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Twentieth-Century Orthodox Reception of Aquinas

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The Oxford Handbook of the Reception of Aquinas

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Abstract and Keywords

The reception of Aquinas in the twentieth century must be understood in the context of the experience of political instability, exile, and Communist oppression that affected, in one way or another, virtually all the theology of the period. In this century, the anti-Westernism of the Russian Slavophiles reaches something of a peak, with Aquinas routinely held up as an archetypal representative of a theological tradition quite foreign to that of the Orthodox Church. That said, there are a number of examples of a more nuanced and less polemical approach to Aquinas that serve to provide hope for a less confrontational (if still duly critical) engagement with Aquinas within Orthodox theology in the twenty-first century. Such an engagement would, in fact, be not unlike that widely found in the Byzantine and early modern periods.

Keywords: Bulgakov, Florensky, Lossky, Florovsky, Ware, Yannaras, Orthodox, sophiology, anti-Westernism, Slavophiles

THE history of Orthodox reception of Aquinas in the twentieth century is inextricably bound up with the construction and articulation of Orthodox identity in what were undeniably tumultuous times. The Russian Revolution catapulted a whole generation of Orthodox philosophers and theologians into Western Europe and North America—and killed many of those that remained behind in the Soviet Union. It is important to recognize that a good deal of modern Orthodox theology was conducted by refugees in foreign academic and ecumenical contexts. In this febrile and fragile atmosphere, a strange mixture of admiration and antipathy characterizes many Orthodox responses to Thomas in this period. The situation of Orthodox theologians behind the Iron Curtain but outside the Soviet Union was also extremely difficult, albeit without the debilitating and disorienting experience of exile and often, but by no means always, more oppressive than positively deadly. Even in Greece—with Cyprus the only majority Orthodox land to have escaped the Communist yoke—Orthodox theology often operated in highly unpropitious circumstances, from the Balkan wars to the two world wars, the civil war, the exchange of populations with Turkey, and the Junta. Such instability has contributed to a spirit of instinctive conservatism and suspicion of the West in all its forms among many (but by no means all)

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modern Greek theologians. Of course, none of this scene-setting is intended to imply a structuralist narrative but these generally unfavourable historical circumstances cannot be ignored in any presentation of the course of Orthodox theology in this period, not least when it comes to the reception of the man widely taken to embody Western theology (and all that is wrong with it).

The chief curiosity of twentieth-century Orthodox reception of Thomas Aquinas is that he is very widely regarded as representing a theological tradition quite inimical to that of the Christian East. For all their profound disagreements with Thomas on the points of separation between East and West, Orthodox theologians prior to (p. 443) the nineteenth century do not tend to set up such global contrasts. This dichotomous mindset dates back no further than the Russian Slavophiles, as detailed in Chapter 20 of this Handbook. A further curiosity is that there are precious few theologians willing to constructively engage with or draw from Aquinas to any significant degree. This, again, marks a contrast with Byzantine and early modern Orthodox readings of Aquinas, in which examples of such engagement and appropriation are widespread. All this is noted elsewhere in this Handbook and in Plested (2012), from which much of the following material is also drawn.

To begin with the Greek world, the opening of the twentieth century saw the appearance of Zikos Rhosis' *Dogmatic System* (1903) and Christos Androutsos' *Dogmatics of the Orthodox Eastern Church* (1907). Both are substantial scholastic works of distinctly Germanic character bearing much in common with earlier manuals: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. Both authors, professors of the University of Athens, vigorously defend the unique truth claims of the Orthodox Church on the basis of substantial patristic, conciliar, and confessional material. While standing broadly within a long Latin-leaning tradition of Orthodox theology in which Aquinas is widely diffused, neither engage very closely or extensively with Aquinas. Androutsos accepts the doctrine of Transubstantiation on broadly Thomist lines, while Rhosis takes issue with Aquinas' claim of the theoretical (but not actual) eternity of the world. Androutsos was also the author of a substantial work on ethics, the *System of Ethics* (1925), that followed in the path marked out by Kant in basing ethics largely on reason and will. A rather different account was provided in Vasilios Antoniadis' (1851-1932) *Handbook of Ethics According to Christ* (1927), which tallies more obviously with Aquinas (whom he refers to frequently) in treating ethics primarily in terms of virtue and humanity's return to God in Christ. Antoniadis was a professor of the theological school of Halki near Constantinople and was one of the first Greek theologians to recognize the significance of Leo XIII's retrieval of Thomas, his intense interest in Thomas being evident in his earliest published work in 1890 dealing with Aquinas' political theology (Antoniadis 1890).

But Antoniadis is rare example among Greek Orthodox theologians of this period, none of whom display anything like his interest in and appreciation of Thomas. The University of Athens continued to be dominated by the systematic and scholastic approach well into the postwar period, as witnessed in the *Dogmatics* (1959-61) of Panayiotis Trembelas (1886-1977). This massive work greatly expands the range of Androutsos, adding a historical

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and analytical dimension Trembelas found lacking in the earlier work. While irreproachably Orthodox and teeming with patristic citations, the work owes much, like the manuals of his predecessors, to Western models and concepts—for instance the distinction between the ‘matter’ and ‘form’ of the sacraments. Trembelas inhabits a thought-world that does not appear much changed in the 50 years intervening between their respective works but which was soon to be robustly challenged by the theology of a younger generation. John Romanides (1927–2001) staged a rebellion against the scholastic dominance of academic theology in postwar Greece. Steeped in the theology of the Russian diaspora, Romanides exploded onto the Greek (p. 444) theological scene with an all-out assault on Augustine and the ‘Franco-Latin’ theologians that followed him, countering them with ‘the Biblical and Patristic line of thought’ represented in the Greek Fathers. Augustine is reprimanded for his rationalist approach to the divine mystery and his pernicious doctrine of original sin. Thomas Aquinas is the chief representative of the ‘Franco-Latin’ theologians who have, in practice, done little more than work out the implications of Augustine’s theology. Romanides claims that the notion of God as *actus purus* has its roots in Augustine’s confusion of essence and energy and his hubristic probing of the divine essence. Aquinas is definitely the chief epigone of this primal error, and avoids pantheism only through the degenerate notion of created grace, thereby breaking the connection between God and the world. In contrast to the admittedly somewhat uninspiring presentations of Trembelas and his predecessors, Romanides offered a fresh and exciting theological vision that found many sympathizers in the Orthodox world. But for all his invigorating insights and his salutary emphasis on the mystical and ascetic dimensions of Orthodoxy, his global rejection of Augustine and all subsequent ‘Franco-Roman’ theology leaves us with an impossibly simple situation in which the biblical-patristic-Palamite tradition stands in stark and splendid isolation from the philosophical-Augustinian-Thomist west. Romanides’ theology amounts to a rejection of the place of reason and philosophy in theology and its supersession by a rather subjective and selective account of Orthodox tradition.

The philosopher and theologian Christos Yannaras (1935–) presents a considerably more sophisticated but essentially analogous form of anti-Westernism. Yannaras is less fixated on Augustine than is Romanides, and focuses rather on Aquinas as his chief target. For Yannaras, the translation of the *Summa contra gentiles* by Demetrios Kydones, completed in 1354, marks the beginning of the extinction of what he calls ‘real Hellenism’, the start of a process that saw the living tradition of the Gospel and the Greek Fathers submitted to and eventually subsumed by the West. The problem with Aquinas, for Yannaras, is that scholastic methodology makes God into a definable and knowable entity, breaking the connection between Creator and creation. The consequences of this scholastic approach are frankly appalling, being especially evident in modern technology and abuse of the natural world. Aquinas is, for Yannaras, the archetypal representative of Western rationalism, individualism, and legalism and a key figure in the West’s relentless march towards secularism and nihilism.

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Yannaras' approach has much in common with the narrative articulated by Philip Sherrard (1922–95) in *The Greek East and Latin West* (1959). Sherrard, a poet, translator, and theologian who spent much of his life in Greece, offers an analysis of Western theological and philosophical decline and traces a 'curious inner dialectic' in Western thought from Augustine through Aquinas to Descartes in which reason is divorced from revelation and elevated to wholly autonomous status (Sherrard 1959: 139–64). This process entailed a gradual separation of God from the world in which God became dispensable in the Western mindset and is held responsible for the subsequent ills of Western society, most notably in the devastation now afflicting the natural environment.

(p. 445) Another prominent thinker in modern Greece, Stelios Ramphos (1939–), has reached conclusions precisely opposite to those of Yannaras and Sherrard. In his alternative 'grand narrative', it is the triumph of Hesychasm and the theology of St Gregory Palamas which represents the real disaster of the fourteenth century. Ramphos characterizes this development as an eschewal of western Christianity's more world-affirming and distinctly rational faith—as exemplified by Thomas Aquinas. The victory of Hesychast asceticism and rejection of western Christianity has sown the seeds of Greece's subsequent woes, from the surrender of the Byzantine empire to the Turks in 1453 to the economic travails of the early twenty-first century, are directly attributable to the void that has opened up the Greek soul as a result of the victory of a world-denying form of Christianity.

Metropolitan John Zizioulas (1931–), one of the greatest Orthodox systematic theologians of modern times, presents a powerful and impactful theological vision that is largely free of metanarrative. In Zizioulas' masterpiece, *Being as Communion* (1985), Aquinas makes occasional appearances as the representative of precisely the opposite ontology to that articulated in the book. In identifying God's essence with his existence and thereby privileging nature over person, Aquinas is found to be worlds away from recognizing the ontological primacy of the person of the Father—a key plank of Zizioulas' theological platform (Zizioulas 1985: 34n.). His notion of opposite relations is quite unacceptable to Zizioulas, who finds it devoid of ontological content (1985: 220n). Zizioulas is suspicious of the psychological model of the Trinity articulated (after Augustine) by Aquinas, regarding such models as based on a false assumption concerning the relation between knowledge and love (1985: 104; 2008: 71). But Zizioulas treats Aquinas with respect, recognizing the importance of his work of systemization along lines established by John of Damascus and Origen (Zizioulas 2008: 2). He also recognizes that Aquinas' theology of the Trinity was motivated by a concern to uphold the dignity of the Son (1985: 210n.). This is a spare and subtle treatment of Aquinas devoid of hostility but nevertheless quite convinced of the vast gulf separating him from the worldview of the Greek Fathers.

To turn now to the Russian world, the sophiology of Frs Pavel Florensky (1882–1937) and Sergius Bulgakov (1871–1944) deserves pride of place, given its impact on so much later Orthodox theology even if frequently by way of reaction. Both men inherited from the Russian Slavophiles an intense suspicion of the theology of the Latin West. For Florensky, theology is a living and experiential reality that defies the objectification and rational

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analysis of the scholastics. That said, his finely poised understanding of reason enables him to engage with Thomas and Thomism in a sophisticated fashion. He attacks Aquinas' contention of the identity of essence and existence (including reason) in God, seeing in this a 'scarlet thread' that leads to Spinoza's definition of substance as 'that which is in itself and is conceived through itself'—in other words, 'the self-proving Subject' (Florensky 1997: 34–5). Discussing the Holy Spirit, Florensky cites St Mark of Ephesus' criticism of the distinction between mediate and immediate procession made by 'Thomas and the Latins' as a sign of Orthodox resistance to Latin attempts to rationalize dogma (pp. 88–9). More positively, he makes use of Aquinas in support of Georg (p. 446) Cantor's understanding of absolute infinity (p. 354). Florensky treats Aquinas with respect and even some deference. He is very ready to contradict him, and to trace back to him certain negative currents in the later history of European thought, but in Florensky's delicate and subtle theological sensibility, there is little room for animus or blanket denunciations. A somewhat less delicate take on the character and possibilities of Western scholasticism is furnished by Fr Sergius Bulgakov.

Certainly Orthodoxy's most constructive and creative theologian of the twentieth century, Bulgakov articulated a compelling but often rather mystifying vision of the world in God and God in the world, a vision in which *Sophia* becomes the link-piece of a vast theological synthesis uniting Trinitarian theology, Christology, pneumatology, cosmology, ecclesiology, and Mariology. She is the non-hypostatic and non-essential eternally created principle of unity and coinherence in God, and between God and the world. Needless to say, there is little in this potted summary that would suggest any great affinity between Bulgakov and Aquinas. Indeed, Aquinas emerges as something of a *bête noire* for Bulgakov. In an essay on 'The Eucharistic Dogma' (1930), Bulgakov homes in on Aquinas as the classic exponent of Western Eucharistic theology. For Bulgakov, Protestant teachings on the Eucharist can only be understood as a rejection and overcoming of Aquinas' doctrine; thus the whole of Western eucharistic theology is a positive or negative Thomism. And this is not simply a matter of external Church relations: 'The influence of Aquinas' doctrine also spread to the East; recent Orthodox theology concerning this question is still under the indirect and insufficiently understood influence of Thomism, an influence that must be completely overcome' (Bulgakov 1997: 69). Bulgakov proceeds to a close examination of Aquinas' teaching and its philosophical underpinnings, concluding that it represents the enslavement of theology to philosophy—and to a very particular and outmoded philosophy at that. Even in purely philosophical terms, transubstantiation is 'an outright coercion of reason, a completely unnecessary and unjustified archaism' (Bulgakov 1997: 76–7). We also encounter sustained discussions of Thomas in *The Comforter* (1936) and *The Bride of the Lamb* (1945), the second and third volumes of Bulgakov's 'greater trilogy'. In *The Comforter*, Bulgakov attacks Aquinas' argument for the *filioque* on the basis of opposite relations as a logical non sequitur. For Bulgakov, Aquinas' Trinitarian theology represents an impersonal account of relationality that has afflicted Catholic theology ever since (Bulgakov 2004: 22–3). He also notes with some justice the way in which Orthodox discussions of the procession have been straitjacketed into Western modes and structures. Even St Mark of Ephesus, while seeking to counter and outdo Thomas in his discus-

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sions with the Latins at the Council of Ferrara-Florence, debates on entirely Latin grounds and, in the end, 'only parodies Aquinas' (Bulgakov 2004: 113-17). *The Bride of the Lamb* represents Bulgakov's most mature and developed discussion of a figure whom he continues to regard as paradigmatic of Western theology. Looking more closely at what Thomism actually is, Bulgakov pinpoints Thomas's fatal flaw as subservience to Aristotle. The impersonal prime mover of the Stagirite is Thomas's real starting-point (Bulgakov 2002: 19-20). Thomas' admission of the philosophical possibility of the world's eternity (as opposed to the revealed truth of its creation) is a sure sign of this reliance, which ends up (p. 447) producing an account that is a makeshift compromise between Aristotle and Moses (Bulgakov 2002: 20-21). Notwithstanding occasional notes of respect and interest Bulgakov finds Aquinas overall a deeply and disappointingly un-sophiological thinker and one who presents a woefully deficient account of God, the created world, and human freedom. Through identifying itself so thoroughly with Thomas, Catholic theology shares in all his limitations and errors. It is no surprise, therefore, that it should find itself at a complete dead end.

Bulgakov's pugnacious and deeply unflattering treatment of Aquinas is the most sustained Orthodox engagement with the Angelic Doctor since the Byzantine era. The attention Bulgakov lavishes on the topic is itself a sign of the strength of a resurgent Thomism in the early twentieth century, albeit more the Thomism of Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange than of Étienne Gilson. With his newly reacquired predominance, Thomas becomes a convenient whipping-boy for Bulgakov, a one-man representative of the Catholic theology whom he can attack at will. Thomas becomes the embodiment and progenitor of the rationalism, impersonalism, and determinism of a West diametrically opposed to Orthodoxy. Insofar as he has infiltrated the theology of the Christian East, Thomas represents an 'influence that must be completely overcome' (Bulgakov 1997: 69). Only a creative retrieval of the theology of the Church Fathers will allow Orthodoxy to 'exit the scholastic labyrinth' (p. 83).

An almost identical approach to Aquinas is found in Vladimir Lossky (1903-58), who was in fact one of the chief movers in the largely successful campaign against Bulgakov's sophiology, contributing to its condemnation by sections of the Russian Church in 1935. But the ferocity of this debate should not obscure the great similarities between the two men. These similarities become very apparent when one compares their attitude to Aquinas. Lossky had a good deal of respect for his sometime professor at the Sorbonne, Étienne Gilson, and admired his teacher's compelling account of authentic Thomism as a living and properly Christian philosophy centred on the fundamental issues of human existence and a far cry from any sort of static systematization. But his respect and love for Gilson did not deter Lossky from an all-out assault on Aquinas along lines similar to those laid down by Bulgakov. For Lossky, it is not transubstantiation but the *filioque* that most aptly represents the rationalist excesses of Western theology. With Augustine its progenitor and Aquinas as its supreme exponent, the doctrine of the *filioque* is decried as a wholly unwarranted intrusion into the mystery of the Trinity that has led inexorably to modern secularism (Lossky 1974: 88). In his masterly *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient* (1944), Lossky grandly contrasts the mystical and experiential foundations of Or-

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thodox theology with the ratiocinations of Latin theology—with Thomas typically the chief exemplar (Lossky 1944: 24, 56, 90). Other comments adhere to this basic pattern. Thomas' archetypical teaching on the procession of the Holy Spirit is confirmed as woefully impersonal, notwithstanding the best efforts of Gilson to suggest otherwise (Lossky 1974: 121–2). His understanding of the Trinity in terms of relations of opposition reveals an inadmissible essentialism in which the persons are subsumed by the nature (Lossky 1974: 76). Lossky sees Thomas as irredeemably rationalist even in his Dionysian inheritance, retaining nothing (in contrast to Palamas) of the properly apophatic theology of the Areopagite, but reducing such theology to a question of simple negation (pp. 26, 53). Aquinas' account of the vision of God is unfavourably contrasted with a Dionysian–Palamite account in his *The Vision of God* (1964). All this brings Lossky to the conclusion that between the positive rationalizing approach of the West (represented by Augustine and Aquinas) and the negative mystical approach of the East (represented by the Cappadocian Fathers, Dionysius, and Palamas) there is really no common ground at all (p. 80). For Lossky, as for Bulgakov, Aquinas represents a deficient and outmoded form of theology quite opposed to that of the Orthodox East.

The Slavophile roots of this dialectical stance vis-à-vis the West are not hard to discern. A rather more nuanced position is adopted by Fr Georges Florovsky (1893–1979). Florovsky, together with Lossky, is inescapably associated with the notion of a 'neo-patristic synthesis', a creative return to the Fathers designed to reinvigorate and, in some sense, repristinate Orthodox theology after centuries of enslavement to Western theology and theological method. But Florovsky's proposed version of this synthesis explicitly embraces the Latin Fathers and indeed Latin scholasticism in a manner that would be quite unthinkable for Lossky. In Florovsky, there is little trace of the blanket criticism of the rationalistic, scholastic, Thomist West indulged in by many of his fellow Russian theologians. He is scornful of any suggestion that East and West are clearly delineated and opposing categories: 'The antithesis of "West and East" belongs more to the polemical and publicistic phraseology than to sober historical thinking' (Florovsky 1989: 191). What we do find in Florovsky are some very sustained discussions of the wholly baneful and pernicious effects of Western theology and philosophy on Russian theology from early Muscovy down to modern times. This is the master-theme of his greatest work, *Ways of Russian Theology*, published in 1937 (Florovsky 1979; 1987), which includes some steady criticism of the use of Aquinas (and Latin theology in general) in the theological schools of imperial Russia. But Florovsky can be rather more positive when dealing with Western theology outside of the question of its somewhat uncritical assimilation into Russian school theology. In the preface to his treatise *'In ligno crucis: The Patristic Doctrine of the Atonement'* (in Baker et al. 2016), Florovsky allows that Thomas and Thomism stand in the tradition of Christian Hellenism (i.e. the conversion of philosophy to the service of Christ) that he saw as fundamental for the whole patristic theological enterprise. This recognition of the Hellenistic character of Thomas and Thomism is a striking confirmation of the analogous assessments of Demetrios Kydones and Gennadios Scholarios in the Byzantine era. Florovsky finds fault with Lossky's reading of Thomas and defends an authentically apophatic current in Thomist thought: 'Lossky dismisses the Thomistic ver-

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sions of the “negative theology” probably too easily.’ He gives Charles Journet’s *The Dark Knowledge of God* as a fine example (Florovsky 1958: 207–8). Elsewhere, Florovsky notes with regret the extent to which Aquinas is so little known in the East, remarking that many Orthodox may even be rather disappointed to find in Thomas a tangible mystical and apophatic dimension founded on his immersion in the Greek Fathers (Florovsky Archive, Princeton University, Box 3, Folder 11).

(p. 449)

The Orthodox thinker can find a more adequate source for creative awakening in the great systems of ‘high scholasticism’, in the experience of the Catholic mystics, and in the theological experience of later Catholicism than in the philosophy of German Idealism or in the Protestant critical scholarship of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or even in the ‘dialectical theology’ of our own day. (Florovsky 1987: 303)

Florovsky’s vision of a ‘neo-patristic synthesis’, then, expressly includes a sustained and sympathetic engagement with Western theology. While this ‘new creative act’ is chiefly a retrieval of patristic tradition designed to assert anew the truth of Orthodoxy, there is no doubt that high scholasticism (by which he means principally Scotus and Aquinas) has much to offer Orthodox theology.

But this nuanced take on East/West difference has rarely been given the attention it deserves. Lossky’s rather more antithetical account of the eternal opposition between East and West has proved of greater impact, to such an extent that Florovsky is often conflated with Lossky as a theologian of East/West antithesis. Lossky’s oppositional approach (which has much in common with Bulgakov and the Slavophiles) was to have a decisive impact across the Orthodox world. It was to find a particularly able and erudite defender in Fr John Meyendorff (1926–92), whose magnificent retrieval of the theology of St Gregory Palamas involved a tangible rebuttal of Aquinas and all that he represents. For Meyendorff, Palamas represents a tradition of theology quite foreign to that of Aquinas, a tradition that discovered ‘that the real problem of the *Filioque* lies not in the formula itself, but in the definition of God as *actus purus* as finalized in the *De ente et essentia* of Thomas Aquinas, vis-à-vis the more personalistic trinitarian vision inherited by the Byzantines from the Cappadocian Fathers’ (Meyendorff 1986: 678).

Of course not all Orthodox theologians of the postwar period fully embraced this model of dichotomy. Indeed, it may be noted that the model of dichotomy is more a feature of the theology and philosophy of the Russian diaspora than of Russia itself. Great modern Russian thinkers such as Alexei Losev (1893–1988) and Sergei Avernitsev (1937–2004) (both of whom dealt with theological topics at one remove, for obvious reasons) do not subscribe to the oppositional model. Even within the diaspora, theologians such as Paul Evdokimov (1901–70) and Olivier Clément (1921–2009) are both capable of sympathetic appraisal of Aquinas. Fr Lev Gillet (1893–1980), writing as a ‘Monk of the Eastern Church’, went so far as to draw positively on Aquinas in respect of mystical experience including the doctrine of the spiritual senses (Gillet 1945: 68). A similar generosity of vision

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is evident in the work of Kallistos Ware, Metropolitan of Diokleia. Ware, like Gillet, cites Aquinas with approval on the mystical life in a passage concerning the outpouring of the soul's glory onto the body at the resurrection that he finds reminiscent of the Macarian Homilies (Ware 1967: 29). Ware warns against the construction of artificial boundaries between East and West (Ware 1973: 16), but does allow that the scholasticism represented by Thomas was a factor contributing to the schism between East and West: 'Theology became a "science" for the medieval Latins, in a way that it never was for the early Greek Fathers and their Byzantine successors' (p. 18). Similarly, while acknowledging the important mystical side to Thomas, he observes that mystical experience was never the criterion of theology it became for Palamas (p. 20). (p. 450) He also doubts the depth and extent of Thomas' apophaticism (p. 22). That said, he does not hold it proven that Aquinas used reason in any overweening or excessive sense nor that he employed philosophy in a fundamentally different way from, say, the Cappadocian Fathers or John of Damascus (p. 24).

The Romanian Orthodox tradition may also provide some important pointers towards a mode of Orthodox theology wary of any sort of simplistic self-definition vis-à-vis the West. This distinctly Latin expression of Eastern Christianity has as its most accomplished and significant spokesman Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–93), certainly one of the foremost theologians of the twentieth century. Stăniloae produced a three-volume *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1978). In its structure and some of its content (such as the treatment of the seven sacraments), this work relies to some extent on earlier manuals (and Stăniloae had translated Androustos in his youth) but is also aligned with the neo-patristic revival initiated by Florovsky. Stăniloae insists on the proper place of reason in theological endeavour and refuses, in contradistinction to Lossky, to single out apophaticism as an exclusive defining characteristic of Orthodox theology. He also follows Florovsky in incorporating Augustine into his version of patristic retrieval. There is, however, little in Stăniloae to suggest any very great sympathy with Aquinas or indeed with post-patristic Western theology in general. By contrast, the *Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church* (1932–78) produced by the Serbian monk and theologian St Justin Popović (1894–1979) is thoroughly and consistently anti-Western with Aquinas typical of the egregious rationalism of the West. In this and other works, St Justin develops a familiar metanarrative of distinctly Slavophile tinge that traces the decline of the West back to medieval scholasticism and the rise of the papacy.

To sum up, the Orthodox reception of Aquinas in the twentieth century is largely negative. Aquinas, where he is recognized at all, is very often treated as an archetype of a type of theology (rationalistic, legalistic, scholastic) that stands in marked contrast to that of the Christian East (mystical, apophatic, ascetic, liturgical). Instances of positive appropriation, such as we see in the Byzantine and early modern periods, are relatively few and far between. But there are many encouraging signs of a more nuanced approach (Florovsky, Ware, and others) which hint at a future in which the theology of Aquinas may yet become a resource for and indeed an ally of contemporary Orthodox theology as it seeks to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Suggested Reading

Louth (2015); Plested (2012); Yannaras (1992).

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