
Alexei Khomiakov, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and Ladislav Hanus

*Three Points of View on Faith and Church in Human Life*¹

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Introduction

In the introduction to our paper we would like to emphasise that three notable authors, namely the Russian philosopher, Slavophile and lay theologian Alexei S. Khomiakov, the French scientist, philosopher and priest, the Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and the Slovak culturologist, philosopher and priest Ladislav Hanus belong to three different cultural-religious contexts: the Eastern Orthodox (Khomiakov), Western Catholic (Teilhard de Chardin), and Central-European (Slovak in particular) Catholic context (Hanus). In spite of this different contextual anchoring, several overlapping ideas regarding the issue of the understanding of faith and the Church can be identified in the discussed authors.

Our starting point is represented by the conception of the Church orthodoxy (and a broader understood identity of man in the environment of love) that was introduced by the Russian philosopher Alexei S. Khomiakov. His reflections on faith and the Church serve as a basis also for the comparison with the opinions on faith and the Church in the work of Teilhard de Chardin, who incorporated them in the understanding of evolution of the entire universe. According to this conception, he interprets the Church as a biological *phylum* of Christ, and at the same time, as a unity of God

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and man. It is a unity that is constantly formed and matures over time. The central unifying force of this unity is love.

Reflections on the issue of the unity of God and man are typical of the spiritual legacy of Ladislav Hanus. This unity is mostly expressed in Hanus's philosophical-personalistic anthropology, in which he emphasises the meaning of spiritual life of man and society against the background of Christian humanism.

Concerning the ideological legacy of the analyzed authors, we focus on the comparison of several specific ideas. Foremost, it is the perception of the Church in connection to the term *sobornost'* by Khomiakov in comparison with the understanding of the unity of the Church by Teilhard de Chardin. At the same time, we note the interpretation of the Church as a living organism as well as a cultural phenomenon whose manifestation is the culture of a man as indicated by Hanus in particular. Our attention is also focused on the role of love which plays a central role in the understanding of the Church as a community of believers. Besides love, it is also the faith of man itself that is crucial, not only in the life of man as an individual but also at the level of their institutional life in the Church community. It regards both the Orthodox and the Catholic Church. The last aspect we would like to point out in this study is the very understanding of man as a being that is manifested both as a reasonable being and believing being. The unity of reason and faith is then also demonstrated in the field of cognition and the search for truth.

Khomiakov and His Reflection on Faith and the Church

The Russian philosopher Khomiakov is considered to be a thinker who had an immense impact on discussions in the field of the understanding of Russian culture, philosophy, and theology. Nikolay O. Lossky, in his work *History of Russian Philosophy*, even states that the Slavophile Khomiakov, together with Kireevsky, may be considered thinkers who represent the beginning of the Russian philosophical thinking of the nineteenth century:

The beginnings of independent philosophical thought in Russia date back to the Slavophiles Ivan Kireevsky and Khomiakov. Their philosophy is an attempt to overcome the German type of philosophizing on the strength of the Russian interpretation of Christianity based upon the Works of the Eastern Fathers and nourished by the national peculiarities of Russian spiritual life. Neither Kireevsky nor Khomiakov worked out a system of

philosophy, but they set out the program and established the spirit of the philosophical movement which is the most original and valuable achievement of Russian thought. I mean the attempt of the Russian thinkers to develop a systematic Christian world conception.²

The noted originality of the thought was manifested in the understanding of human knowledge, national identity and the Church in connection to the term *sobornost'*.³

The term *sobornost'*⁴ is likely to be best understood at present against the background of two opposing interpretations: individualism and collectivism. While individualism prefers the priority of individual freedom, personal sovereignty and responsibility that has to be respected in members of a specific community, collectivism, on the contrary, prefers group integrity, sovereignty and collective fate to an individual. However, *sobornost'*, in a certain meaning, transcends both understandings: both the understanding of individualism and the understanding of collectivism. *Sobornost'* is more than just a “community” linking several individuals together. *Sobornost'* as a dynamic principle does not so much describe the individual’s merging with or absorption by collectivity. Although this collectivity in Khomiakov’s view is still analogically associated with the Russian *obshchina* (the *obshchina* as a peasant community), more importantly, according to him, *sobornost'* is an organic, living unity, the origin of which lies in the divine grace of mutual love.⁵ Let us add that it is also a mystical unity of God and man. It is an invisible Church, a spiritual unity, not only a social unity.

Khomiakov’s treatise *The Church is One (Tserkov' odna)*,⁶ in which he formulated the basic credo—*Confession of Faith (Symbol of Faith)*, is the

2. Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, 13–14.

3. From the etymological point of view, the term *sobor* comes from the root of the word *sobirat'*, which means to put together, summon, gather. In the Slavic church, it had three meanings: council, cathedral, and gathering of people. Modern Russian uses it in the first two meanings. The general gathering—Catholic (Greek *katholikos*, i.e., general, universal) is neglected here. See Ambros, “Učitel' církve?,” 29.

4. There is no literal English translation for *sobornost'*, but its meaning could be paraphrased with words such as “community,” “togetherness,” or “collegiality.”

5. Let us recall here that Khomiakov used the adjective *sobornyy* (as multitude in one) rather than the substantive *sobornost'*. This term has been assigned to him by later translations and elaborations of his works. For a detailed analysis, see Riasanovsky, “Khomiakov on Sobornost'.”

6. The work was published for the first time only after Khomiakov’s death, in 1864. Several years later, it was published in Prague under the editorship of Yuri F. Samarin (a friend and younger Slavophile) and with a foreword by the same. It was a translation from French that was a part of the collection of works published in Prague in 1868, even

most inspiring work for us in the submitted study. It is the first and most significant theological essay by Khomiakov. He attempts to justify the unity and uniqueness of the Church in a brief and metaphorical form.⁷ Khomiakov holds by it a free unity of members of the Christian Church in the understanding of Divine truth and common salvation based on the common love of God—the Godman Christ.⁸ In him (in Christ) the world can unify and not divide. In Christ, there is only the undivided and complete truth for which all those who live in the Church and for the Church are bound. Also, the fullness of Christ is to be sought for in a community of those who believe in this only truth, while “the unity of the Church follows necessarily from the unity of God.”⁹

Let us note that it was precisely Khomiakov who sought an appropriate term to express wholeness in regard to the unity of the Church. He was looking for a word that would capture the organic unity of the Church, or the idea of its ideal image. Therefore, the word *sobornaya* or *sobornost'* should be a more adequate and dignified expression than the one used by the Roman Church, that is just the word Catholic or universal, general.¹⁰ In a sense, the origin of the word *sobornyy* was derived from a council meaning, a gathering without the need to summon anyone. In this context, Tomas

though the year 1867 is stated on the cover of the book. However, it has to be noted that in this edition, “The Church is One” is found in the contents of the book under a more general title: “Opyt katikhizicheskago izlozhenia uchenia o Tserkvi.”

7. It is known that Khomiakov would let the people read the work as a work by an unknown old Orthodox author that was found accidentally by his nephew. His main intention was probably to discover people’s attitudes and opinions on the given subject as well as his fear of censorship.

8. Nikolay Lossky adds to the understanding of *sobornost'* (commonalty) in Khomiakov the following: “*Sobornost* is the free unity of the members of the Church in their common understanding of truth and finding salvation together—an unity based upon their unanimous love for Christ and Divine righteousness” (Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, 35).

9. Khomiakov, “Church Is One,” 31.

10. See Ambros, “Učitel cirkve?,” 8. Let us make a further comment that Khomiakov does not reject the word “Catholic” and “universal,” however, he puts them in brackets while defining the Church. In paragraph 4, Khomiakov writes: “The Church is called *one, holy, sobornyy* (catholic and universal), and *apostolic* because she is one and holy; because she belongs to the whole world and not any locality; because she hallows all humanity and all the earth and not one particular nation or one country; because her essence consists in the harmony and unity of the spirit and life of all her members who recognize her over the entire earth; and because finally all the fullness of her faith, her hopes, and her love are contained in Scripture and apostolic teaching” (Khomiakov, “Church Is One,” 33–34).

Spidlik quotes Khomiakov's words according to which the Christian people living their faith are a hidden council to themselves.¹¹

Let us add that this term meant a kind of a distance from the formal authority of the Catholic Church (including the authority of its Pope) for Slavophiles and, at the same time, a distance from Protestant individualism.¹² In Slavophile thought (and in Khomiakov's in particular), *sobornost'* became an ideal model of the natural coexistence of not a single nation or state but all people with a shared faith who form one organic whole.¹³

In this connection, let us recall here the words of Khomiakov's friend, Samarín, which he wrote in the introductory foreword to the Russian edition of the second volume of his writings in Prague. These words were devoted to a characterisation of the personal relationship of Khomiakov to the Church. Samarín writes:

For him the Church was a living center in which all his thoughts originated and to which they all returned. He stood before the face of the Church and judged himself with an inner judgment according to her law. All that was dear to him he held dear in relation to the Church.¹⁴

Teilhard de Chardin and His Reflections on Faith and the Church

Reflections on the Church representing one organic whole were also developed in the work of the French thinker, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.¹⁵ Unlike Kho-

11. See Spidlik, *L'idée russe*, 126.

12. Khomiakov's criticism of the Catholic and Evangelic Church obviously corresponds to the entire criticism of the superficial "rationalistic" Western world, which disables the accomplishment of the complexity of the truth by its violent intervention in the natural structures. According to the author, only "the Orthodox Church remained the 'true' Church; not because of proud claims but due to remaining compact, i.e., *sobornaya*" (Ambros, "Učitel církve?," 31). The critical attitude of Khomiakov to Catholicism and Protestantism related to his understanding of *sobornost'* as the harmony of unity and freedom is also expressed in the opinion that Catholicism represents unity without freedom and Protestantism represents freedom without unity, as pointed out by Lossky: "In Catholicism, he finds unity without freedom and in Protestantism freedom without unity. In these denominations only external unity and external freedom are realised" (Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, 35).

13. For more on the meaning of Khomiakov's teaching and his persona as a teacher of the Church in the context of the Russian Orthodoxy, see Ambros, "Učitel církve?"

14. Samarín, "Theological Writings," 162–63.

15. Teilhard, like Khomiakov, held it important that the Church was for him personally also a divine environment that he could not secede even if his relationships with

miakov, he associated the understanding of the Church as an organic whole with the teachings on evolution. Teilhard de Chardin was also a scientist, not only a theologian and a priest, and throughout his life, he attempted to carry out a “synthesis of science and religion,” a synthesis—as he often stressed—of the “religion of the Earth” and “religion of Heaven.”

This is also suggested by his reflections on the understanding of the Church and faith, which he interprets in a broader and not strictly religious meaning. Besides the faith in God and personal Jesus (who has, at the same time, a cosmic character and is Pantocrator), it also regards, for example, faith in man, in evolution, in science and progress, in increase of spirituality on Earth and final completion of Evolution of the Universe in the Omega Point.¹⁶

His personal credo, which he published as a motto in his work in 1934 entitled *Comment je crois (How I believe)*, sounds like this:

I believe that the Universe is an Evolution. I believe that Evolution proceeds towards the Spirit. I believe that the Spirit is fully realized in a form of personality.¹⁷ I believe that the supremely Personal is the universal Christ.¹⁸

Christ is, for Teilhard, the saviour of both the idea and the reality of evolution.

It may be appropriate to note that the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes* (1965) pointed out precisely to the need to grasp the active role of man and humankind in the context of the modern and evolving world, precisely such a world as Teilhard de Chardin described.

The Pastoral Constitution is a revolutionary work due to several reasons; in the context of our ideas, a statement in point 5 is of particularly great importance:

The human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one. In consequence there

the authorities were rather tense. However, Teilhard not only considered the Church as a divine environment, but the Universe, too. For more ideas on the subject, see Plašienková and Kulisz, *Na ceste s Teilhardom de Chardin*, 133–34.

16. For a detailed interpretation of the Omega Point from the biological and ecological perspectives, see Florio, “Omega Point.”

17. In 1950, Teilhard de Chardin clarified this sentence as follows: “I believe that *in Man*, Spirit is fully realized in Person.” And he continued with a note: “It is only an added touch, but it allows us to emerge unequivocally from metaphysics and move into the historical, the biological—the planetary” (Teilhard de Chardin, *Heart of Matter*, 78).

18. Teilhard de Chardin, “How I Believe.”

has arisen a new series of problems . . . calling for efforts of analysis and synthesis.¹⁹

Teilhard de Chardin had dealt with these issues much earlier in his work.

In order to understand Teilhard's intention of clarifying the position and meaning of the Church in the history of humankind and in the context of the modern world better, interpretations and characterisations of the Church itself are briefly indicated further.

If we assume that in the history of Christianity, and especially in its periods of crisis, the Church has always sought adequate formulations and images to bring man closer to their mission as well as the role of the Church itself, it is self-evident that within this historical context and many "historical turning points" we can also find various characteristics and definitions of the Church itself: from the apostles of Paul, Peter, John through the Church Fathers to the Tübingen School, especially the theologian Johann Adam Möhler, who, thanks to a new analysis of the images of the Holy Scripture and the interpretation of the Church Fathers, paved the way for a deepened view of the Church. He influenced many theologians of the nineteenth century, as well as some opinions expressed in the scheme of the Church at the First Vatican Council (though these were later rejected because of their ambiguity). The following period connected to the "crisis of modernism" brought new challenges for any understanding of the essence of the Church; and eventually, the Second Vatican Council, after a deeper examination of the mystery of the Church, communicated its mission in the world in a new spirit, too.

Within these important approaches to the understanding of the Church, we can find characteristics that define the Church as: the community of believers, the Body, the Bride of Jesus Christ (St. Paul), the living body of Christ (St. Peter and St. John), people united through the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (St. Cyprian), spiritual Israel, the family of people glorifying God, the house of Israel, the people of God, the vineyard of the Lord (the Fathers of the Church), and so on. It should be noted that within these characteristics, the mystery of the community of the Church with which man is connected is also emphasised. It is not an accidental connection but a unity with God, which is constantly being realised in the Church and through the Church. It follows that this unity is not pre-determined and ready, but it is realised through the Church and thus, it also becomes its mission. It is therefore to "mature in time," which ultimately emphasises the very need to get to know this world and its expectations (the Second Vatican Council).

19. See Paul VI, "Gaudium et spes."

The history of the Church demonstrates, in a plastic manner, how the mission of the Church was understood within the Church itself and within the period's conditionality and it points out the difficulties the Church encountered. The Eastern and later Western Schism within the Church meant that theological reflection placed an emphasis on the visible, organisational and legal (for instance, hierarchy in the Church) features of the Church so that the borders between the Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic Church were determined.

A major change occurred especially after the First World War when the Church began to be spoken of as a community created by the Holy Spirit (and not by law). Teilhard de Chardin belonged to the theologians of this period. He wanted to point out the unique role and mission of the Church and its place in the world in a new way.

Although Teilhard has not left a systematic explanation of his ecclesiology, we can find such statements in his work that allow us to create an image of the Church as a whole; a whole that is in line with his evolutionary image of the world. Therefore, Teilhard's aim was to give a new meaning to the dogmas of the Catholic Church in accordance with some concepts of the theory of evolution. He held an interesting position that, since religion and science are inextricably linked together, they form two phases of a cognitive act that captures the image of the past and of the future and points to the evolutionary completion of the entire Universe. Teilhard is also aware of the fact that the evolution of our planet Earth is linked to the development of thought and a constantly increasing concentration of the human spirit that gradually creates the "spirit of the Earth." This spiritual cover is called the noosphere.

However, this is not the final developmental actuality. This is the unification of the spiritual center of the entire Universe that is a meta-intellectual center, independent of its material bearer. This center is called the final Omega Point.²⁰

And just like the evolution of the Universe leads to an increasingly greater organisation and concentration, the development of thought leads to a deeper spirituality. The unification of all of the elements of the spirit of the Earth provides, according to Teilhard, a basis for the second coming of Christ, that is Parousia.²¹ Through these ideas, Teilhard reaffirms the need for the synthesis of science and religion.

20. From the religious perspective, the Omega Point is actually the Cosmic Christ.

21. Teilhard develops these ideas in a work written in 1927 entitled "Le Milieu Divin" (Teilhard, *Divine Milieu*). For new inspirations from this work in the field of the understanding of the spirituality at present, see Savary, *Divine Milieu Explained*.

Teilhard's effort to point out the role of Christianity in evolutionary development, and above all, the function of "its heart," which is the Catholic Church, resulted in the implementation of biological concepts in the field of religion. These basic concepts include: *phylum* and *axis (l'axe)*. The Church represents a biological *phylum*²² and at the same time, it is an *axis* of the universal, cosmic convergent development heading toward the Omega Point.²³

According to Teilhard, this convergence needs to be carried out on the *Christian axis*, in faith in Christ. In him the other Creeds find the just expression of what they have been looking for in their movement towards the Divine.

From the biological point of view, the Church represents a "living branch," collective and well-developed. It is associated with those characteristics that apply to every biological *phylum*, that is, polymorphism and elasticity. They are manifested in the richness of individuals within the same species and in the ability to adapt to the environment, which proves dynamism within new life conditions.²⁴

Based on these observations we discover that *phylum*, despite the constant development and multitude of different individuals, creates unity. Thanks to it, the given species differs from other forms of life. According to Teilhard, every religion has the properties of the biological *phylum*, however, the fullness of spiritual content is revealed only in the Christian *phylum*.²⁵ This view of religion as such (that is, a view through the prism of the biological *phylum*) enables Teilhard to discover, in the multitude of religions, a new meaning for religion.

It has to be noted here that not all religions as *phylum* have been equally important in the history of humankind. Teilhard presents a comparison with the animal realm. Not all of the animal species (*phyla*) evolved immediately toward the origin of man, likewise, not all religions had the same value. Biological species, however, were necessary so that the "tree of life" could develop. Similarly, in the development of religion, a "place" emerged which a little strand of spiritual life grew towards, creating a space in which the mystery of incarnation, and divinisation of the world, should take place.²⁶ This strand was a place for the personal encounter of God with

22. Phylum is a taxonomic rank at the level below Kingdom and above Class in a biological classification, especially of animals.

23. Teilhard de Chardin, *Phenomenon of Man*, 257–64.

24. See Plašienková and Kulisz, *Na ceste s Teilhardom de Chardin*, 171.

25. Teilhard discusses this issue in an important essay, written in 1933, entitled "Christianisme."

26. Teilhard, "Christianisme," 144–45.

man, it was the hearth of love that emerged in the heart of Christianity—in the Church. And this burning hearth starts in Jesus. Teilhard believed that it is the Roman Church that is the biological *phylum* of Christ. In the Church, Christ actualises his salvation power and develops his total personality in the world. The Church, according to the author, is also a place in which God reveals himself as Father to humanity through Jesus.

Finally, it can be added that love is the inner quality, the spiritual energy that penetrates and forms the physical unity of the Christian phylum. Thanks to it, the state of a specifically new consciousness appears in the Church and through the Church in the world. Therefore, Teilhard says that the Church is a “phylum of love in nature,” and thus, he compares the Church—a community formed by love—to a living organism that is revived by the power of the risen Christ. In him we are connected in one. If the love of God in the soul of the believers vanished, the whole Church would disintegrate.

It can be seen that reflections on the Church and the meaning of love connected to the faith in Christ are typical not only of Teilhard, but—as it has been already demonstrated—they were also present in Khomiakov’s reflections. As it is demonstrated further, certain parallels can also be found in another author whom we would like to introduce briefly—the Slovak philosopher and priest Ladislav Hanus.

Ladislav Hanus and His Reflection on Faith and the Church

Reflections on the Church representing an organic whole were also developed in the work of the Slovak philosopher and theologian Ladislav Hanus.²⁷

27. Prof. Ladislav Hanus (1907–1994), a philosopher of culture and dialogue, Slovak philosopher of *sobornost*, prominent Slovak theologian and philosopher of the twentieth century, famous for brilliant analyses of Slovak society and culture. Ladislav Hanus was born in Liptovský Mikuláš, studied philosophy and theology in Spišská Kapitula, continuing his studies in Innsbruck, in Germany, Switzerland and Italy. He attended the lectures of Peter Lippert and Romano Guardini (Werkwoche, Rothenfels an Main); he devoted an individual monograph to Guardini (1944). In 1938, he became a professor of morality at Vysoká škola bohoslovecká in Spišská Kapitula. He was the chief editor of the journal of the Slovak Christian intelligentsia *Kultúra*, the avantgarde journal *Obroda* and the journal *Verbum*. The school was disbanded in 1950. In 1954, Hanus was sentenced to 16 years imprisonment for treason, which he served in Czechoslovak prisons and forced labor in mines in Jáchymov. After his release, he worked as a stoker and gave lectures at private philosophical and cultural symposiums held in Bratislava, known as the “underground university.” Despite many years spent in the worst communist prisons, he maintained his human and moral integrity and managed to continue his violently interrupted philosophical and theological work. He died

He understood culture as an element of the spiritual life of an individual and community which alone could prevent an acutely threatening dehumanisation of society. Similar ideas are also found in Khomiakov. As with Khomiakov's conception of *sobornost'* and statements on the importance of the community and the Church, Hanus concentrates on the value of human life, the human individual as a spiritual being and at the same time a social being.²⁸ Hanus emphasises the importance of culture in the shaping of society and points out the threat of the devastation of spiritual values in competition with other values (totalitarianism and its forms such as Fascism and communism). In Hanus's understanding, culture is a personal feature of man, an essential way of existence, a higher spiritual quality, an inner norm of thinking, acting and decision-making. Culture is a spiritual habitus of the individual and society too; a habitus that the individual and the whole society approach through a persistent, intentional and demanding work on their own improvement, while they gradually shape their spiritual substance and leave a shape in it. Culture, similarly to Khomiakov's *sobornost'*, is a manifestation of the effort of generations, where the defining element of the acquisition of culture is tradition. Tradition is like a river that makes its way either as a dominant current of the period, or as an "undercurrent" in the bowels of the world.²⁹ For Hanus, Europe was primarily the culture of order, of standard of thought and acting in the unity of spiritual affinity. In *Rozprava o kultúrnosti*, Hanus suggested seven principles of culture that communicate closely with Khomiakov's concept of *sobornost'*. They include: diligence, opinion, breadth, nature, piety, goodness, human relations. Culture, according to Hanus, is definitely not a natural gift, nor a talent. Without effort, a shape will not originate even from natural assumptions.

The resultant of indifference is shapelessness. The noble essential form is achieved only in a tedious effort and is proportionate to exerted efforts.³⁰

in 1994 and some of his works were published after his death. Hanus's work consists of the following monographs: *Rozprava o kultúrnosti* (1991), *Romano Guardini. Mysliteľ a pedagóg storočia* (1994), *Princíp pluralizmu* (1997), *Človek a kultúra* (1997), *Umenie a náboženstvo* (2001), *O kultúre a kultúrnosti* (2003), *Princípy kresťanskej morálky* (2008). Hanus belongs to the most important personalities of European culture and European philosophical thought.

28. In his reflections on the spirituality of man and humankind, Hanus is also inspired by Teilhard's conception of the noosphere. See Hanus, *Človek a kultúra*, 217.

29. Let us add that this telluric flow of the spirit in the world and the society is also highlighted in the work of Pavel Florensky.

30. Hanus, *O kultúre a kultúrnosti*, 57.

Hanus comes to realise that culture is essentially a moral property that a man acquires already in childhood through education in a family environment and later at school. The sacrificed generation brings values for other successor generations, which can then create a cultural humus which permits the cultivation of a precious form of life, create a lifestyle, refine the spirit, unwind from the earthy, original simplicity. However, while diligence is a voluntary law, the thesis represents a synthesis of will, moral character and cognition. Culture begins with cognition, which is a complex process, claiming the whole of man and their life consequences. The cognised represents a challenge for man—it puts them in front of a choice and asks for a decision, that is, an opinion. Cognition itself is merely a formal ability, the content and importance are given to it by a moral decision. However, for Hanus, a man becomes a cultivated person when their opinion has “breadth” and openness. Hanus warns against narrowness, limitedness, flatness, restriction of the view. The breadth, this openness to the truth, requires significant effort—fanaticism does not demand effort, it is carried away by spontaneity, by “natural gravity.” Limited persons only acclaim the existence and value of what they see, what they immediately understand and they put their circle of knowledge in place of reality.³¹ However, the result of cultural diligence is a person whose characteristic is nobleness, which is a human work, but also the work of the mysterious action of the divine. It is the willingness and openness of man to the action of transcendence, that is, something that transcends them and promises the fulfilment of their deepest aspirations. In Christianity, God approaches man to raise man over their naturalness, drawing him into the inner circle of God’s life. Devotion, according to Hanus and Khomiakov, is essential to man: it creates order in them, stimulates cultural performance, presents goals, encourages building, elevates them toward ideas, unifies personality, connects personal history with human history, inspires accomplishments in culture, art and social engagement, even heroics.³² Devotion to religion is the main nerve of cultures and the uplifting of nations.

Ladislav Hanus sees a natural piety in Slovak nature, but points out that it is necessary to cultivate a conscious religious culture so that it reaches a higher, noble form. Besides piety, goodness is the second source of nobleness, and it is an effective determination for the good. According to Hanus, goodness springs in the contemplation of beauty, in love of life, in gratitude (Khomiakov). It is a substantial overcoming of selfishness in respect to reality, to the order of the world. The basic disposition of goodness is to help this

31. See Hanus, *Princíp pluralizmu*, 31–33.

32. See Hanus, *Romano Guardini*, 18–20.

truth, and in the effort to confirm it, it is based on itself, it actively interferes and does not remain passive. Goodness is the moral dimension of the truth, it is the fate of the absolute.³³

Human relationships—life space, household, society, lifestyle—grow out of the above-mentioned factors of culture. Human relationships are a manifestation of the nature of man. A man leaves the loneliness of their life, and proceeds to the world of faces. At first, they are the faces of strangers, material, non-disturbing faces with no demands. Only after the first contact do the faces cease to be things, they start to disturb, make demands. The community, however, interferes with the innermost personal sphere, in which a man is alone with himself and with his God—only there does the face, its depth and spirituality call.³⁴ Hanus notes that with the onset of liberal society, a prerequisite for individual self-actualisation was created, which led to the decline of the depth of interpersonal relations as a social phenomenon. Hanus thus anticipates the fate of mankind, which later atomised, where contemporary man is often an essentially lonely individual. The utilitarian understanding of man marked the whole culture of humanism. This applies equally to the post-modern age and it seems to be the case for contemporary post-secularism, too. Even in this, Ladislav Hanus was a great prophet of Slovak history, which he had to experience so painfully himself.

Conclusion

To conclude, it may be stated that all of the analyzed authors, despite living in different historical and social conditions and representing three different cultural-religious traditions, thought rather similarly in regard to the issue of faith and the relationship of man to God and the Church. Thus, several overlapping ideas and parallels in defining the meaning of spiritual life of a man and society in the context of the individual and social life of the Church can be found in their works. Besides the intellectually critical attitude of all the authors (Khomiakov, Teilhard, Hanus) to the totalitarianism and ideological manipulation of their time, they are connected by the quality of their Christian education and formation in their childhood, where the emotional and intellectual influence of their mothers was of immense importance.

33. On the relationship of good will as a disposable openness to the truth, the spiritual truth in particular, see Rusnák, *Pravda, veda, symbol*, 87–92.

34. See Hanus, *Človek a kultúra*, 23–26.

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