progress of secularization, this thought advanced more and more to the reunification with Greek philosophy. As a consequence, in the dyad *Natural theology* – *Revealed theology* the second pole was more and more losing its importance and value, and the attitude of NT, i.e. the knowledge of God by means of secular science and natural reason, on the basis of general notions and logical syllogisms, was more and more accepted as self-consistent and self-sufficient. This process went through several stages. In the early modern period, Nicolas of Cusa developed panentheist ontology based on such Dionysian concepts as “world in God” and present in God images or prototypes (*paradeigmata*) of all things, and this ontology provided NT with solid ontological grounds. In the Enlightenment the prevalent position is deism which represents the relation of God to world with the aid of the metaphor of the watch-maker and his product. At this stage NT becomes the principal content of theological discourse and the reduction of theology as such to NT is almost complete. But the course of things could not stop at this stage and in the final, with the completion of the secularization and coming of post-Christianity, in the mainstream of Western culture there comes the rejection of theological reason as such, and hence the rejection of NT as well. New paradigm of NT was not created so far and modern studies following the approach of NT (mainly the attempts at theological interpretation of modern physical and cosmological conceptions) lack common epistemological basis.

The history of NT in Orthodoxy is very different. Typical features of the Western and Eastern Christian culture are such that the West cultivates humanistic pathos of unlimited horizons of knowledge while the East concentrates on the necessity of permanent inner work of the Christian, the work of metanoia and transformation of one’s old self in striving to the union with Christ. Thus the principles of NT become subject to critical reflection already in Cappadocian Fathers. The Cappadocians do not deny this way of knowledge of God, but they insist that it has inherent restrictions: it is incomplete and imperfect in both aspects of cognitive activity, i.e. in what can be cognized by the ways and means of NT, and how reliable and precise this knowledge can be. Both aspects are clearly seen in Gregory of Nyssa’s words: “Looking at the beauty of the creation, we obtain the notion not of the essence, but only Wisdom of Him Who created everything wisely... From the wisdom seen in the Universe one can see Him Who created everything only as a guesswork. Similarly, in human works... one sees not the nature of the artist, but only the artistic knowledge that the artist put into his work”¹. This means that natural reason can cognize only Wisdom of God, and only as a guesswork. In the “Life of Moses” st. Gregory presents even more skeptical

¹ St. Gregory of Nyssa. On Blessednesses. Moscow, 1997. P.88-89 (In Russian).

view of the possibility for this reason to cognize God: he states that all the ideas and notions on God formed by the reason acting on its own are nothing but idols that even the Old-Testament piety demands to destroy. St. Gregory the Theologian always stressed that the Holy Trinity in all its economy is inaccessible to all approaches of natural reason. Contrary to St. Augustin, he denied even the possibility to compare or liken the Trinity to any created things and he considered only the “goodness of Heavenly Father” as cognizable from created things.

We shall not discuss these conceptions since NT in Cappadocians and other Eastern Church Fathers till St. John of Damascus is a well-studied subject. We only note that very often one particular conception of Greek patristics was interpreted as leading to the positions of NT: it is the conception of divine “logoses”, *logoi*, present in creation. Indeed, if the *logoi* are rooted in Divine Essence, then our cognition of created things in their *logoi* would produce true knowledge of God. But, as Fr John Meyendorff shows, “a personal and dynamic understanding of God” inherent in Byzantine thought implies the dynamic, or “energetic” understanding of *logoi* as “energies” that “do not exist on their own”². St Maximus the Confessor states the transcendence of God in a language and context different from palamitic doctrine of energies, but not less unambiguously. In “Questions and Answers to Thalassius” he illustrates this transcendence by means of a striking image: he says that the Logos gives us His flesh and blood, but not His bones, and he explains this allegory, associating the flesh of the Logos with knowledge (*episteme*) contained in *logoi* of visible things, His blood with more profound knowledge (*gnosis*) relating to invisible things, and the bones with some special “logoses around the Divinity” (*peri theotetos logous*) that are beyond all knowledge and understanding and are infinitely distanced from all created nature³. Thus we can conclude that the conception of the *logoi* does not contradict the general skeptical reception of NT in Greek patristics. In the recent fundamental study by J. Pelikan⁴, this reception is characterized as a “metamorphosis” of the version of NT that existed in Greek philosophy. It can be added that this metamorphosis includes basically the reflection upon the limits of NT and giving to NT the status of a severely restricted cognitive paradigm.

The attitude of Orthodox ascetic tradition, or hesychasm, to NT is very little studied, however. One can think a priori that this tradition being practical, it just did not produce any such attitude, but it is not so: in fact, the Orthodox reception of NT obtained considerable development in hesychasm, especially in hesychast theology of St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1357). Critics of NT is Palamas’ starting theme in his famous polemics with Barlaam of Calabria. For Palamas, Barlaam is an apologete of NT who states unrestricted validity and value of “outside wisdom”, or knowledge gained by “outside science”. Following Cappadocian Fathers, Palamas does not reject NT; but he presents a very critical estimate of it, reducing its possibilities to the extreme and stressing the deficiency of its fruits. NT can only “guess about God basing on probabilistic reasoning”, it provides utterly unreliable knowledge, and Palamas gives the precise verdict: “We forbid completely to expect any adequate knowledge on Divine subjects from outside science, since its teaching cannot give us anything reliable concerning God” (*Triads for the Defense of the Holy Hesychasts*, I.1,12).

² Fr John Meyendorff. Introduction to the Study of Gregory Palamas. St. Petersburg, 1997. P.167 (In Russian).

³ For the discussion of these aspects of the doctrine of *logoi* see: J. Van Rossum. Les Logoi de la creation et les “energies” divines chez Maxime le Confesseur et Grégoire Palamas // La Pensée Orthodoxe (Paris). 1998. XVIII/6. P.49-54.

⁴ J. Pelikan. Christianity and Classical Culture. The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism. New Haven – Lnd., 1993.

What is more, in no way Palamas confines himself to bare criticism. He points out what exactly NT lacks in and why its cognition of God is just a guesswork. Like other hesychast teachers, he repeats often a simple thesis, a truism for ascetic consciousness: “True knowledge, union with God and likeness to Him is achieved only through keeping to the commandments” (*Ib.*, II.3,75). What looks like truism deserves the closest attention, however. Even if we don’t know what means “keeping to the commandments”, we can see here a certain attitude to the cognition of God or better, a certain conception of man’s relation to God: we are told that for getting “true knowledge” of God **man must change himself**. True and not deficient cognition of God includes some *anthropological pre-conditions*.

This conclusion is of principal importance. Palamas’ way of knowledge is alternative to NT since NT means cognition which doesn’t demand the change of cognizing subject. NT corresponds to the cognitive paradigm that dominated in European thought during almost all its history and took its definitive form in Cartesian metaphysics as the “subject-object paradigm”. In science (especially in natural sciences) it took still stronger roots than in metaphysics. In the 20th c. it was rejected in philosophy (due to the processes of “overcoming metaphysics” and “death of subject”), but in scientific discourses it still continues to dominate, although some tendencies to the deconstruction of the subject-object opposition do exist at least since the discussions on the interpretation of quantum mechanics. As for the paradigm assuming the changing of the subject, it was recently studied in detail by M. Foucault. Tracing its history in the West, Foucault presents it as a sound alternative to the Cartesian subject-object paradigm that was undeservedly marginalized. Analyzing its structure, he defines the involved process of the change of the subject as “practice of the self”, an anthropological practice, in which man performs a transformation of himself directed to a certain goal. Thus using Foucault’s terms, we can say that the approach of NT is the (indirect and conditional) cognition of God in the Cartesian subject-object paradigm, while the approach of Orthodox-ascetic thought is the direct cognition of God in the paradigm of practices of the self. This alternative paradigm was rather clearly described in hesychasm long before Foucault: in particular, Palamas, opposing it to NT, develops a full-fledged “doctrine of the two kinds of knowledge”, as J. Meyendorff calls it. But hesychast practice of the self is not just another particular case of Foucault’s concept. Let us describe it briefly.

The hesychast alternative to natural theology

Constitution of the alternative strategy starts with the change of the perspective: the necessity of anthropological pre-conditions for the “true knowledge of God” being recognized, the consciousness focuses on these pre-conditions. Doing this, it has purely practical goals: to find how to meet them. How exactly should man change himself? Palamas tells only about “keeping to the commandments”, but in the ascetic discourse this formula implies a complete way of life. In no way are Christ’s commandments understood formally: on the contrary, their observance should direct man’s consciousness and man as a whole to Christ. If the first commandment is interpreted as a pre-condition of knowledge of God, it adds to the cognitive attitude a very important moment: knowledge of God presupposes love to Him, and love, in its turn, presupposes striving to its object, to the union with it. This striving is a deeply personal relation to God as a person, and actualization of such relation is nothing but personal communion. Thus the cognitive attitude gets transformed and expanded: *knowledge of God is converted from the purely intellectual cognitive paradigm to the integral,*

holistic paradigm of love and communion. Hence the roots of insufficiency and deficiency of NT are revealed: “true knowledge”, about which Palamas tells, is not knowledge *about* God, but knowledge *of* God as a living person that is obtained in the communion of love with Him. As for knowledge as cognitive activity, it is realized as an aspect of this communion inseparable from the whole and nourished by it. In contrast to this, NT is an isolated cognitive activity; accepting no pre-conditions, it disconnects itself from the economy of communion with God and tries to reach some conclusions on God by indirect ways, from knowledge of empiric phenomena. Evidently, it is only some scraps of knowledge that such activity can get and they are, in addition, utterly unreliable.

Actualization of the paradigm of knowledge of God as communion with God demands the radical change of man and unfolds into a very specific practice of the self. There is a split, i.e. ontological distance between man and God and man must surmount this ontological split in his striving to the union with God. Orthodox theology describes the surmounting as deification (*theosis*), which means the complete union of all man’s energies with Divine energies. Being an actual ontological transformation, theosis is the anthropological change of maximal, meta-anthropological scale. Orthodox asceticism identifies theosis as the final goal of its works, the spiritual state, to which hesychast practice is directed. Thence the connection between “true knowledge of God” and hesychast practice is established. Hesychasm is recognized as the core of Orthodox spirituality exactly for the reason that its practice is devoted exclusively to the cultivation of communion with God, which ascends to theosis and includes knowledge of God. This connection implies also a special hesychast idea of what theology is. As seen by hesychasts, theology is not a theoretical discipline making syllogistic constructions on the basis of Scriptures and the Church doctrine; it is strictly experiential discipline that performs the direct transmission of the experience of communion with God by those who personally experienced it, i.e. ascetics reaching higher grades of spiritual ascent. “Theology is the first-hand account about that being, into which man was introduced by the Holy Spirit”⁵.

Clearly, hesychast practice is a practice of the self, but of the kind not described by Foucault, and not considered possible by him. Here man’s self-transformation is directed to the goal not belonging to the horizon of empiric being, i.e. meta-empiric and meta-anthropological goal. Such a goal cannot be reached by man’s own effort only. As higoumenos Sophrony says, it is by the action of the Holy Spirit that man is introduced into Divine being. Ontological transcending of man is performed by the grace of the Holy Spirit; it is performed, however, not without the participation of man’s will and energies, but in accordance and collaboration, or *synergy* with them. The transcending is the fruit of all the ascetic practice that represents a subtle spiritual-anthropological process having the form of a ladder ascending to theosis. Meta-empirical and meta-anthropological nature of theosis implies some specific features of this process, the main of which is the necessity of a rigorous method, or a complete “travel instruction” for the advancement to the goal. Since this goal is ontologically beyond-there and hence absent in our mode of being and the horizon of our consciousness, hesychast practice always risks to substitute its goal and lose its way. To avoid it, it must create a complete set of rules which determine the organization, checking-up and interpretation of its experience. This set corresponds exactly to the Aristotelian notion of *organon*, and the formation of the complete organon of hesychast experience was an intricate anthropological work that took as long as 1000 years, from the 4th to the 14th c. All the way of

⁵ Sophrony, Archim. Staretz Silouan. Moscow, 1991. P.153.

the ascension is structured into big blocks, each of which is devoted to a certain anthropological task: the initial block is concentrated on the repentance (*metanoia*) and fighting the passions; the central one forms up the union of the two key activities, attention and prayer (when they are joined together, their union produces the driving force for the ascension and leads to synergy, or the unlocking of human being to the contact with Divine energies); while in the concluding block, due to synergy, the first manifestations of actual transformation of human being appear (first of all, new perceptive modalities begin to form up that are called “intellectual feelings”, *noera aisthesis*). What is important for our theme, all this anthropological self-transformation is not a natural process in a physical system. In this practice man realizes himself as a personality endowed with freedom and all the process follows the paradigm of personal communion representing an “ontological dialogue” between man and God. In the course of this dialogue, man in his self-transformation unlocks himself to his Interlocutor and advances to the union with Him.

Now the distinctions between the “two kinds of knowledge” are seen clearly. In hesychast view, God is not cognized as an object of study, but becomes known as living Person, with Whom deepening communion of love springs up. Behind these distinctions of cognitive attitudes we discover essential anthropological distinctions concerning the paradigms of man’s constitution. NT corresponds to the Western model of man as the subject of cognition who constitutes himself actualizing his relation to infinite Universe in cognizing activity (and discovering in the course of his cognition some arguments, never precise or conclusive enough, in favor of the existence of the Creator of the Universe, His wisdom and goodness). Hesychast knowledge of God corresponds to man who constitutes himself actualizing his relation to God as Person in the practice of ontological transcending developing as dialogue with Him, unlocking himself to Him and final complete union with His energies. In this ontological dialogue man is striving to the horizon of personal being; and reaching the union with it (in Christ’s Hypostasis), he becomes himself a person (becomes hypostasized, in terms of patristic theology). The two kinds of (theological) knowledge are associated with two different types of philosophical vision of reality. Theology as NT is developed chiefly within the framework of metaphysical vision of reality based on the oppositions of God and World, Reason and Nature, etc.; it is epistemologically correlative to philosophical discourse promoting speculative metaphysics, philosophy of nature and theory of knowledge. Hesychast theology is developed within Christocentric, anthropocentric and personalist vision of reality; it is epistemologically correlative to philosophical discourse having as its core anthropology and philosophy of personality. From the viewpoint of this theology, NT is justified only as a very particular aspect of true knowledge-communion with God. In all attempts to develop it as an independent discourse it loses its ground and distorts the perspective.

It is worth adding that the reasons of skeptical attitude of Orthodox-ascetic consciousness to NT are completely different from those of the rejection of NT in theology of the Reformed Churches and dialectical theology by Karl Barth. In fact, the arguments are diametrically opposite in the two cases: in Protestant theology, which rejects synergy, NT is considered as an inadmissible exaggeration of human ability to cognize God, while for hesychast consciousness separated NT represents rather under-estimation of this ability, the wrong way leading only to guesswork around God and diverting from the right way, in which cognition of God is part of communion with God, and man reaching synergy is favored by grace to “see God as He is”, as *higoumenos Sophrony* puts it.

Some implications for modern prospects of natural theology

Fr John Meyendorff reminds us: “World is not Divine... Secularization of the cosmos was Christian idea from the very start”⁶. The idea means essentially that the New Covenant is a bond between God and man, not the cosmos, and God’s presence in the latter is actualized through the former. Yes, the prayer to the Holy Spirit tells us that He “is everywhere and fills everything”, but His presence would be only implicit and hidden without man, whose mission is to actualize and reveal God’s presence in creation. For Christian thought ontological dimension of reality is generated by the relation *God – Man*, but not *God – Universe*. Philosophically, it means that man is the observer and recorder of phenomena, which are endowed with ontological status and meaning only in this observing. In Heidegger’s words, “Man and being are entrusted to each other. They belong to each other... Only man in his openness to being lets being approach him with its presence”⁷. The position described, with its concentration on the role of man, corresponds fully to that of hesychast theology. Such position implies definite conclusions on the subject of NT, the correct way of stating its problems and also on the relationship of theology and science.

In the habitual way of reasoning in NT, the stamp of God’s presence in creation is seen in universal laws of nature, in the fact that natural world in all its objects and phenomena is subject to strict laws and structures. Natural world displays striking properties of regularity and order: all processes obey definite laws, all objects and phenomena possess definite structure and all the laws and structures are coordinated between them so that all elements involved join together into well-organized ensemble of the Universe. However, according to the position just described, all these properties of natural world as well as any other its properties have no religious sense in themselves. They don’t allow religious interpretation, whether in favor of God’s existence or against it. The view that wants to see in laws and structures of natural world purposefulness and the mark of mind, which should be introduced from without by some supernatural instance (Divine reason, God’s will, etc.) is trivially unfounded. There is no purposefulness or mark of mind in natural phenomena *taken in themselves*, they are characteristics not of phenomena as such, but the discourse used by human consciousness for their description. Consciousness arbitrarily associates its own constructions with phenomena; and what is more, the constructions in question are unfounded even as characteristics of the discourse since consciousness comes to them, tendentially manipulating incomplete information. Using the same manipulative technology one might just as well conclude to purposelessness and absurdity of everything. It is very easy to counterpose the selections of the absurd and agonizing things to those of the rational and beautiful things in NT, and nowadays surely more people decide that the truth about our world is in the former selections, not the latter. For all those people the argument of order and beauty in creation is just an old illusion, while the right and convincing argument is one which Lars von Trier voiced powerfully: “There is so much sadism in the very fact that God created this world. To create all these hosts of living creatures who can survive in the only way, by devouring each other!”⁸. Clearly, it is a vicious circle to confront such selections against each other and none of them should be accepted as the truth about our world.

⁶ J.Meyendorff. Orthodox theology in modern world // Id. Orthodoxy in modern world. N.-Y. 1981.P.73-74.

⁷ M.Heidegger. Der Satz der Identität. Moscow, 1991. P.74. (In Russian)

⁸ Lars von Trier. I don’t believe in God, but I fear him! // A.Dolin. Lars von Trier: Check works. Moscow, 2004. P.219. (In Russian)

This critical logic can be extended to a wide field of problems. As we have seen, in Christianity the *relation of the Divine and natural is necessarily mediated by the human*. In Christian vision of reality natural phenomena and processes acquire religious meaning and actualize their connection with God (the presence of the Holy Spirit in them) exclusively through man, by means of the involvement into the economy of constitutive God – Man relation. “In Christian vision, it is impossible to speak about creation, not speaking about man”⁹. Hence it follows that any discourse all the contents of which are restricted to natural phenomena only, is devoid of religious contents and has no connection with theology. This conclusion can be used as a useful criterion or test in discussions of theological problems of modern natural sciences. In many cases we find in such discussions naïve methodology of *sui generis* “short circuit”, trying to invent direct theological interpretation of scientific facts or theories in no way related to anthropological reality and hence religious one too. In such cases what we see is illusory problems and pseudo-religious discourse in religious disguise¹⁰. In order to avoid the loss of theological ground, all considerations in this field should include as a necessary stage the disclosure of the anthropological aspect of the phenomena considered. It is via this aspect only that these phenomena can be provided with religious meaning and get involved into theological discourse.

If this criterion is taken into account, the area of direct contact, or “interface” of theology and natural sciences might be reduced noticeably. Pseudo-religious discourse abounds (and perhaps dominates) in discussions of problems of cosmology and quantum physics. Let me give just one small example by way of proof. When I read about profound theological meaning of the noncommutativity of operators in quantum theory, I know equally as one of founding members of International Association of Mathematical Physics and a member of Theological Commission of Russian Orthodox Church that this is a pseudo-religious discourse. The diversity of modern mathematical formalisms is such that we can formulate quantum theory (both nonrelativistic and relativistic) in lots of mathematical languages and the choice between these languages has absolutely nothing to do with theology. The structure of such pseudo-religious discourses obeys usually a kind of Bohr’s complementarity principle: If there is a combination of theological and scientific discourse, then either the first or the second of these two discourses is an imitation.

But, on the other hand, the expansion of the interface of theology and the humanities should take place. The subject field *Theology and Science* had and continues to have an artificial configuration formed within the episteme of the Modern Age and concentrated on peripheral areas of this field. This configuration ignores the obvious and cardinal fact: first of all, theology and science meet and enter into the closest contact in the key problem of all the humanistic sphere, the problem of man. In virtue of this fact, the adequate configuration is one, which focuses the main attention on the *topos of man*; and main tasks of all the subject field should lie in prompting the comparison and interaction of theological and scientific approaches to the phenomenon of man.

New and interesting possibilities emerge in this direction today. Both theology (Western as well as Eastern) and human sciences are now in a period of deep-going changes. The

⁹ M. Stavrou. *Le mystère de la création // Supplement au SOP (Paris). 2009, No 339. P.5.*

¹⁰ It should be stressed here that our discussion is restricted to Christianity with its “secularized cosmos”. Obviously, in Far-Eastern “religions of the cosmos” or, say, magic cults the “short circuit” methodology is fully legitimate.

changes are caused by coming of sharply different spiritual and anthropological situation as well as crisis of classical foundations of European cultural discourse including theological one in the extent, in which it also relied on the Aristotelian essentialist fundament. In the humanities the crisis manifests itself in the absence of unifying epistemological paradigm similar to classical or structuralist paradigms in former periods. Search for the unifying ground turns to the framework of human strategies and practices and the discourse of acts and energies, to replace the old essentialist discourse. Foucault's conception of practices of the self is so far the most promising fruit of this search. As for theology, the leading strategy of renewal is here the *anthropologization of theology* based on the idea that theology must become much closer to anthropological reality and discourse. Such strategy responds to a general trend of Christian thought which is implemented in different ways in different Christian traditions. Protestantism was the first and most active in implementing rapprochement of theology and anthropology creating a series of theories, of which theology of hope by Jürgen Moltmann is the last one so far. In Orthodoxy the evident and direct way to the anthropologization of theology is to focus on the quintessential experience of Orthodox spirituality, which is the experience of hesychasm. Undergoing these discursive transformations, both theology and human sciences take such forms that imply a new configuration of their relationship favorable to the deepening of their contacts.

The old configuration with both theology and science using essentialist discourse and abstract categories, predisposed one to ideological discourse that lives on oppositions and confrontations. This is reflected, in particular, in the fact that Orthodox theology used to allot its relationship with science to the sphere of apologetics, defense of faith, conceiving it in the key of defensive and isolationist reaction: in any contact with science the task was to reach as convincingly as possible the prescribed conclusion, *undisputable achievements of contemporary science don't contradict faith and theology*. In the new configuration the situation is different, however. Leaving the essentialist discourse and adopting the ground of experience and human practices, theology and science have the chance to go out of the deadlocks of ideological confrontation. In the paradigm of anthropologization Orthodox theology presents itself as an experiential discourse possessing its own experiential ground. Clearly, it has no reasons to hold a defensive position with respect to scientific discourses unrelated to this ground. As for the discourses concerned with the latter in some way or other, theology can enter into working relationship with them. Both sides can compare their concepts, methods and standings, and if they both keep to the fidelity to their experiential ground (a kind of phenomenological attitude), their common turn *zu den Sachen selbst* (Husserl's famous motto), free of ideological pressing, can be fruitful for both.

Modern studies of hesychasm present a concrete example, in which the new configuration is already at work. In these studies, not only palamitic theology of Divine energies, but all the experience of hesychast practical theologizing is used as the basis for comprehensive modern reconstruction of hesychast practice as a spiritual and anthropological phenomenon. In our context, such reconstruction is exactly the interface Theology – Science, since it includes both theological interpretation of hesychast experience and its interdisciplinary anthropological analysis. Theological interpretation in question exploits concepts and methods of many human sciences, in particular, Foucault's theory of practices of the self. The interaction is not one-sided, however. Various aspects of the phenomenon become subjects of the analysis of various disciplinary discourses, psychology, philosophy, history, etc. And turning to the analysis of hesychast experience, all these discourses for their orientation in such a specific subject need to get some information and instructions from

theology, since many important moments such as the goal of the practice, its motivation, its inner context are adequately rendered by theological discourse only. Thus the collaboration, or “synergy” of the two sides of the interface is achieved here.

Our reasoning allows us to expect that this example is not an exception and the present-day situation is really stimulating for the rapprochement of theology and science (the human sciences, first of all). The two spheres are capable to collaboration in the crucial problem, to conceive modern man in his relation to himself, Universe and God. The approach of Orthodox theology to this problem is aptly expressed by Michel Stavrou: “Theology of Divine energies – not as metaphysical system, but as experiential discourse of faith in God present in creation – can be fruitful, helping Christians to lend Christianity all the fullness of its cosmic dimension. Of course, it is not a question of rejecting scientific progress or turning theology against science. It is a question of combining the two fundamental human vocations with respect to the world, kingship and priesthood, domination and sanctification, without adopting one of them to the detriment of the other”¹¹.

¹¹ M.Stavrou. Loc.cit. P.9.