

Russian cosmism, the Temple, and the Eucharist in the Gospel of John.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this talk, I would like to approach the gospel of John from two angles: firstly, looking at it through the lens of certain Russian Orthodox cosmist thinkers; and secondly, looking at it by considering how this relates to Margaret Barker's temple theology. I believe that to a great extent their thinking is compatible and can produce useful insights for Orthodox theology and Biblical exegesis today, though it is not a completely trouble-free synthesis. My starting-point for applying this tentative and still shaky synthesis will be to see how it can illumine references to the Temple in John in general, but then I want to focus on one specific aspect of the book: the institution of the Eucharist, especially the verses in Jn 6.52 onwards which so shocked Christ's and John's contemporaries: "My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink...whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I in him."

2. RUSSIAN COSMISM

First, I should define the term Russian Cosmism. This was a general tendency in Russian religious philosophy in the first quarter of the twentieth century. It built on the ideas of early church fathers like Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Irenaeus of Lyons and Maximus the Confessor concerning the role of man as a microcosmos and recapitulation, or *anakephalaiosis*, of creation, and supplemented it with various other sources, such as Western Christian mysticism and theosophy, and often Jewish and Christian Kabbalah¹. The idea that the redemption of humanity involves the sanctification of all that is bountiful in humanity naturally led to a synthetic approach in scholarship and theology. For our purposes, it is interesting to consider how this influenced interpretation of the Bible. Vladimir Soloviev and Sergei Bulgakov were extremely interested in detecting continuities between the Hellenic and Hebraic components of the Bible. Soloviev, for example, famously parsed the Greek word Sophia as the Hebrew "soph-ja", "end of Yahweh", which he interpreted as the element that mediated between Yahweh and creation. The general idea was that, contrary to the school of Adolph von Harnack, Judaic-Hebraic thought was not some simple, pure and philosophical construct which had been muddied by alien Hellenistic accretions in the early growth of Christianity - rather ancient Judaism had its own native gnosis, whose expression in Hellenistic terms was not a distortion but a fairly accurate mapping of similar insights. One of the best statements of this position about Biblical tradition was made by Fr. Pavel Florensky and Vasily Rozanov, and in keeping with our theme, I would like to illustrate it with regard to their interpretation of the Eucharist, especially as given in John.

Florensky, a highly original polymath who influenced many of his contemporaries, wrote a book called *The Philosophy of the Cult*, whose very title illustrates the idea of a Hebraic-Hellenic

¹ Obviously, there is no time to fully define this tendency or to outline what is more or less valuable in it. Different readers will draw the line differently in evaluating Russian cosmism and my own application of it here. In general this paper is of an exploratory, provisional and suggestive nature - all of the proposals made here would need to be backed up more fully and supported by reference to the literature of the different fields I refer to.

continuity: he argues that it is the temple cult in antiquity, and as continued in the Christian liturgy, which is the source of all culture and philosophy. Outside of the cult, there is no culture - and for him this was true for both antiquity and modernity. When culture loses its connection to the cult it loses its sacred foundations. Florensky looked with reverence to the sacred cults of antiquity, both Jewish and pagan. For him (as for Bulgakov writing at the same time in *The Unfading Light*), the temple is the place where the god himself manifests himself to his worshipers. He is particularly interested in the Dionysian idea of theophagy, i.e. the consumption of the god, writing that "in certain religions the sacrificial animal is directly the god-animal, the god itself in animal form, seeking to bring itself as an offering to itself. The priest, the victim, and the deity are all brought together in the slaughtered animal, all of them are mystically combined: this combination is enabled by the laying on of hands on the animal's forehead, which is one of the most essential moments of the sacrifice."² The Christian eucharist - though originating in the Jewish temple - is an extension of this idea: only the savior, only the god-man's, blood is thick enough to satisfy the hunger of man. And only a real participation in this blood-letting will satisfy the worshiper, and only this sacrifice can replace all other animal sacrifices, so bringing to a culmination and completion the idea of sacrifice. For the moment, I merely state Florensky's views; later on I will add a critique and revision of them.

It is most important to realize, continues Florensky, that through the cult the sacred and until then secret foundation and meaning of the entire cosmos is made manifest. In the Judaic religion, God revealed His Name to the Israelites. In the Orthodox hesychast mysticism of the Athonite monks, which was also practiced in Russia in the time of Florensky, the Name of God was treated with special reverence: it was seen as embodying the glory of God Himself, and repetition of the Name (the name of Jesus, that is) in meditation was (and is) a means for the worshiper to attain union with the bearer of the name, i.e. to attain *theosis* or deification. For Florensky, there is a tragic aspect in the gradual loss of knowledge of the tetragrammaton among the Jews. Through excessive earnestness and caution, the Jews put fences round the pronunciation of the Divine name, till finally only one man of one tribe could pronounce it, i.e. the high priest on Yom Kippur. However, as the Talmud recounts, even this quickly muttered rendition was not heard by the crowd due to the blasting of trumpets and the singing of the temple choirs. Finally, even the high priest lost this knowledge. For Florensky this is a sadly paradoxical situation: if God had not wanted mankind to know His Name, he would not have revealed it in the first place. The loss of the Name in general was a sign that the temple cult among the Israelites was being treated more and more as a formality: the theurgic power of the cult, its ability to serve as a means for the deification of the worshiper, was gradually lost. When Christ came, he revived the Name in his own person and name, so restoring the original intention of the Old Testament cult. However, again, Florensky's point is that

² Among the Russian thinkers, there was also an interest in detecting proto-Christian elements in world religions. To Florensky's account of Dionysian mysticism one could add the interesting parallel in the Taittiriya Upanishad, where the divinity cries: "I am food, I am food, I am food! I am the eater, I am the eater, I am the eater;...the first-born." Or, Mahabharata, Santi parvan: "All this universe, conscious and unconscious, is made of fire (*agni*) and offering (*soma*)." Furthermore, it is interesting that David Biale in *Blood and Belief* refers to a stream of scholarship that has revealed the typological similarities between the use and symbolism blood in Greek and Israelite religion: the latter is far closer to the former than to its regional neighbors like Egypt, Mesopotamia or the Hittites.

contemporary Orthodox Christian mysticism is not *either* Hellenic *or* Hebraic, but the true continuation of that which is essential to both traditions.

After giving this all too brief sketch of Russian cosmism, I would like to make my first point: this whole point of view obviously shares a general orientation with what Margaret Barker has called Temple theology. Barker's point is that Christ and the early church were seeking to rediscover and revive a cosmic cult which was to some extent present in the First Temple, and had been watered down in the Second Temple. The so-called pagan elements which Florensky and others were happy to detect in Egyptian religion, Judaism and Christianity were actually present in the First Temple: the serpent, the ashera-tree signifying divine wisdom or femininity, the oxen and the bronze sea, the mercy-seat with its human-faced cherubim above which the Lord appeared in human form, the merging of God and king into one, and so on, are all symbols of the God-imbued and -created cosmos. Barker gives extra detail to Florensky's general thesis about the loss of the divine Name and the power for *theosis* in the ancient Hebrew cult; and a point once made by Bulgakov that the Jewish cult was too strict in its rejection of paganism could be happily modified: in its original form, the one that Christ was appealing to, it was not as strict as it later became. So from that point of view, those who view Russian cosmism as an important trend in Russian Orthodoxy have quite a lot to learn from Temple theology. Florensky's "philosophy of the cult", in other words, is a sort of embryonic Temple theology.

Now I would like to look further at what Florensky said about the Eucharist in light of the above. The circumstances in which he originally set out his thoughts on this are extremely scandalous. He had a fundamental conviction that Christ's words to eat his body and drink his blood must have had a basis in the Jewish temple cult, and the theory that he built to show this was actually applied first of all for anti-Semitic purposes at the time of the notorious Beilis affair, when a Jewish man in Kiev in 1911 was brought to trial on a charge of ritual murder. Florensky and Rozanov wanted to show that contemporary Jews are privy to a gnostic ritualistic tradition which requires the use of blood in its cult. Put briefly, he was defending the blood libel that Jews sacrifice innocent Christian children. It would take me too long to go into the whys and wherefores of this sorry affair³. I must open and close the incident briefly by making three points: 1) This shows how Bible interpretation can be a dangerous business. 2) Florensky, we can say, lost his head momentarily here. 3) Nonetheless, despite the anti-Semitic motivation, there are elements in Florensky's logic that are worth salvaging and reinterpreting (as we shall see: all the premises of his argument, minus the conclusion). In other work, I have critiqued Florensky's anti-Semitism⁴, and it is my intention here to engage only in the latter task.

Firstly, I will summarize Florensky's argument, filling it out with details added by his co-writer Vasily Rozanov to give a composite account. The main idea was that if Christ's

³ Incidentally, the original blood libels originated in Catholic Europe in the Middle Ages, and were often linked to a revival in Eucharistic piety and the mysticism of the Eucharistic blood, the blood of flagellation and so on. Generally, this is treated historically, sociologically etc. But this link between a devotional piety of Christ's blood coupled with an attack on Jewish blood merits serious theological exploration. A start is made here, but to treat the matter fully goes beyond the subject of this paper.

⁴ Dominic Rubin, *Holy Russia, Sacred Israel*, ch.4.

commandment to drink his blood was understood by his disciples there must have been something in Jewish tradition in which it was grounded. He therefore reasoned that the well-known strict prohibition on blood in the Old Testament diet was a secular prohibition, which in fact underlined the fact that blood could be consumed on special, i.e. sacred, occasions. In general he pointed to the fact that the blood was precisely that which was offered to Yahweh on the altar; given that he also held to a theory of the fusion of worshiped and worshiper in the cultic act, the idea that Yahweh was pleased by blood was transferred to the idea that his select worshipers were pleased by and consumed blood. Searching for a proof-text he offered Leviticus 10:16-18, which reads: "Why did you not eat the sacrifices for sin in the holy place? for they are a great holiness and they are given to you to remove the sins of the congregation and to cleanse it before the Lord. Its (the sin-offering's) blood was not brought inside the sanctuary, and you should have eaten *it* in the holy place, as ordered by me." Rozanov understands "it" to refer not to the meat of the atonement sacrifice (the natural reading, in fact), but to the blood of the sacrifice. Imagine my surprise then when I read Margaret Barker's similar appeal to the letter of Barnabas, which also points to the sacred consumption of blood, or at least the bloody parts of the animal, by the Jewish high priest. The relevant passage from Barnabas, s.7 reads: "And let them eat of the goat that is offered at the fast for all their sins. Attend carefully; and let all the priests alone eat the entrails unwashed with vinegar." If Barnabas was right (and it is agreed he was a Jew of priestly descent), then Rozanov would have independently rediscovered the sacred consumption of blood by priests in the temple. The enjoyment to drink Christ's blood would then be a reference to the most sacred ritual of the Yom Kippur priestly ritual: Christ as sacrificer and sacrificed who was one with those consuming the sacrifice would thus continue, as Rozanov phrased it, the tradition whereby the 'little Yahwehs' (the deified Jewish worshiper) would – on one sacred day of the year - partake of the same blood as the great Yahweh.

Rozanov produced more evidence for this use of blood in Judaic ritual. In particular he was intrigued by its role in the ritual of circumcision. He pointed to the ritual of *matsitsa*, whereby the *mohel* or ritual circumciser sucks some blood from the child's penis to seal the wound: his belief was that, the medicinal function of this action aside, this was a symbolic communion in the blood of the (Abrahamic) covenant, and again, Rozanov's insight here seems to be correct: contemporary Jewish-American scholar (and rabbi) Lawrence Hoffman also points to how the *geonim* (medieval Jewish scholars) encouraged adolescents to wash their hands in a mixture of water and circumcisional blood, and he also comments on the likelihood that *matsitsa* is a communion in covenant blood. I might add that the 18th century Hasidic rabbi, Shneur Zalman of Liady, adds to this picture of the sacramental meaning of blood and specifically circumcisional blood: he links the sprinkling of the temple altar "seven times below, one time above" to circumcisional blood: the eighth sprinkling is accomplished through the merit of circumcision, and the blood of circumcision takes the Jew beyond the nomian seven to the anomian number eight (circumcision is performed on the eighth day). So once again, Rozanov's basic instincts and insights about the role of blood in modern Judaism, and by extension in ancient Judaism, were rather ingenious.

His remarks about the Sabbath are also highly suggestive, and will guide my thinking about John. He saw the Sabbath as a temporal equivalent of the Jerusalem temple, so that Christ's deliberate flouting of elements of the Sabbath are the same as his calling for the tearing down of the Temple. We will comment more on this link between Sabbath and temple shortly.

In sum, Rozanov and Florensky's cosmic interpretation of Judaism are bold and inspirational; but their conclusion that the Temple contained a murderous secret ritual – while it may have been true for those who emulated Canaanite practices at certain dark periods – spoils their account. It is my intention now to find a more serious meaning to the link between the sacraments of blood, Sabbath and Temple in what one might call Old and New Testament Judaism, by looking at the institution of the Eucharist in John.

3. JESUS, JOHN AND THE TEMPLE

The main idea of Rozanov was that Christ reverses the ordinary meaning of the Temple, but in such a way that he is building on some esoteric reversal already existing in the Temple now. The main reversals here are that: blood can and must be consumed; and that the Sabbath can and must be violated. At the same time, the opposite is true: blood must *not* be consumed; and the Sabbath must *not* be violated. This is what philosophy refers to as antinomies, i.e. paradoxes which cosmic philosophers see as being resolved in the "ground of being", in which there is a "union of opposites". The Hellenistic philosophical phrasing should not lead us to think that this is not also a Judaic concept: after all, any mystery tradition deals in paradoxes, and Jesus is famous for uttering paradoxes and performing paradoxical deeds, and not only in the book of John. I will start with the antinomy of the Sabbath versus work, and then consider the antinomy of blood consumption versus abstention, which will eventually lead into a modified Florenskian "cosmic" interpretation of the Eucharist.

Christ heals on the Sabbath. Healing is not *per se* forbidden on the Sabbath, but Jesus deliberately performs certain actions during that healing (spitting and forming paste in Jn 9, picking grain in Matthew) which could offend the sensibilities of strict interpreters of Sabbath rest, and so point to the higher meaning of the Sabbath. Moreover, in John he performs such healings in the vicinity of the Temple. Jesus' point is that he is allowed to work on the Sabbath, or more accurately, that he *must* perform his work on the Sabbath. This is because he is a new Temple: and the whole point is that even the old existing Temple depends for its existence on a permanent violation of the Sabbath in its very heart. That is, sacrificial offerings of animals and the preparation of fresh shewbread (in Hebrew *lechem tamid*, or 'bread of eternity, constant bread') continue on the Sabbath, and both of these tasks require cutting, baking, tearing and so on, which are forbidden by law on the Sabbath. But obviously, then, such tasks are only prohibited outside the Temple, for non-working non-priests. Inside the Temple, the forbidden is obligatory, and the obligatory depends on the forbidden. Priests must work on the Sabbath so that laypeople can rest on the Sabbath and be assured that the source of all holiness is still being sustained by sacred labor. Not only that, but on the Sabbath the Law actually requires additional Sabbath-violating *musaf* offerings⁵. This paradoxical relation between cessation of work outside the Temple and the continuation and intensification of work inside the Temple, with both states of affairs deemed necessary and holy, might also be read out of the rabbinic derivation of the types of work prohibited on the Sabbath: they are precisely the

⁵ One might recall, too, that circumcision also overrides the Sabbath (i.e. *halakhah* permits a circumcision to be performed on the Sabbath, despite the "work" involved if that is the eighth day after the boy's birth): thus it is entirely appropriate that the merit of circumcisional blood is what allows the high priest to achieve unity with God in the Holy of Holies, in R. Shneur Zalman's interpretation: the anomian eighth-day blood and the Sabbath-defying sacrificial blood take the worshiper beyond the world and creation.

39 tasks that were needed to build the tabernacle. It is as if those outside donate their labor to the Temple, and then rest - while the labor continues to be used and sanctified within the Temple precincts. Now given that Jesus refers to himself as a temple ("he was referring to the Temple that was his body"), we can see that the Christ-temple is permitted to perform forbidden work *wherever* he may be. He is an omnipresent zone of sacred labor, the antinomian centre of the cosmos, a meta-cosmos on which the cosmos depends for its existence. In his omnipresence and mobility, he is perhaps more akin to the Tent of Meeting that was carried through the desert than the static Temple building in Jerusalem.

Christ's contention that he is a new Temple is shown in the book of John to have far greater scope than often assumed. I think we see this in the actual etymology of the word "work" as used by Christ in the Greek and Syriac of John. The Temple is a house in which the Father works, Christ tells us. And the Father works even on the Sabbath through his priests. Christ is a temple of flesh and blood, whose work is also eternal: "My Father still goes on working and I am at work too." Christ often refers to his Father working in him, and given that he also refers to the Temple as his Father's house, the idea of the works of the Son being Temple works follows naturally, especially as Christ makes these comments in the vicinity of the Temple. But the word "work" in and of itself hints at this Temple connection. In Greek, the word connected with "work" comes from the root "ergein", as in Jn 9.4: *hemas de ergazesthai ta erga tou pempantos me heos hemera estin; erketetai nux hote oudeis dunatai ergazesthai...* ("As long as the day lasts we must work the work of the one that sent me..."). In Syriac, the verb is "avadeh": *li valeh leme'bad avadeh dman d'shadrani ad imama ho. atbei lihya d'enash la mishkab l'miflah*. "avadeh" means "to do", but its derivatives are related to the meaning "work" and "service". In Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew, the cognate root "avodah/avad" also means "work", but it also means simply "service of God, worship", or simple, "temple worship". In Jn 9.4, in the verse just quoted "leme'bad avadeh" (to work/do the work of God) is paralleled with "l'miflah" - whose meaning is even more overtly connected with the cult: it is translated in Ezra, Daniel as "to serve, to pay reverence to, to serve the deity"; in nominal form it is used in Ezra to refer to the "servants of the house of God"⁶. In sum, the "work of the Father" that Christ is working in the Temple precincts - but then also far beyond them in "Galilee of the gentiles" and in Samaria - is a new kind of cultic service in a new, expanded temple. As I shall comment more later, the Greek too

⁶ One could make a point of more general linguistic interest here: the Syriac verb 'avadeh' strictly speaking does indeed rather prosaically simply mean to 'to do'. It might seem to be taking liberties to translate it as 'work, worship', only because it *sounds* like Hebrew 'avodah', which has that meaning. But this may actually be a counter-productive hyper-scholarly philological purism: a Syriac writer who knew Hebrew would probably, especially in sacred writing, allow the nuances of Hebrew to inform his passive and active use of Syriac/Aramaic. Prof. Robert Hayward comments how Aramaic targumim link the Hebrew word '*dvir*' (inner sanctuary, back-room) to the Hebrew root, *dbr*, to speak, and Aramaic-Hebrew *debira*, Word - so that the *dvir* is the place where man speaks with God and hears his Word. Strictly speaking, again, the targumim are making what we would call a pun, i.e. linking sound and meaning against the etymological grain. However, a) this is typical of rabbinic midrashic analysis, and b) it is a more universal way of creating new words than philologists might suppose. G.Zuckermann (2003) has even coined a term for it: phono-semantic matching. In other words, the pun whereby Syriac '*avadeh*' also absorbs Hebrew '*la'avod*' - to serve, worship, do sacred labor - may not just be an exotic hermeneutic device but a natural feature of normal human use of language, so that linguistic purists are the abnormal ones here. Incidentally, one might go so far as to speculate that the builders of the Tabernacle named the Holy of Holies *dvir* because it was enriched by the 'punning' double meaning of 'place where the Word is heard, place of conversation with the Spirit'. To exclude this is to impose a purist 'arboreal' model of Indo-European philology on a non-academic culture!

captures this fairly well: "ergein" is related to both "energeia" and "leitourgia"; "energeia" is already (in Jewish and pagan ritual) a word that expresses the direct *action* of God *in* (en-) the worshipper who participates in the cult; and "leitourgia" (or "common work") in Luke 1.23 refers to "priestly service", in Hebrews to "temple ministry", and so on, from which of course, the Orthodox church eventually derives its own naming of the divine service, as the sacred *liturgy* - the gathering at which God works through and in his worshipers in the Eucharist.

So Christ's working the Father's work on the Sabbath is not a violation of creation but sustains creation. We can now look at how the same antinomy can be observed with regard to blood. Barnabas and Rozanov believe that on the holiest day of the year, blood was consumed by the high priest. Whether they are right or not, there are indications in the Old Testament that Yahweh is pleased by the smell of the blood of bulls and lambs⁷. The Aqeda story about the near-sacrifice of Isaac, and other OT passages (in Ezekiel in particular, and even in the oft-repeated commandment to bring the first born of the womb, human and animal, to Yahweh) even hint that *human* blood is pleasing to Yahweh. (Again, the contemporary researcher Jon Levinson argues convincingly for the existence of a Yahwistic child-sacrifice cult). And yet somehow the Law also insists that blood is strictly *forbidden* for Israelites. Here Rozanov's logic could explain this satisfactorily: outside the Temple blood is forbidden to lay-people; inside it is permitted to the priestly caste. Perhaps sacred blood-consumption - like the *asbera*, the human-faced cherubim, the serpent, and other elements which now strike us as pagan - was one of the elements that was abolished in the Josian reforms. Such blood-tasting need not have been cannibalistic: like *matsitsa*, it could have been in minute, symbolic quantities. However, the abuse of blood-tasting by those Israelites who engaged in child-sacrifice and perhaps the general tendency of the Israelites to confuse the old pre-Josian cult with the cults of surrounding peoples, may have encouraged the priests and prophets to do away with such blood-tasting. But the idea that the blood now poured out at the altar is a gift to Yahweh still preserves this logic: the most precious substance goes to Yahweh, who is divine, while man, being a lesser creature, consumes only the blood-drained flesh of the animal.

In other words, accepting Florensky's premises about cultic antinomy allows us to make a bold speculation as to the possible shape of blood ritualism in the pre-reformed cult, while rejecting his conclusion that such blood-ritualism need have involved human sacrifice - at least among 'orthodox' mainstream Yahwists. However, what Florensky's account still does not give us yet is the actual reason why Yahweh is said to like blood, and why blood in and of itself is precious. Here, in fact, Jesus' words in John supply the answer, but only if we interpret them as being founded in a deep understanding of the ancient Old Testament understanding of blood given in the Torah.

When we read Jesus' words in conjunction with Leviticus and Genesis, we understand that in the most fundamental sense, the reason Yahweh desires the blood of creatures, human and animal, is because it is *his* blood. The blood comes from Yahweh, flows in the veins of creatures, and when the creature dies the blood flows back to Yahweh, from whom it came and to whom it always belongs. This is seen most clearly in Gen. 9.4. where we are informed why blood should not be

⁷ The places where Isaiah complains that blood is not pleasing to Yahweh are the exception that proves the rule: blood of honest, righteous sacrifices is pleasing; blood of dishonest or cultically faulty sacrifices is not.

eaten: *Akb basar be-nafsho damo lo tokhlu* - "the flesh with its **life-breath, its blood**, you shall not eat." Here "blood" is grammatically in apposition to "nefesh": nefesh *is* blood, dam-nefesh – or blood-breath - a point Philo makes incidentally about blood and breath throughout the "writings of Moses". Gen 9.6 tells us further: "He who spills the blood of man, by man shall his blood be spilt, for in the image of God He made man." The first part of the verse very strongly links *adam* and *dam*: man and blood; the second part suggests that the resemblance between blood-man and God, which gives man his sacred status, may well be linked to this "dam-ic" component of A-dam. (I shall comment more on this verse later). This ultimately takes us right back to Gen.2, where God breathed his *nefesh* into the nostrils of Adam, and Adam became a living creature – whereas before he had been mere earth or dead meat – *basar*. Gen 9 allows us to understand that it's not just breath or abstract life that God breathes into Adam, but more specifically blood-breath, blood-likeness - and that this blood-breath is the source of man's resemblance to Yahweh. We remember that for the more archaic writers (the pre-Josian writers, as Barker would say) Yahweh is seen, he has a shape, he speaks quite directly to his worshipers: and here we can add that Yahweh's manifestation, his shape is strongly linked to, perhaps given outline and visibility, by the contours of blood.

The prohibitions in Leviticus also make the link between blood and *nefesh*, though seemingly less boldly: there blood is not the actual nefesh – but its container, and its symbolic substitute. Yahweh says: (my translation), "I have set my face against the nefesh (soul) who eats the blood, and I shall cut him off from his people: for the nefesh (soul) is *in* the blood [i.e. it is not simply equated with the blood as before] and I have given it to you (to put) on the altar to cover up for *your* nefesh (souls), for it is the blood that will atone for the nefesh." But in fact, here too, blood and nefesh are inseparable: the blood *contains* the nefesh, but it is also inseparable from the nefesh: to give animal blood to Yahweh is to give its nefesh for your own nefesh. You cannot have the nefesh outside of that which contains it. Giving the animal's blood back to Yahweh really means to give its nefesh back to Yahweh, at the altar of creation where Yahweh gave his blood-breath to living things⁸.

Once we understand that blood and breath are one divine substance issuing from Yahweh, we will understand more about Jesus' logic in John too. In Jn 6.63, shortly after he has told us to drink his blood - the blood-breath of Yahweh, we see now - Christ says: "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh has nothing to offer. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." If we continue to think that blood is matter and spirit is something distinct, it would seem as if Christ is now disowning his whole bloody invitation to consume him, and positing the old flesh-spirit dichotomy, perhaps alarmed by the hostile reception his invitation caused ("and many of his disciples went away and accompanied him no more"). But as soon as we understand the meaning of blood in the sacral, temple sense given in Genesis we understand otherwise: one simply needs to read these words correctly: "It is the blood (blood-spirit, blood-breath) that gives life, the *basar/sarks* has nothing to offer. The words I *breathe* onto you...are life." We should not take these words in too general a light: *basar/sarks* does not mean "humanity" or some such abstraction. In the sacrificial context of "drink my blood etc", in the context of the nearby Temple where Jesus is preaching, *basar/sarks* has a quite specific meaning: it means the blood-drained *basar* of the dead animal that

⁸ By the way, if we stop for a moment, we will realize that the writer of Genesis and Leviticus had anticipated nineteenth century science quite remarkably: it was only then that moderns finally understood the function of blood – to carry nefesh, or as we should say, oxygen round the body!

was eaten by the communicant in the Old Temple. And this is contrasted with the new *basar* that Christ's communicants are commanded to chew rigorously (that odd Greek verb which underlines, again, the careful physicality of the communicant's meal⁹) in the new temple precincts: this is a *basar* aflo with the quixotic, dynamic blood-breath of Yahweh, and so it is meat that is ever alive, ever self-renewing, and ever transmuting the consumer into the consumed. Once the communicant begins to eat *that* meat in the precincts of the Christ-temple, he need not go away again: it is an eternal meal that will change the communicant utterly.

Thus, as Rozanov and Florensky intuited, there is a deep and intimate connection between the logic of blood in the Old Temple and the logic of blood in the New Temple of Christ's body. If Jesus' followers were in any way attuned to the traditions of the First Temple with its far greater sacramental ritualism, they would have picked up on this. The difference is simply that the use of blood in the Old Temple is more staccato, more discontinuous. And that applies even to our speculatively reconstructed pre-Josian temple, with its deeper familiarity with the meaning of blood. In both the First and Second Temple eras, the Israelite traveled to the Temple in Jerusalem and poured back the blood-breath of animals to Yahweh (perhaps tasting very minutely of it in a preview of the real blood that would be tasted in the Messianic era). The blood is given, the blood is returned. However, in Christ the divine Temple is on earth and everywhere. One does not have to travel to the Temple; the Temple comes to you. Moreover, there is no break in the circulation of blood-breath, or blood-spirit. The Father's blood flows in the Son, and the Son's blood flows in the Father, and the Father dwells in the Temple of the Son and the Son in the Temple of the Father. The Israelite to whom Christ comes and who goes to Christ likewise joins himself to this flow of blood-breath, healing the rupture whereby blood-breath is poured out into the ground after death. In the Christ-Temple, furthermore, one *must* consume blood: for this is the place where - as in Genesis - Yahweh is constantly pouring the blood-breath into the nostrils of the supine Adam, and where Adam is constantly consuming Yahweh's blood. Let us return to the text of John to see how Jesus further paints this picture of a blood-infused creation Temple.

In John 6.56-7, Jesus says: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person. As the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me." In John 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that a man must be born again, and Nicodemus asks: "Is it possible to go back into the womb again and be born?" In fact, Nicodemus' question gets the point exactly. Before Christ, Yahweh gives his lifeblood out to creatures. The

⁹ The verb 'trogo' can be translated 'gnaw, crunch, chew.' and differs from fago, which is simply 'to eat'. In Greek 'trogo' was used of animals eating: someone in the audience asked whether the idea that we are invited to 'crunch' Christ's body as if we are animals might have significance. I don't know if attention to the animal action is putting too much weight on 'trogo' - but assuming this nuance is there, it might be explained as follows: i. we are thereby envisaged as animals to Christ the human - and this underlines that (outside the metaphor) the bread and wine of his body is *super*-human, and not merely human. That is, we are not cannibals, consuming our own; rather we consume the flesh of a *higher* type of being. The crudity of the verb, that is, actually rescues Christ's bold invitation from descending into a dangerous literalness, from breaking the sacred antinomy we are discussing. ii. A much more personal explanation comes to mind: Christ is depicting himself as a man who gives himself to be torn to be pieces and eaten by beasts; this suggests an end even more ignominious than the Cross - to be left out on the hillside and eaten by wild beasts, leaving no trace of a body in history at all - and all in order to sustain those beasts. This would be a poignant type of self-giving (of self-annihilation) indeed. However, this interpretation is based on a rather slender premise.

creatures continue to hang onto their portion of lifeblood by consuming the *basar* of lesser animals, and returning those animals' lifeblood to the altar. This system of barter is rather ecologically wasteful: one human blood-breath demands the outpouring of many animal blood-breaths. But now Christ proposes to mankind to leap to a time *before* their own creation. That is, Jesus proposes that creatures be infused constantly with Yahweh's lifeblood, while never becoming unstuck from Yahweh - so that the metric of waste is solved - all will share one blood, the tributaries of the one river of Yahweh's blood will never be sundered. In other words, Jesus proposes that creatures indeed re-enter the womb of creation and never leave it. The old Christian symbol for this extraordinary state of affairs was the pelican who was supposed to feed its fledgling with its own blood; however, we know that this is not zoologically accurate, and it might be better to compare Yahweh and the new creature to an embryo and its placenta - as Nicodemus unwittingly does and as Christ does quite wittingly: in the placenta the baby's blood vessels and the mother's blood vessels are separate but so closely intertwined that nutrition passes from the mother's cells to the embryo's: the embryo's blood is thus separate but wholly dependent on the mother's blood. One could say their two bloods form one "higher" blood without mixing.

Incidentally, this image of two bloods that are one but separate and unmixed corresponds fairly neatly with the later Nicene Christological formula for the unity in division of Christ's divine and human natures, and probably not accidentally. That is, the concrete Ancient Near Eastern/Semitic blood-metaphor translates very well into Hellenic categories - a point Florensky constantly makes on a general scale. One could make the same point for the Platonic metaphor of "participation": the individual manifestations of reality are said to gain being by participating in the eternal Forms, and this was adopted by the Church fathers to model man's participation in the divine. (To this day, this is the dominant paradigm in Orthodox theology). Plato's own model, as he admits, had roots in Egyptian priestly religion; and Christ's own "model" of participation as a consumption/infusion of God's transformative sacrificial blood is highly homologous to Plato's model, as well as being deeply rooted in the Old Testament cult. Again, a Hellenic-Hebraic dichotomy seems to be out of place here.

There's one other point regarding the Temple of Christ's body. We have seen that it magnifies the antinomy of the old Temple, for in Christ the Sabbath is work and blood is sacred food. But the Temple of Christ also overcomes another distinction, that between purity and impurity. In John 9, Jesus cures a man born blind at Siloam. Siloam was a pool that provided the Temple with the water needed to cleanse Temple priests from death-impurity. In the Talmud we learn that the priest who sprinkles the all-purifying ash of the red heifer on the people himself becomes impure and the only water powerful enough to purify must come from a flowing source, and not merely a *miquveh*; the water that was brought came from Siloam. This highlights quite compactly the difference between Christ and the old Temple. In economics and ecology, there is talk of the problem of externals, i.e. the case where a system functions efficiently in its own terms, but generates waste beyond itself which it does not take responsibility for. The Jerusalem Temple is like that: it acquires the blood it needs to sustain the people's lifeblood but in so doing it itself becomes impure, and has to expel waste products - such as the scapegoat, and the blood of sacrificial victims which flows out into the wilderness and can cause impurity if people contact it - as well as import external products such as the Siloamic water. In addition, the violation of the Sabbath in its precincts is itself a sort of uneasy compromise. In Christ, however, the antinomy of deathly

blood and purifying water is also resolved. The blood of Christ is purifying: it contains its own antidote, its own purifying water. In John 20.34, we read that after Christ's death, "one of the soldiers pierced his side and there came out blood and water." The blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem temple and used to make the ashes of the red heifer, and the water located just beyond the Jerusalem Temple in Siloam, are here brought together in the Temple that is Christ's body. (Again, it is interesting to note that another function that modern scientists have discovered about blood is its cleansing function: it transports oxygen, and removes waste away from cells...)

4. FILLING OUT 'THE 'PHILOSOPHY OF THE CULT' WITH TEMPLE THEOLOGY

In all of this, I have adapted a basic Florenskian approach to the "philosophy of the cult" as seen in John. In the last part of my talk, I would like to hint at how this approach can be deepened further by adding some elements of Temple Theology. The main point, recognized but not developed by Florensky, is that Jesus is pointing to an antinomian mystery in the Jewish Temple whose real meaning only he fulfills. But, along with Margaret Barker, I think we need to add that Jesus is pointing not just to the Second Jerusalem Temple, but to the First Jerusalem Temple, and beyond that he is pointing to the Edenic Temple, which we already mentioned when we referred to Adam receiving the blood-breath of Yahweh at his creation. In effect, Jesus in John is saying that the Temple is not a straightforward affair: even in its degraded present state it contains a stunning paradox regarding Sabbath and blood. As such, even the second Temple can give contemporary Jews the idea of what the Messiah-temple is like. But there are a few references in John in which Jesus refers to the First Temple, as if to then take his listeners a step further in their ability to approach the Temple that is his body. The most obvious reference is to the snake that is raised in the wilderness to heal the Israelites (Jn 3.14). The bronze serpent was one of the sacred artifacts that was kept in the First Temple but not the second temple. Perhaps more subtle is John 10's description of Christ's working of his father's works (*energeia, avodah, avadeh*) in the Temple precincts during the feast of the *enkainia*.

The *enkainia* of the Temple is generally translated as the feast of dedication and equated with Hannukah, which originated in the time of the Maccabees. However, among eschatologically inclined groups - such as Jesus' followers - the Maccabees were regarded rather critically: the changes they introduced in Judea acted to distance the cult even further from the First Temple ideal. So a Jewish Greek reader with Messianic proclivities and a good knowledge of the Septuagint would probably, in seeing the word *enkainia*, rather think of Solomon's weeklong dedication of the First Temple, described in Kings and Chronicles. For the normal Greek usage for Hannukah, found in Josephus, is "feast of lights", and the word *enkainia* is hardly ever used in the Greek Old Testament, and one of the rare instances where it is is precisely in naming *Solomon's* dedication - which incidentally culminated on the Day of Atonement, another festival with significance for the Jesus movement. Thus not the Maccabean rededication of an already compromised Temple is hinted at in Jesus' words about his "works" in John 10, but the dedication of the First Temple which had the serpent and other sacred objects.

Of course, finally, in John Jesus makes reference to one other "object" if one can call it that that belonged to the First but not the Second Temple: the divine Name. In John 5.43, Jesus says: "I have come in the name of my Father and you refuse to accept me; if someone else were to come in his own name you would accept him..." And in Jn. 17.6: "I have revealed your Name to those

whom you took from the world to give me.” Again, just as Jesus' "work" does not simply mean in some mundane sense his "mission", but refers precisely to his cultic-Temple activity, so too concerning Christ's revelation of the Name. In coming to the Temple of the Messiah, one comes to a Temple where the Name is - as in the First Temple - known. Again, knowledge of the Name is associated with an intimate sensory contact with Yahweh. In John 6.37-8, Jesus says: "You have never heard his voice, you have never seen his shape...and his words find no home in you [do not abide in you] because you do not believe in the one he has sent...". In Amos, Isaiah and Ezekiel the worshiper sees and hears Yahweh: in the Temple that is Christ's body, this situation is again restored. There is an *enkainia* of a new third Temple where Name, glory, vision, healing serpent - as in the First Temple - are all present. Again, Christ's invitation to consume his blood is also best understood against a First Temple background: blood, as we said, is associated with a very "visible" Yahweh, a very flesh-and-blood and Adamic Yahweh. Moreover, I am inclined to think that Jesus' talk of blood, and of the worshiper who worships in Christ supping from the blood of the Father, hints at another aspect of First Temple times that Barker has often referred to: the *ashera*. The sacred tree that was torn up in the Josian reforms may have represented just such an embryonic, maternal side of Yahweh.

However, while Jesus appeals to the First Temple, and while he denigrates the Second Temple (like many dissatisfied Jewish groups of the time), eventually he goes beyond both Temples, and as such he uses both Temples to make the point he needs to make. The point (that he is the new temple and new sacrificial victim) can be understood in different depths through recourse to both temples. In other words, the type of Temple that Christ is now building through his "works" is a Temple whose antinomian nature has a range of different degrees of ability to shock. That is, it is extremely shocking if compared to the Second Temple, less shocking if compared to the First Temple, perhaps even less shocking if compared to the pre-Josian First Temple, and not really shocking at all if compared to the moment of creation when Yahweh breathes his breath-blood into the *basar* of Adam. That is, in leading his followers into himself Jesus takes them through the layers of Israelite history back to the ashera-like tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. The result is quite clear, as Jesus hints ever so briefly - once again during the festival of the *enkainia* in John 10, citing a snippet of Psalm 82: "And you are gods..." The result of his cultic recapitulation, *anakephalaiosis*, of history is deification; or, as we now understand more clearly, consumption (ingestion, influx) of Yahweh's blood so that the worshiper is born again as a child of Yahweh, a child, that is, who - not being sundered from the womb - is one with his mother, a mother who is a cosmic temple of pulsating flesh and blood.

I think it is worth bearing in mind that Jesus' construction of a new temple and critique of the present temple is not necessarily intended to fully replace the Second Temple. Sometimes, the Johannine Jesus has been seen as a supersessionist *par excellence*. However, Jesus is a lot more subtle than that: he is not trying to gather momentum for a movement that will destroy and rebuild the Second Temple on First Temple lines - any more than he is trying to abolish the observance of the Law among his disciples and fellow Jews (or get rid of Herodian rule *etc*). He does not want Jews to start eating blood in their everyday life (a prohibition the Orthodox church preserves by the way), or to stop going to the Temple to check for purity and to offer sacrifices. In a sense, all these exoteric observances are highly useful and necessary to the point he is making - which is that his own followers, in observing externals are led to participate in "internals": abstaining from blood and

observing the Sabbath externally, they taste the blood and the beyond-time through him *now*. To abolish the externals would also strip the internals of support. That is, the complete unity of opposites (abstention *and* participation in blood) is something beyond the remit of *this* world. We might ponder this by considering the following: if the Second Temple had not been destroyed, then it would not need the efforts of scholars at this meeting to laboriously reconstruct all the Temple references in John! That is, John's liturgical text works best against a background of a deep knowledge of and participation in even the much diminished Second Temple. This is a point that might have repercussions for how we conceive of the "Jewish Jesus", living according to the exigencies of his time...

5. MARY AND THE COSMOS

I would like to conclude by pointing to one other antinomy that John highlights about Jesus - an antimony that is also not fully resolved. This is the paradox that Christ is, on the one hand, the life of the world, the "zoe tou kosmou" (Greek), the "khayya d'alma" (Syriac), the "hayyei ha-olam" (Hebrew) - in a quite literal sense, the temple of Christ's body with its blood and flesh, is the kosmos. And yet on the other hand, John's Jesus also makes clear that "my choice of you has drawn you out of the kosmos", and that "the kosmos" hates his disciples. Thus oddly, Christ splits the kosmos into two, even though his *avodah* (cultic work) is intended to make those in the world "one like us", i.e. like Christ and His Father. The issue once again can be solved through understanding the meaning of blood in John. Fr Sergius Bulgakov is helpful here: he argues that the blood and water that flowed from Christ's side when it was pierced is not the same as the Eucharistic blood that the disciples partook of at the Last Supper even before Christ's death. Rather it was akin to the leftover blood of the sacrificial bull that was poured out at the foot of the altar and was not used for the purificatory sprinkling of the altar. This blood flowed out beyond the Temple. (It was, in our terminology, "waste blood"¹⁰ - though, we could add to Bulgakov's account the fact that the blood is mixed with "Siloamic" purifying water). Likewise, says Bulgakov, the blood from Jesus' side flows out beyond the cosmos-temple of the Christ who is one with that part of the cosmos that wishes to consume and turn into his body. That blood flows into the cosmos which still hates Christ, and waters its soil, engendering a desire to eventually turn towards Christ. Thus the two bloods of Christ, rather like the two goats, one chosen for slaughter, one chosen as scapegoat and evicted into the no man's land of the desert, will eventually become one; similarly, the two kosmoses, separated for now, are continually moving towards one another.

The other place in John that hints at the reconciliation of the division of the kosmoses is the elliptic incident at the foot of the Cross. "Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' Then to the disciple, he said, 'This is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his home." This too can be interpreted in a cultic manner. Mary gains in John a new son, a new Jesus.

¹⁰ Middot 3.2.a. "At the southwestern corner there were two holes, like two narrow nostrils, through which the drops of blood which are tossed on the western foundation and on the southern foundation descend and mix together in the channel and go forth to Qidron brook." The image of the Temple having two nostrils suggests to me a building with a human face, reinforcing the interchangeability of man and dwelling, house or temple and human body. Incidentally, the soil washed in that blood was sold as fertilizer or compost, the Mishna says, so in a sense there was a limit on ecological waste even in the earthly temple! Also, this suggests the idea that Christ's blood and water that flow into the world, like this temple mixture, also fertilizes the world.

Jesus ascends from the world, taking all who believe in his name with him into the kosmos that is one with the Father. But just as with the blood-water that flows beyond the Jerusalem Temple and Christ's crucified body, so Christ leaves Mary for the kosmos that does not as yet accept him. Mary (and here I am building on an interpretation of Bulgakov in another work) is the universal mother, the universal Woman. Through her, John becomes Mary's son, that is, he becomes Jesus, the sacred temple, and the home into which John takes Mary becomes a new temple too. Those who already believe can partake of Christ's Eucharistic blood: they are the already (nearly) redeemed kosmos. Those who do not yet believe have a chance to visit the new Temple Christ has just dedicated in his absence, and through that Temple to continue to the Temple that is Christ. This act of filiation recapitulates what we have seen above: in an odd way Christ repays his Mother the gift of his own birth; Mary birthed Jesus, and now Jesus gives Mary a new son, as if Jesus is himself a mother birthing a child (and as Origen points out, the blood-water from that flows from Christ's side recalls the waters of childbirth). But that should no longer be strange given how Yahweh himself is given maternal traits in Jesus' discourse. Henceforth, Mary will dwell in John's house, so transferring the blood-washed altar of Golgotha to John and John's followers. Mary, too, of course is Jesus' blood-relation: indeed it is through her that Jesus receives his human (more precisely, his Israelite) blood. Thus in a literal sense, Mary and the blood-water mix of Golgotha are one; and they are one, too, in their function of continuing the unification of the two kosmoses that are sundered by Jesus' work in the world¹¹.

6. CONCLUSION

I have not covered everything I wanted to talk about, and most of what I have said has been merely suggestive, hints to be pursued in future. In the spirit of cosmist antinomy, I will conclude this talk with two pieces of Rozanovian mischief. In Leviticus 17.10, we read (in Hebrew): "Ki natati panai banefesh ha-ohkelet et ha dam...", which is always translated as: "For I shall set my face against the soul who eats the blood", but can be translated quite reasonably and literally as: "For I shall put my face [i.e. presence, glory, energy - *doxa* in the Septuagint] into the soul of the one who eats the blood..." Such a translation would have been anathema to the original (or at least Second Temple) readers of the blood-prohibition, but in the cosmic Temple of Christ's body where opposites unite, it was a reading that was waiting to be discovered, a labor resting until a laborer should come and put it to work. Perhaps going even further than Rozanov could or would have gone, one can also go back and read Gen 9 in a similar spirit: *shofekh dam ha-adam be-adam damo*

¹¹ It is interesting - another point Bulgakov makes - that Mary is not present at the last supper. Bulgakov posits that this is because she already bears the blood of Christ within her, and so takes communion of her Son even without needing to be present at the distribution of his blood and flesh. One could add that Mary, with her blood, is out in the world while the disciples commune, laying the ground for those outside to enter in. A perhaps related question was posed to me after this talk: why is there no account of the Last Supper in John? My tentative guess is that the whole book of John is itself a Last Supper: a verbal sacrament that takes the reader-worshiper right into the sacrament of the blood and flesh. (Jn 17 is really the core of the Eastern Orthodox liturgy, so in a sense the content of the Last Supper is there without being so identified - Fr. Anatoly Zhurakovsky dwells on this at length). Or, put differently: John's book fulfils the role of Mary - it takes the verbal sacrament of the Last Supper outside to those who do not yet know Christ, and is the gateway through which they enter into the Temple of her Son's communion. The verbal sacrament of John's book is so intense that in it Word becomes Flesh; the Word almost is the Last Supper for those not yet fully initiated into the Church.

yishafeb, ki be-tselem elohim asah et-ba-adam ("He who spills the blood of man by man shall his blood be spilt, for in the image of God He made man."). Earlier, I commented (footnote 6) on how rabbinic midrash uses phono-semantic matching. Michael Fishbane in his seminal *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* showed how such midrashic methodology goes all the way back the original writing of the Hebrew Bible texts - and we see it here: "dam ha-adam be-adam damo" gives us a phonetic chiasmus, in which *adam* -man, Adam - is iteratively linked to *dam*, blood: man is blood. It is awfully tempting here to add to this chiasmus by substituting the word *dmuth* - likeness - for *tselem* - image: the two are paired in Gen 1.26 (*betsalmenu kidmuthenu*: "in our image in our likeness.") Then we get: *shofekb dam ha-adam be-adam damo yishafeb, ki be-dmuth elohim asah et-ba-adam*. Again, translating the prepositions a little differently, and giving a somewhat wider meaning to Adam, we can provide an English targum (inspired by our Russian thinkers) which brings out the phono-semantic equivalence of the roots *dm/ dmuth*: "Those of you who pour forth the blood of Adam (the Second Adam or Christ) [pour forth = to drink?], into Adam will your blood be poured, for with the blood-likeness of God did He make Adam (the blood-man)." That is: if you drink the blood of Christ, you will become Christ, and you will become God." Or, one could interpret it slightly differently: "Those of you who spill the blood of Adam-Christ, nonetheless into Adam-Christ shall your blood be poured, for God originally made Adam as his blood-likeness." That is, even the greatest sinners, those who kill Yahweh (which is all of us), shall be allowed to participate in the blood sacrifice of Yahweh at the end times, for that is what Yahweh intended at creation.

With this "Hebreo-Russian targum", I will end, hoping that the line of thought developed here can provide other insights about the Temple (and other) mysteries lurking just beneath the surface of our Old and New Testament texts, which have come down to us in Hebrew, Aramaic-Syriac and Greek, languages often taken to be opposites, but opposites which are - or if our thinking is to be true, should be - united¹².

¹² Another point that arose in the symposium on June 16: Robert Hayward mentioned how the Septuagint translates Hebrew *tavnit* (pattern, figure) as *paradigmos*. He commented (skeptically) on how traditional university academics see the Platonic ramifications of the Greek translation (paradigms, Ideas) as accidental. I agree. The idea that the Hellenistic Jews who translated their sacred scripture into Greek would have been unaware of the philosophical ramifications of the word they chose in the target language, or that they would not have been guided in choosing a word with manifest religious-philosophical ramifications seems to impute to the translators a pedantry and linguistic unimaginativeness that belongs rather to a far later epoch. Also, given that Plato got *paradigmos* and much of his theory of Forms from the Egyptians, Egyptians Jews really would have had to be quite heroically pedantic to keep their traditions so hermetically (!) sealed from one another.