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## **Christian Humanism in Russian Religious Thought**

Apropos *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Caryl Emerson, George Pattison, and Randall A. Poole (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 712 pp.

*Abstract.* The article offers comments on the book *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought*, to which was dedicated a symposium held on April 6, 2021. It took place at the Library of Russian Philosophy and Culture “The Losev House” in cooperation with the Gorky Institute of World Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow. It considers the topic of Christian humanism, the main position of which can be defined as the possibility of improving a person in his unity with God. It is noted that Christian humanism took the form of personalism for some Russian philosophers. The theme of Christian humanism is considered taken as an example the work of the outstanding philosopher Vladimir Solovyov and his followers: Sergei Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdyaev and Semyon Frank.

*Key words:* Christian humanism, Russian religious philosophy, Russian idealism, theism, personalism

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## **Христианский гуманизм в русской религиозной мысли**

Apropos *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Caryl Emerson, George Pattison, and Randall A. Poole (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 712 pp.

*Аннотация.* Предлагаются замечания по поводу книги *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought*, которой был посвящен симпозиум, состоявшийся 6 апреля 2021 года в Научной библиотеке и Мемориальном музее им. А.Ф. Лосева при сотрудничестве с Институтом мировой литературы им. А.М. Горького Российской академии наук, г. Москва. Рассматривается тема христианского гуманизма, основная позиция которого может быть определена как возможность совершенствования человека в его единении с Богом. Отмечается, что у некоторых русских философов христианский гуманизм принимал форму персонализма. Тема христианского гуманизма рассматривается на примере творчества выдающегося философа Владимира Соловьёва и его последователей: Сергея Булгакова, Николая Бердяева и Семёна Франка.

*Ключевые слова:* христианский гуманизм, русская религиозная философия, русский идеализм, теизм, персонализм

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The history of Russian religious thought is a very big topic. Accordingly *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought* is a big book, with forty chapters. There are many good reasons to study the topic, and the editors did not try to impose any unifying framework. But one of the book's main themes is Christian humanism.<sup>1</sup> I would define the basic position of Christian humanism as the possibility of human progress toward union with the divine, that is, toward salvation. Christian humanism is distinctive in its emphasis on human capabilities – on human dignity rather than human depravity. It holds that human beings are created in the image of God and are capable of recognizing the divine image (or ideal) in themselves and of striving to become ever more worthy of it, to approximate it ever more closely, and to realize it ever more fully in themselves and in the world. In short, Christian humanism maintains that human beings are capable of working toward their own salvation, of positively contributing to it. In Orthodox Christianity, salvation is conceived as *theosis* or deification, which emphasizes human cooperation in the salvific process. Theosis is a prominent idea in the *Handbook*, with a whole chapter devoted to it and numerous references in other chapters. For Russian religious thinkers, theosis was the core of Christian humanism. According to Ruth Coates, they developed “the dynamic anthropology of the Greek patristic tradition that suggests – in contradistinction to the Latin tradition cemented by Augustine – that humans are not helpless in the face of their fallenness, but retain agency, and can become collaborators with God in the work of their own theosis and that of the cosmos” [2, p. 242–243].

In Russian religious-philosophical thought, Christian humanism rested on a certain conception of human nature, of what it means to be human. In my chapter on the liberalism of Russian religious idealism, I noted that this conception of human nature was idealist in the basic meaning of the term: human beings are conscious of ideals (e.g., truth, the good, and beauty) and can freely act on them, thereby overcoming determinism in the external, naturalistic sense of the term [3, p. 258–259]. According to this conception, reason has a remarkable dual power: first, to recognize or posit ideals, and, second, to determine the will according to them. This type of philosophical anthropology was advanced by Boris Chicherin and Vladimir Soloviev, the two greatest philosophers of nineteenth-century Russia, and formed one of the basic frameworks for the further development of Russian religious-philosophical thought in the twentieth century. Russian philosophers extolled “ideal self-determination” (as Sergei Trubetskoi called it) as the quintessential human capacity [4, p. 108; 5, p. 121]. In the modern period, the concept has been most associated with Kant, but its roots can be traced to the patristic period (Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, for example).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The development of a distinctive Russian tradition of philosophical humanism (a broader category than Christian humanism) is the focus of Hamburg and Poole [1].

<sup>2</sup> Kant's most influential exposition of the concept is *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785). For a recent edition, see [6]. For patristic roots, see [7, p. 48–50, 232–237; 8]. According to Louth, “For Maximus, what is distinctive to being human is self-determination (*autexousios kinēsis*: movement that

In my chapter, I wrote that one might perhaps remain agnostic about whether the human capacity for ideal self-determination has metaphysical implications, but that Russian idealists, beginning with Chicherin and Soloviev, had no doubt that it did – indeed that it entailed theism. This is precisely what made them “religious idealists.” They understood that human nature, if properly appreciated for its capabilities, provides good grounds for theistic belief. These capabilities include the theoretical and practical powers of reason, the power to appreciate and create beauty (a whole section of the *Handbook* is devoted to art), and the power of love. These powers refute naturalism, rationally justify faith in God, and warrant a conception of reality that includes the divine. This “anthropological” approach, proceeding from the human to the divine, is an important part of the meaning of Christian humanism. By contrast, anti-humanistic forms of Christian thought deny themselves some of our best and most immediate reasons for theistic belief. These forms emphasize human depravity and denigrate human capabilities, holding that human beings are so corrupted by sin that any capacity for ideal self-determination is radically impaired. By dimming awareness of the image of God in man, they even can be seen as contributing to the rise of atheistic belief.

Why did Russian religious idealists think that ideal self-determination provided a rational basis for theism? Let me suggest three basic reasons. First, they recognized that the ideals of reason are by their nature infinite and absolute. Such ideals invalidate reductive positivism, since the positive data of sensory experience are finite and suggest nothing of the absolute. Infinite ideals cannot come from finite sense data. Thus, they refute materialism (or naturalism) and provide good grounds for belief that there is more to reality than the material, natural world, for belief, that is, in a transcendent metaphysical reality. Our ideals form (or are aspects of) the idea of the absolute, which is a priori or intrinsic to consciousness. Chicherin defined reason as consciousness of the absolute, or of the absolute principle.<sup>3</sup> Soloviev also took the view that the absolute (or divine) principle was intrinsic to human consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Both believed that the idea of the absolute entailed (or at least implied) its ontological reality, since its presence in consciousness was otherwise inexplicable. This was a basic conviction among other Russian religious idealists such as Sergei Trubetskoi, Evgenii Trubetskoi, Pavel Novgorodtsev, Sergei Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdiaev, and Semyon Frank. For them, the absolute was the philosophically precise term for God. They thought the very idea of the absolute implied the reality of God (their logic recalled the ontological argument, especially in Descartes’s version).

Second, the capacity for ideal self-determination involves not only consciousness of ideals (and the idea of the absolute), but also the ability of reason to deter-

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is within one’s own power). . . . This self-determination is not, however, absolute: human beings are created in God’s image, and it is in their self-determination that they reflect God’s image” [8, p. 60]. I am grateful to Philip Boobbyer for referring me to Louth’s book.

<sup>3</sup> He develops his conception of reason in part one (“Science”) of [9, pp. 1–173]. See also [3, p. 260].

<sup>4</sup> This is one of the main ideas in *Lectures on Divine Humanity* [10]. See also [11].

mine the will according to its ideals – free will in the highest, positive meaning of the term. This power overrides external determination by sensible-empirical causes and again makes naturalism untenable. Third, ideal self-determination enables human perfectibility or progress, our striving toward and ever closer approximation to the *telos* of perfection (the absolute). Because our ideals, as ideals, can never be fully realized, human progress toward them is a process of infinite perfectibility. The transcendent culmination of this process must be life or union with God, who is absolute perfection, the ontological reality that grounds our ideals and aspiration toward them.<sup>5</sup>

This type of “argument from human perfectibility” was central to Vladimir Soloviev’s religious philosophy [11, p. 223–228]. In *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, he wrote that the human capacity for “infinite development” (or for perfectibility, as he will refer to it in his later works) presupposes an ultimate end toward which it is directed, which he called the positive absolute of all-unity or perfect “fullness of being.” Infinite human striving toward the absolute ideal convinced Soloviev of the reality of the absolute. He formulated this in striking terms: “Thus, belief in oneself, belief in the human person, is at the same time belief in God” [10, p. 17, 23]. These words captured perfectly the Christian humanism of Russian religious thought. Sergei Bulgakov made this same “argument from human perfectibility” in his famous essay, “Basic Problems of the Theory of Progress,” which opens *Problems of Idealism* [13, p. 104].

Russian Christian humanists emphasized that their modern idealist conception of human nature was also biblical and patristic: We are graciously created in God’s “image” (the absolute ideal) but are endowed with capabilities – reason, conscience, free will – that enable us to assimilate progressively to God’s “likeness” by our own efforts. Again, the transcendent culmination of this process is theosis. The roots of this dynamic, synergetic interpretation of Genesis 1:26 go back to Greek patristic theology and bore fruit in the full-fledged Christian humanism of the European Renaissance and then of Russian religious thought. In Russia, the patristic heritage was recovered by the country’s four theological academies, which undertook a massive, multigenerational effort (from approximately 1821 to 1918) to publish the works of Church fathers in Russian translation, accompanied by extensive scholarly analysis [14, p. 102–106]. Among those featured were the Cappadocian fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa) and Maximus the Confessor, whose “similitude anthropology” emphasized human agency and self-determination in the salvific process.

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<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the best known example of the third type of argument is Kant’s derivation of the postulates of immortality and the existence of God from moral perfectibility. Recently Paul Gavriluk has shown that this “ethico-teleological argument,” together with the other classic arguments from natural theology, was developed into a tradition of philosophical theism in the Russian theological academies of the nineteenth century [12].

Theosis was an important patristic source of Vladimir Soloviev's religious philosophy, which helped to advance a modern, moral-philosophical (rather than strictly mystical or ascetic) understanding of it [15]. Soloviev often invoked the terminology of Genesis 1:26. In *Justification of the Good*, he wrote that our consciousness of infinite, divine perfection (the absolute) is the "image" of God in us and our striving for infinite perfectibility according to this ideal is our "likeness" to God. This "double infinity" of the image and likeness belongs to everyone. "It is in this that the absolute significance, dignity, and worth of human personhood consist, and this is the basis of its inalienable rights" [16, p. 145, 176.] In another passage he wrote, "The absolute value of man is based, as we know, upon the *possibility* inherent in his reason and his will of infinitely approaching perfection or, according to the patristic expression, the possibility of becoming divine (*theosis*)" [16, p. 296].

To be human is to be a person. Russian Christian humanism typically took the form of a robust personalism: the defense of personhood (*lichnost'*), the idea that human beings are persons or ends-in-themselves, each having an intrinsic and absolute worth or dignity, with the implication that persons are the highest form of reality and its supreme value.<sup>6</sup> Chicherin and Soloviev both followed Kant in locating personhood and human dignity in "practical reason," that is, in the capacity for ideal self-determination or perfectibility. Both philosophers thought this power made persons "metaphysical beings" (i.e., irreducible to physical-chemical processes), which in turn philosophically justified their grounding of personhood in theism – specifically in the idea that persons are created in the image and likeness of God [3, p. 258–264]. In this way, Russian personalism was religious in its conclusions but humanist (or idealist-humanist) in its premises. This is what made it a form of Christian humanism, even the core of Christian humanism in Russia. This is not surprising, if we take into account the broader context of Russian intellectual history. The defense of human dignity and of personhood were arguably the most important preoccupations of nineteenth-century Russian social thought. The defense of personhood is not always the same as personalism, which generally has a metaphysical and theistic meaning. But the defense of personhood in Russian social thought was easily elevated, so to speak, to the form of personalism in Russian religious thought, because in both spheres Russian thinkers were concerned to defend human values against the autocracy and, in the case of Russian religious thought, specifically against the autocracy's control of the Russian Orthodox Church through the Holy Synod. These structural features of Russian intellectual history help account for the humanism of Russian thought, including Russian religious thought.

Personalism has been a deep feature of the Russian religious-philosophical tradition ever since Ivan Kireevsky and Aleksei Khomiakov, as I emphasized in my chapter on the Slavophiles [20]. Beginning with them, Russian idealism has been extolled as "concrete" in contrast to "abstract" German forms. The opposition encap-

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<sup>6</sup> On personhood and personalism in Russian thought, see [17, 18, 19].

ulates the Russian philosophical recognition that being is transcendent to immanent consciousness and must be experienced through faith rather than merely thought through abstract concepts. As Kireevsky wrote, only faith can ascertain “the relationship between the living Divine personality and the human personality” [21, p. 285]. The term “concrete” captures the much-vaunted “ontologism” of Russian religious thought – and also its personalism, which holds that divine being is revealed in personhood. In his book on Khomiakov (1912), Nikolai Berdiaev helped to turn the ontologism and personalism of Russian religious thought into tropes. He also used the term “concrete spiritualism” to designate what he called the “fundamental idea of all Russian philosophy”: that free will and creativity refute materialism, affirm the ontological reality of the spiritual, and make human beings persons [22, p. 341]. Berdiaev himself became a prominent Russian personalist, as Ana Siljak recounts in her chapter [23]. Like Soloviev, he thought that personhood, in its capacity to transcend the natural world, was itself good grounds for belief in God. As he wrote, “the existence of personality presupposes the existence of God; its value presupposes the supreme value – God” [23, p. 315; 24, p. 55]. This type of “argument from personhood” or “personological proof” was advanced by other Russian religious thinkers, including Semyon Frank (see below).

As I have suggested, the greatest Russian Christian humanist was Vladimir Soloviev. His early biographer Ernst Radlov compared him to the great Renaissance humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola [25, pp. 49–50; 26, p. 39, 52–53]. The central concept of Soloviev’s religious philosophy is *Bogochelovechestvo* (Godmanhood or divine humanity). It was the vehicle, Paul Valliere has written, “for a principled and profound Orthodox Christian humanism” [27, p. 12]. *Bogochelovechestvo* refers to the free human realization of the divine principle in ourselves and in the world. It is the divine-human project of building the Kingdom of God and of cosmic transformation in the unity of all (*vseedinstvo*), in which God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). In developing the concept, it is clear that one of Soloviev’s main theological sources was the patristic doctrine of theosis, effectively conveyed by St. Athanasius’s teaching that “God became man so that man might become God.” Another source was Chalcedonian Christology, which confirms that the two natures of Christ, divine and human, are united in his person in perfect harmony, without “division or confusion” – Christ being the integral “Godman.” It is hard to imagine a more powerful vindication of human worth: the humanity of Christ is preserved even alongside his divinity. Russian Christian humanism helps us to appreciate that this type of esteem for humanity is the true spirit of Christianity.

Soloviev’s heirs emphasized human agency in the salvific process, in the divinization of the world. None was more indebted to Soloviev than Sergei Bulgakov. In *Problems of Idealism*, he referred to Soloviev as “so far the last word in world philosophical thought, its highest synthesis” [28, p. 116]. In *Philosophy of Economy: The World as Household* (1912), Bulgakov conceived the purpose of economic activity as the humanization of the world, the return of creation to the Creator, through human

creativity [29]. His cosmology develops Soloviev's idea of Sophia: the divine Wisdom or archetype of creation (the world-soul), and also the ideal by which humanity continues God's creative work. According to Regula Zwahlen, "The concept refers to a potential for perfection that empowers human beings to transfigure the world, even if their capacities are limited after the fall" [30, p. 283]. Beauty is the supreme way that Sophia is revealed in the world, and art is the supreme way that human beings work to transfigure the world in her image.

Bulgakov's *Unfading Light: Contemplations and Speculations* (1917) is an essential work of Russian religious philosophy. It includes a further exposition of Bulgakov's cosmology, but the last and longest part of the book ("The Human Being") is devoted to his theological anthropology. Here the essential framework is Genesis 1:26, which Bulgakov interprets to mean that we are "deiform" in nature and capable of divinization [31, p. 286]. In *The Tragedy of Philosophy* (1927), written in Crimea before his expulsion from the Soviet Union in 1922, and in *Glavy o Troichnosti (Chapters on Trinitarity)* (1928-1930), Bulgakov elaborated a Trinitarian theology of personhood and a personalist metaphysics [32, 33].<sup>7</sup> His basic intuition was, "Anthropology is the natural basis of theology" [33, p. 54; 36, p. 179]. Some years later, in his "Social Teaching in Modern Russian Orthodox Theology" (1934), he used a simple but apt term to describe the main direction of his theology and of modern Russian religious thought as a whole: "Christian humanism." Its distinctiveness, again simply and aptly put, is that "it includes the creativity of man in the means of his salvation" [37, p. 283].

Vasilii Zenkovsky famously regarded Semyon Frank as the "most outstanding" Russian philosopher [38, vol. 2, p. 853]. Frank himself thought the distinction belonged "unquestionably" to Soloviev, precisely because of his significance for understanding the truth of Christian humanism [39, p. 9, 30-31]. Forty years before rendering this judgment, Frank had concluded his famous essay in *Vekhi* (and thus the volume itself) with the clarion call to pass from the radical intelligentsia's "nihilistic moralism" to "religious humanism" [40, p. 155]. This remained a lifelong theme [41, 504-507]. He returned to it in his last major work, *Reality and Man: An Essay on the Metaphysics of Human Nature*, which includes an account of Christian humanism and its historical fate. But he was most concerned with theological foundations, which were also anthropological ones (hence the book's subtitle): "The only completely adequate 'proof of the existence of God' is the existence of the human person taken in all its depth and significance as an entity that transcends itself" [42, p. 104]. This type of "argument from personhood," which he also made in *The Unknowable*, was utterly convincing to Frank: "If the human being is aware of himself as a person, i.e., as a being generically distinct from all external objective existence and transcending it in depth, primacy and significance, if he feels like an exile having no true home in

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<sup>7</sup> On these works, see [34, 35, 36].

this world – that means that he *has* a home in another sphere of being,” the sphere, that is, of ultimate reality [42, p. 104]. “The apprehension of the reality of God is, thus, immanently given in the apprehension of my own being as a person” [42, p. 106; see also 43, p. 200].<sup>8</sup>

The exile of Russian religious thinkers after the Russian Revolution had paradoxical consequences for Russian Christian humanism. On the one hand, figures such as Berdiaev, Bulgakov, Frank, Lev Shestov, and Lev Karsavin continued to work within the general framework of the Russian Religious Renaissance.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the neoplatonic revival, associated first of all with Georges Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky, constituted a reaction against it [46]. The reaction was paradoxical because neoplatonic theology emphasized personalism but rejected its modernist religious-philosophical defense, seeking to return it entirely to its patristic and Byzantine foundations. Yet it is clear that the personalist focus owed at least as much to the Russian Religious Renaissance as to the Church Fathers [47, 48]. The paradox has much to do with the extraordinary historical circumstances surrounding the Russian Revolution: the neoplatonic revival was largely an effort to forge a distinctive Orthodox theological identity against Western philosophical modernism (especially German idealism), which was influential in the Russian Religious Renaissance – but which also could be blamed for Russian Marxism (in their youth Berdiaev, Bulgakov, and Frank were all “legal” Marxists) and thus for the Russian Revolution and for the exile of Russian religious thinkers. Rejecting the Hegelianism that led to Marxism meant rejecting Kant and Schelling, too.

Its anti-modernism generally prevented the neoplatonic school of Orthodox theology from engaging with the problems of modern society (including law, culture, and politics). Instead, it was a Roman Catholic theologian, Jacques Maritain, who turned Christian personalism to the purposes of rebuilding the intellectual and social foundations of a world ravaged by war and genocide. His 1936 treatise, *Integral Humanism*, is a profound exposition of Christian humanism and personalism [49]. Four years later he began to fashion this philosophy into an explicit and robust defense of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights followed in 1948, and Maritain was one of its intellectual architects. He had arrived at his personalist theory of human dignity and human rights under the influence of Berdiaev and the Russian religious-philosophical emigration in Paris, in which he was immersed thanks to his Russian-born wife Raissa Oumançoff. Maritain thus rediscovered what Russian Christian humanists had known since Soloviev [50].

<sup>8</sup> For an impressive study of Frank’s philosophical anthropology, see [44].

<sup>9</sup> They are the subjects of chapters by George Pattison, Robert F. Slesinski, Philip Boobbyer, Ramona Fotiade, and Martin Beisswenger, respectively, in Part V (“Russian Religious Thought Abroad”) of *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought*. In this part, see also [45].



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## Реферат

Статья посвящена одной важной теме книги *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought* – христианскому гуманизму. Основная позиция христианского гуманизма может быть определена как возможность совершенствования человека в единении с божественным, в спасении. В православном христианстве спасение понимается как *theosis*, или обожение, которое подчеркивает человеческое сотрудничество с Богом в процессе спасения и, таким образом, опирается на определенную концепцию человеческой природы. Для русских религиозных философов эта концепция человеческой природы (или философская антропология) была одновременно идеалистической, библейской и святоотеческой: люди милостиво созданы по «образу» Бога (абсолютный идеал), но наделены способностями (разумом, совестью и свободной волей), которые позволяют им постепенно ассимилироваться с «подобием» Бога собственными усилиями. Трансцендентная кульминация этого процесса – теозис. В России христианский гуманизм обычно принимал форму стойкого персонализма. Самым выдающимся русским христианским гуманистом был Владимир Соловьев. В статье рассматривается творчество Вл. Соловьева и его наследников: Сергея Булгакова, Николая Бердяева и Семена Франка.

Русские религиозные философы были идеалистами в основном значении этого термина: они считали, что люди осознают идеалы (например, истину, добро и красоту) и могут свободно действовать в соответствии с ними, тем самым преодолевая детерминизм во внешнем, натуралистическом смысле слова. Они превозносили «идеальное самоопределение» (как назвал его Сергей Трубецкой) как важнейшую человеческую способность. Можно было бы оставаться агностиком относительно того, имеет ли человеческая способность к идеальному самоопределению метафизические последствия, но русские идеалисты, начиная с Бориса Чичерина и Владимира Соловьева, не сомневались в этом. Именно это и сделало их «религиозными идеалистами». Они понимали, что человеческая природа, если правильно оценить ее возможности, дает хорошие основания для теистической веры. Эти способности включают теоретические и практические силы разума, способность ценить силу любви и творить красоту (целый раздел *The Oxford Handbook* посвящен искусству). Эти силы опровергают натурализм, рационально оправдывают веру в Бога и подтверждают концепцию реальности, включающую в себя божественное. Этот «антропологический» подход, идущий от человеческого к божественному, является важной частью смысла христианского гуманизма.

Быть человеком – значит быть личностью. Русский христианский гуманизм обычно принимает форму стойкого персонализма – идеи о том, что люди являются личностями, каждая из которых имеет внутреннюю и абсолютную ценность и достоинство, является высшей формой реальности и ее высшей ценностью. Персонализм – черта русской религиозно-философской традиции со

времен Ивана Киреевского и Алексея Хомякова. Начиная с них, русский идеализм превозносился как «конкретный», в отличие от «абстрактных» немецких форм. Противопоставление *русского* и *немецкого* идеализма основано на признании первым того, что бытие трансцендентно имманентному сознанию и должно переживаться через веру, а не через абстрактные понятия, что характерно для второго. Термин «конкретный» отражает «онтологизм» русской религиозной мысли, а также ее персонализм, согласно которому божественное бытие раскрывается в личности. В своей книге о Хомякове (1912 г.) Николай Бердяев смог трансформировать онтологизм и персонализм русской религиозной мысли в тропы, усиливающие образность языка.

Величайшим русским христианским гуманистом был Владимир Соловьев. Центральным понятием его религиозной философии является *Богочеловечество*. Как писал Поль Валлиер, оно явилось средством выражения «принципиального и глубокого православного христианского гуманизма». Богочеловечество является свободной человеческой реализацией божественного начала в себе и в мире. Это божественно-человеческий проект построения Царства Божьего и космического преобразования в единстве всех – всеединстве, в котором Бог будет всем во всем (1 Кор. 15:28). Наследники Вл. Соловьева подчеркивали роль человека в процессе спасения, обожествления мира. Никто не был обязан Вл. Соловьеву больше, чем Сергей Булгаков. В своем сочинении, посвященном социальному учению православного богословия, он использовал простой, но подходящий термин для описания основного направления своего богословия и современной российской религиозной мысли в целом – «христианский гуманизм», отличительная черта которого состоит в том, что «он включает творчество человека как средство его спасения».