

Love as a Concept in the Religious Philosophy of Pavel Florensky

El amor como concepto en la filosofía religiosa de Pavel Florensky

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Resumen

El presente artículo se ocupa del análisis del concepto de amor en la filosofía de la religión de Pavel Florensky, quien comparte con otros representantes de la filosofía rusa de la religión (N. Berdyaev y S. Bulgakov) un enfoque ontológico a propósito de esta cuestión. Prestamos aquí una mayor atención a la comprensión del amor-*ἀγάπην* de Florensky. Y hemos extraído la conclusión de que, en la filosofía de P. Florensky, el Amor, estrechamente vinculado con la Verdad y la Belleza, es considerado como un fundamento ontológico existencial de la personalidad. Desarrollamos las ideas de Pavel Florensky, y, consecuentemente, asumimos la posibilidad de sintetizar el amor-*ἀγάπη* y el amor-eros en torno a la idea de amor sacrificial. Los marcos agapológico y erótico del amor, son aspectos del amor unido que es concedido por Dios. Este don de Dios, el don del amor unido, es mantenido por los hombres mediante la oración y los actos de amor.

Palabras clave: amor altruista, amor-filía, amor-*ἀγάπη*, Verdad, Belleza, consustancialidad de los amantes, “Yo” y “Tú”, amistad, celos.

Abstract

This article focuses on the analysis of the concept of love in the religious philosophy of Pavel Florensky, who shares the ontological approach to the consideration of love with other representatives of Russian religious philosophy (N. Berdyaev and S. Bulgakov). We pay more careful attention to the understanding of love-*ἀγάπην* by Florensky. We have drawn the conclusion that, in the philosophy of P. Florensky, Love, closely connected with Truth and Beauty, is considered an onto-

logical basis existence of personality. We develop the ideas of Pavel Florensky, and accordingly assume that it is possible to synthesise love-agape and love-eros around the idea of sacrificial love. Agapological and erotical ‘bezels’ of one jewel of love is aspects of united love, which is given by God. This gift of God, the gift of united love, is kept by humans through prayer and deeds of love.

Keywords: altruistic love, love-filio, love-agape, Truth, Beauty, consubstantiality of loving persons, «I» and «You», friendship, jealousy.

1. Introduction

One of the directions of the philosophy of love is represented by P. Florensky¹, N. Berdyaev², S. Bulgakov³, N. Lossky.⁴ These philosophers focused on Christian agape⁵ in the context of ancient Grecian ontological categories. A pioneer in this field was father Pavel Florensky, who in his book, ‘The Pillar and Ground of Truth’ (1914), examines such issues as love, jealousy, friendship. The analysis of the last of these concepts has been estimated by S. Bulgakov, in the ‘Gift of Love’, as ‘a real theological discovery, because for the first time understanding of friendship as church relation, which has a rightful place in the life of the Church is involved in the theological doctrine of the Church’.⁶

A wealth of the literature published in recent times has been not only in Russia but also in Spain, Italy, Germany and other European countries.⁷ The most important foreign investigations dedicated to the analysis of Florensky’s works are those by Francisco José López Sáez (2010) and Natalino Valentini (1997).

The creativity of Florensky should be considered in the context of the culture of the ‘Silver century’ of Russian culture-the epoch of poetic symbolism. The works

¹ Florensky (1997). See also: Florensky (1995), Florensky (2001); Florenskii, Pavel. *Vodorazdel* [excerpts]. Available online at Biblioteka “Vekhi,” <http://vehi.net/florensky/vodorazd>.

² See The doctrine of Sophia. Faas (2001). See also: Berdyaev (1957); Berdyaev (1960); Berdyaev (1962); Berdyaev (1935); Berdyaev (1962); Berdyaev, (1992); Berdyaev (1944); Berdyaev (1939).

³ Bulgakov (1918); Bulgakov (1932); Bulgakov (1934); Bulgakov (1943); Bulgakov (1965); Bulgakov (1988); Bulgakov (1994).

⁴ See Lossky (1906). See also: Lossky (1928). Lossky (1934); Lossky (1951); Lossky (1952); Lossky (1955); Lossky (1957); Lossky (1969); Lossky (1994); Lossky (1991); Lossky (1991).

⁵ See also: Pavenkov (2012) 42-46; Pavenkov (2014); Pavenkov (2014).

⁶ Bulgakov (2014) Orig. russian: Булгаков С. Н. Дар любви // Шестаков В. Эрос и культура: философия любви и европейское искусство. Философские тексты о любви // URL: http://www.gumer.info/bogoslov_Buks/Philos/index_philos.php (дата обращения - 26.03.2012).

⁷ See also: L. Žak, (1999), G. Lingua (1999), N. Valentini e R. Ronchi (2003), M. Silberer (1984), R. Slesinski (1984), A.S. Trubačev, (Andronik) (1998), S.S. Choružij (1999); F. Haney (2001); M. Žust (2002), Accarini G. (1975) amongst others.

of Florensky are one of the expressions of the spirit of symbolism in Russia. Francisco José López Sáez considers Florensky as the ‘master of thinking’ of all new generation of intellectuals, who sought to establish new religious consciousness, connecting the approach of traditional asceticism and ‘anachorea’ and and eros-love with personal creativity.⁸

The subject of constant discussion is connected with the question concerning whether or not the philosophy of Florensky is esoteric. The sofiological and esoteric character of Florensky’s philosophy is a discussed problem. In rationalistic spirit, Francisco José López Sáez⁹ argues that, in spite of various similarities with the language of esoteric doctrine and the syncretism of the approach, Florensky’s teaching cannot be considered gnostical. Florensky finds roots of his ideas in ecclesiastical Christian teaching, and in the faith of the first communities.

We would agree with this rationalistic position; however, we cannot argue that the teaching of Florensky is syncretical and is a reflection of judo-Christian teaching¹⁰ because Florensky’s philosophy has personalistic roots, and roots of the saint-fathers. The theological foundation of Florensky’s ideas is not only faith of the first communities but also the vital spiritual experience of personal encounters with God and the patrological background. We place an accent on the innovational character of Florensky’s sofiology, which can integrate the philosophical search of Divine Sofia and the theological Christian teaching of Sofia of God, who is the incarnated Logos. It is the main idea of the author’s intuitivistic approach to the sofiology of Florensky.

Valentini stresses that love, according Florensky, provides an ontological category as the essence of Divinity; in the mystical sense, entrance in the existence of Trinitarian relationships in Divine.¹¹ Love is an ontological vital participation in Truth. Love-agape is the ‘door’ of hope and faith-the way of salvation. According to Valentini, the deification of personality in love is participation¹² in the God-Love-Trinity, substantial communion of personality.

According to Florensky, love is connected with place; it is an act descending from subject to object. A beloved person transcends from his ultimate self-significance and accordingly reveals identity with the other ‘I’. The same thing happens with the second and third, etc. Therefore, as a result, all the infinite processes of love are synthesised in one act. This single and endless act is a consubstantiality of persons who love in God. Love is the essence of God-His nature.¹³

⁸ López Sáez (2010)14.

⁹ López Sáez (2010) 22.

¹⁰ Testa (1995).

¹¹ Valentini (1997) 450.

¹² This participation was called by M. Silberer “trinization”. Silberer (1984).

¹³ Florensky P. *The Pillar and Croud of the Truth*. (Moscow, 2002). Orig. russian: Флоренский П. *Столп и утверждение истины: Опыт православной теодицеи*. - М., (2002). P.83.

Pavel Florenskij has developed ontological approaches in the interpretation of love. Ontologism originates from the ancient, realistic outlook. The question centres on what love is as an ontological category, and which approaches and methods should be applied to determine their nature. Such considerations are far from being easy to answer. The idea of the ontology of Christian love is developed by I. Iliyn.¹⁴ S. Frank adds to this idea spirit of eastern patristic. Love is considered an ontological force of God.¹⁵ According to personalistic philosophy, the essence of love is rather ontological as opposed to psychological. Love metaphysically leads to union beloved persons with God. Love is an ontological act. We cannot disagree with Paul Florensky in the view that altruistic Christian love can only be understood as an ontological concept; it is impossible to confuse true altruistic love with external altruism. Instead of developed by Rubinstein's dichotomy 'love-hate'¹⁶, Florensky considers the important difference between altruistic love and external altruism. According to external altruism, the external deal is the alpha and omega of 'love'. The identification of the Christian, altruistic love with 'altruistic emotions and striving to the good of humanity'¹⁷ is a crucial mistake. Philanthropy, as itself, external altruism, as itself and without inner love for God, is absolutely nothing. True altruistic love takes a new man to a new over-empirical level of existence where there is no significance in all past human affections related to nationality, power and glory, and other material and social values. In Christ's love, there is a challenge direct to us, exhortation to get out from the usual, false life, and to transform it and start living according to a new sense of love. Christ is the ideal behind any truly altruistic love, which is absolutely realised only in the reality of the Kingdom of heaven, which exists in every human heart. We cannot achieve this kind of love if we will not enter into a vital, personal relationship with three-hypostasis of Truth, if we will not recognise them as sons and daughters. Florenskij does not point out the disadvantages associated with this approach.

2. Understanding of love

Based on an ontological approach of considering love in an objective-metaphysical sense, Pavel Florenskij identifies the following conditions of the most simple love:

¹⁴ Iliyn (1991) 398.

¹⁵ Frank (1991) 414.

¹⁶ Rubinstein (1991) 316.

¹⁷ Florensky (2003) 95-96.

1. Act of election;
2. Consciousness of uniqueness; and
3. Agreement with election.

Then Florenskij comes to the preliminary understanding of love:

Love is the free election: from many personalities. Through the act of internal self-determination, 'I' elect one person and establish the relationship with her as only-begotten, stick to her soulfully.¹⁸

For various reasons, the personality 'You' has already become the one, and can reject this election. What will happen 'if, wanting to be "You", personality "You" does not want to admit "I" as "I"? Then "I" cannot and should not remain without a counter-action. This opposition is a manifestation of jealousy, - jealousy to his love, which is concern about virginity, about the authenticity, finally, concern about the preservation of his love'.¹⁹ Jealousy is implementation, validation and apology of the election. Therefore, jealousy in the positive sense of the word is connected to the powerful, and to arduously striving to protect one's own love and protecting love from the actions of any hostile, destructive factors. Jealousy accompanies any love and all good values in person. If 'You' denies the right to jealousy of 'I', reduces 'I' to 'no one' ('I' as one of the many other), that is, to the level of thing or necessary for anything, the 'I' then can react in different ways:

- 'I' can try fall out of love 'You', forget about 'You'. But it is very painful and bitter because the part of spiritual heart is losing. Increasing the intensity of the love of 'I' leads to the enlargement of sickness of love deprivation because it is the deprivation of part of personality. In addition, nobody can guarantee that this wound will heal and that 'I' saves the ability to love in the future. That is, there is a risk of heart disability, in which people cannot love anyone.
- 'I' continues to love 'You'. We can agree with Florenskij in the respect of the freedom of other persons from the motivation and process of falling out of love. However, essential limitations of this idea do exist. Nobody can deny 'I' to love 'You', even if this love is not mutual. Sacrificial love does not require mutuality, but love has a right of existence in the absence of reciprocity: just as God loves not only those who love him, but those who hate him. 'For if you love them which love you, what thank have you? For sinners also love those that love them. And if you do good to them which do good to you, what than have you? For sinners also do even event the same...

¹⁸ Florensky (2003) 372.

¹⁹ Florensky (2003) 374.

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful' (Luk.6: 32–36). If 'You' live according to Christian morality, 'You' should love 'I' if 'You' wants to execute the commandment of love. The character of Christian sacrificial love is teleological. This love is directed toward a specific goal to achieve Godlike love. 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another' (Ioan.13: 34). If 'You' reject the will of God, which is 'You' are invoked to love 'I', the 'I' cannot agree with sin 'You' and encourage this God-detachment sin. 'I' executes the will of God on a voluntary basis. This will is the performance of the commandment of love. We notice that, in the case of sex, love God can rend the connection of love between 'I' and 'You'. In this situation 'I' cannot keep the love of 'You' and 'You' does not remain the only elected for the 'I'. It is possible to change the identity of 'You' and thus establish a new connection of love.

3. The Various Aspects of Love

There is a diversity of values and meanings in love, and it is the need to systematise this collection and accordingly build a hierarchy of values. P. Florensky assumes that Greek language is richer than English or Russian for the designation of love, and consists of four words for love. These words present the various aspects of love: *έραν*, *φιλείν*, *στέργειν* and *άγαπαν*:

- **έραν or amor concupiscentiae or love-eros.** Love-eros is sensual desire and passionate attraction to the object. The basis of this desire is the love to life. It is the vital love.²⁰ This love includes values such as amorousness, beauty of body and soul, attractiveness, and sexuality as a value. As Pavel Florensky writes, 'Words *έραν*, *έρως* almost excluded from the books of the Old Testament... and are not admitted in the books of the New Testament. It is necessary to note that the terms *έρως*, *έραν* have found a place in the ascetic literature. Fathers-mystics, such as Basil the Great²¹, Gregory the Theologian²², John Chrysostom²³, Gregory of Nyssa²⁴, Nicholas Cabasilas²⁵, Symeon the New Theologian²⁶ and others use these

²⁰ Dupla (2013).

²¹ Basiliius Caesariensis PG 29 (1858-1866) 401.

²² Gregorius Nazianzenus PG 37 (1858-1866) 1449.

²³ Joannes Chrysostomus PG 46 (1858-1866) 463.

²⁴ Gregorius Nyssenus. PG 46 (1858-1866) 93.

²⁵ Vakrakos. (1989) 43.

terms to denote the highest love for God.²⁷ According to this saint fathers and P. Florensky, Divine Eros transforms the soul of humans by giving of the Divine love for God and neighbours. Physical contact with beloved persons is not important for this transformation in love. As a result, the church fathers came to the idea that Eros provides the unity of personality with God and other people. Florensky used the term ‘consubstantiality’ for denomination of this unity.²⁸ This unity is kept and increased by prayer and the free sacrifice of itself for others. The best example of this transformation of soul in eros is The Holy Virgin: ‘She achieved, by her eros for God, the strength of her thought, the straightness of her choice and the largeness of her mind to overturn every sin and set up a trophy of victory to which nothing else can be compared’.²⁹

Basil the Great identifies heavenly and blissful love as ‘eros’.³⁰ Gregory of Nyssa also uses the term ‘erasmon’ for the identification of desired object of love.

When soul, who has become simple, uniform and absolutely godlike, will find... the good which one actually is worthy object of love and desired object of love (erasmon), it (soul) connected with this object and enters in unification with it.³¹

According to N. Cabasilas, the highest form of eros is God’s love for men. The main proof of response to love for God is the ability to suffer and proceed into death for Christ and beloved the person:

God’s love (eros) for men emptied God. He does not stay in His own place and call the slave. He seeks him in person by coming down to him. He who is rich reaches the pauper’s hovel, and He displays His love by approaching in person. He seeks love in return and does not withdraw when He is treated with disdain. He is not angry over ill treatment, but even when He has been repulsed He sits by the door and does everything to show us that He loves (eronta), even enduring suffering and death to prove it. Two things reveal him who loves and lead the lover in a triumphal procession (erasten)-the one, that in every way possible he does good to the object of his love (eromenon); the other, that he is willing, if need be, to endure terrible things for him and endure pain. Of the two, the latter would seem to be a far greater proof of friendship than the former. Yet it was not possible for God since He is incapable of suffering harm.... It was necessary, then, that the greatness of His love should not remain hidden, but that He should give the proof of the greatest love and by loving display the utmost measure of love (erota).³²

²⁶ Symeon Neos Theologos (1976) Hymn 46. 29-36.

²⁷ Florensky (2003) 430.

²⁸ See Florensky (2003) 24.

²⁹ Athanasios Vavrakos (1989) 43.

³⁰ Basilius Caesariensis PG 29 (1858-1866) 401.

³¹ Gregorius Nyssenus Theol. Dialogus de anima et resurrectione//Patrologia Graeca/P.Migne – Vol. 46 – Paris, 1858-1866. - Σ. 93.

³² Nicholas Cabasilas (1974), 162-63; See also Fredrickson (2013).

The origin of category of Divine eros probably is connected with Plato's philosophy. According to Plato, the purpose of immortal soul, moved by eros, is a mystical contemplation of the Absolute, beautiful as itself.

'What then,' she (Diotima) said, 'do we believe happens to one, if he gets to see the beautiful itself, pure, clean, unmixed, and not infected with human flesh, colours, or a lot of other mortal foolishness, and can glimpse the divine beautiful itself as being of a single shape? Do you believe,' she said, 'that life would prove to be a sorry sort of thing, when a human being gazes in the direction of the beautiful and beholds it with the instrument with which he must and is together with it? Or don't you realize,' she said, 'that only here, in seeing in the way the beautiful is seeable, will he get to engender not phantom images of virtues because he does not lay hold of a phantom-but true, because he lays hold of the true; and that once he has given birth to and cherished true virtue, it lies within him to become dear to god and, if it is possible for any human being, to become immortal as well?' 'Here, Phaedrus and you others, is what Diotima declared and what I am convinced of. And in this state of conviction, I try to persuade others that for this possession one could not easily get a better co-worker with human nature than Eros.³³

Only contemplation of Beauty can unleash the power of Divine eros in humans. If the human stops in contemplation of the feminine beauty, he will accept the negative values of erotic love. The negative values of erotic love are the carnal passions or lust in her diverse varieties: fornication, adultery, sexual satisfaction outside of marriage, homosexual attraction, etc. It is well known that homosexual relations 'to love young men' are the subject of praise in the speech of Aristophanes in Plato's 'Symposium':

Men, which is one of the parts ... androgynous before being ... are hungry for women, and fornicators in the majority belong to this category, and women of this origin are hungry for men and jaded.³⁴

Following negative values causes the line between the opposition between 'love' and 'not-love' to be erased. They are separated by one 'step' of consciousness, one movement of feelings. When a person says 'I love you', it is also subjective and cannot create trust, as in the case of 'I do not love you'. Speaking to the man not speaking instinctively relates to another person according to dichotomy 'nice-not-nice', 'comfortable-not-comfortable'. There are not 'I' or 'You'; rather, there are the image of the self, which is far from the 'true-I' and the illusory and changeable image of 'You', which is far from the 'true-You'.³⁵ If eros is not estab-

³³ Plato. Symposium (1991) 137-138.

³⁴ Plato. Symposium (1991). 118-119.

³⁵ This suggestion requires clarification. Doubt in the truth of own "I" leads to doubts that "I" love "you." This situation was demonstrated by Bonaventura in words of "Ophelia": "Lead me at least once

lished by God, it is illusory sexual love. Such love is always short-lived and quickly destroys. If a person tries to gain and develop true love, he proceeds on to the second level of love—that of φιλεῖν.

- **φιλεῖν or amor affectionis or love-filio.** Filio is a more balanced love, based on the internal nearness of people. Friendship is also referred to as love-filio. Patristic philosophy stresses the true value of honest friends. 'Faithful friends cannot be replaced by anything, and there is no measure of his goodness; faithful friend—animated treasure. Faithful friends are more expensive than gold and a lot of jewels. Faithful friend—"a garden enclosed... fountain sealed" (Song 4:12), temporarily opened, and temporarily used. Faithful friend—refuge for appeasement'.³⁶ Objects of love-filio are more manifold than the narrow sexual love. Types of such love include the following³⁷: love for her father ('filopa-torus'-'person, who loves his father'); the love for a mother ('filometor'-'person who loves his mother'); love for children ('filopays'-'person who loves children); love for brothers and sisters ('filadelphia', from 'adelphos' is brother and 'adelfe' is 'sister'); love for their comrades ('filetayrya'); love of friends ('filofilya'); love for his native city ('filopoly'); love for his country ('filopatrya'); love for the people ('filodemos'); the love for man ('filantropya'; that is 'philanthropy'), love for pleasure ('filedonya'); love for fame ('filendoksyia'); the love for power ('filarhya') and so on. 'Positive' values that exist at the second level of love are friends, interesting people, tact, communication, mutual support and mutual understanding. 'Negative' values are the following: misunderstanding, disturbance, split-up and communicative gaps. Love-Filio is a way of cognition overcoming the illusory 'I' and 'You' through friendship.

- **στέργειν or amor obedientiae or love-storge.** This means, according to P. Florensky, 'quiet and continuous feeling in the profoundness of a loving person, so that thank to the force of this feeling loving person recognises the object of love as close-owned by him, closely linked with him, and loving person finds soul peace in this recognition; στέργειν refers to an organic, tribal ties, which are indissoluble by even evil by virtue of this nature'.³⁸ The following values are important at this level: adherence, tenderness, courtesy, calm, prudence, personal closeness. Patriotism as love for the country is also a positive value at this level of love. Negative values are treason to his family and homeland, betrayal, cruelty to a loved person. Love-storge as the love-filio is the way of consciously overcoming the illusory 'I' and 'You', but in another way—namely through personal intimacy.

to my "I", and I will ask it, whether it loves you" [Bonaventure. (1990)]. Only spiritual heart, in which there is the Kingdom of Heaven, is capable for Christian sacrificial love. If the "I" is only a mask, which can have any "content" [See Saprionov (2011) 217], this leads to the realization of the fundamental impossibility of true love between illusory "I" and truly "you".

³⁶ Gregory the Theologian PG 35 (1858-1866) col. 831B, C.

³⁷ Rurikov (1990) 45.

³⁸ Florensky (2003) 320.

- **ἀγάπην or amor benevolentiae or love-agape.** This higher level of love is love in its purest form. It is an intelligent love connected to the recognition of high value in the object. The highest level of love does not wound the sensual sphere of the human. Love-agape moderately exists in the will and expresses itself in the free election of the love's object, as well as in the mind, which is connected to an objective assessment of the value of loving personality; tyranny, mental uncertainty, passion, immoderacy. This love does not 'shout' about itself, does not try to present or show itself to people. On the contrary, order, peace, tranquillity and respect characterise this love.

Friendship between man and God, the Eucharistic unity of Christians, selfless compassion, self-sacrifice for the sake of other, freedom and compassion are the highest value of this love-agape. Negative values cannot be found in this love. In contrast to all other levels, it is not able to move into its opposite, and under no circumstances is it the result of resentment or does it lead to its formation. Love-agape is universal love. Every person is invoked to fill their own soul through this form of love. The result of personal relationships of love-filio is love-agape, which includes the full co-unity of the two personalities.

In our opinion, there are three main forms of connection of love (especially in the case of sex love): temporal mutual connection of love, temporal nonreciprocal connection of love, and eternal mutual connection of love-agape. The first two types of connection are not true and full-fledged; rather, they execute the preparative function for third truly connection. The historical experience of the soul, which had these kinds of connection, can be useful for the spiritual development and birth of eternal sacrificial love. In our opinion, both eros and agape can be sacrificial love.

Thus, love-agape as truly love-eros is the result of spiritual ways; it is the final victory over the ghosts and the idols of 'love'. True-I and true-You are one in God, in love-agape. The perfection and the happiness or benefit, which is the goal of every rational soul, is possible in this love.

4. The Concrete Expression of Spiritual Love

P. Florenskij asks, 'What is the concrete expression of spiritual love?', and in answer provides the following: spiritual love is expressed in overcoming itself, which requires spiritual communion between people. This is the metaphysical essence of love. It is necessary for a person to get out from himself, his self-individual life to live for another, when opposition between 'I' and 'not-I' is eliminated and they become consubstantial. Their relationship is likened to the relationship between hypostases of the Holy Trinity.

Pavel Florenskij applies the classic Hegelian scheme ‘thesis-antithesis-synthesis’, which, according to this subject, can be modified as follows: ‘I-not-I-You.’ Intromission of ‘I’ in ‘other I’, which is ‘not-I’, leads to the formation of ‘You’, in which a man, humbling himself, gets out of self-existential, sin existence, and lives for another that enriches his personality. ‘Loving person transfers his love in beloved person and give at once the possibility to cognize and love yourself in God. Beloved person became loving person and identifies yourself with loving person in God. This process of self-exposition and self- abjection of lovers becomes an endless act of consubstantiality of lovers in God’.³⁹ The result of this process of self-abjection, kenosis, is the emergence of a new, updated ‘I’, which is able to see the essence of things and say ‘yes’ in relation to being. Love is ‘Yes’, which new ‘I’ tells.

The membrane of self-significance is broken between loving persons, and each person contemplates himself in the other, his intimate essence, his other ‘I’, which is not distinct from their own ‘I’⁴⁰.

Two personalities improve their love in the extant, allowing themselves to integrate into one unity whilst, at the same time, not losing their individuality. How does this happen? It is one of the most important mysteries of love. ‘This is a great mystery...’ (Ephesians 5: 32).

Love ‘I-You’ takes place in God, whilst consubstantiality with others is established in God. During the process of the development of this relationship, ‘I’ and ‘You’ are assimilated of Divine Love, in which unity becomes ‘duality’, which has a source of its unity in God. Florenskij shows freedom in the formulation when he writes that love is manifested ‘only in the purified consciousness’.⁴¹ The long feat is needed for the achievement of such blessed love. The purification of consciousness is characterised, as we know, for Buddhism and some sects, in particular, for ISKCON.⁴²

Divine love is not a sign of the God; it is not just a quality of ‘loving’ towards others⁴³. Paul Florenskij defends the idea that love is the essence of God-His nature. This idea re-echoes with thoughts of S. Frank, who writes:

³⁹ Kiseleva (2012) 201-206.

⁴⁰ Florensky (2002) 346.

⁴¹ Florensky (2003) 319.

⁴² ISKCON - The International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

⁴³ Otherwise as P. Florenskij correctly noticed, God depends on contingent, accidental existence, which may or may not be.

God is love and Christian religion educates person for sacrificial love and for starting the cross way in the name of the Godman Jesus Christ. ⁴⁴

However, how to achieve such God-assimilation love? We can represent the way of achievement of true love based on the ideas posed by Paul Florenskij.

1. Stages of the achievement of true love:
2. Person
3. Looking for love-a manifestation of the will
4. Free choice-decision-making
5. Voluntary election
6. God-Love.

Love is the cognition of the divine essence, entering into God. Love is a way of the cognition of the Truth, Goodness and Beauty, which is one spiritual love.⁴⁵ Knowledge of the truth is cognisable in love-and only in love. 'Love outside the God is not a love, but only a natural cosmic phenomenon'.⁴⁶ It is difficult to give Christians absolute assessment of this phenomenon.

Human, as the image of God, is the image of love and is love itself; however, its distortion caused by sin is present in human. The consciousness of sin leads to search of better things, the search for truth and for sacrificial love. Human finds love, but he has not chosen it. He is in a state of choice. At this stage, he can still return to a past life - life in sin, not in love. When a person chooses, he elevates to the next stage of the 'election'.

All love, in its essence, has an elective, selective force. There is dilectio, and therefore the loving person is always elect, select, only-begotten⁴⁷.

According to Florenskij, the analysis of love is impossible without taking into account the context of the Truth and Beauty categories, in the unity of which he considers Love. Love, Truth and Beauty are triune, united by its own essence, but manifest themselves in different ways depending on the point of view.

The same thing for the subject of knowledge is true, and for object it is the love to him, and for person contemplating knowledge ... is Beauty'.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Frank (1990) 313.

⁴⁵ Florensky (2003) 85.

⁴⁶ Florensky (2003) 96.

⁴⁷ Florensky (2003) 373.

⁴⁸ Florensky (2003) 85.

At the same time Truth, Love and Beauty are only one spiritual life, one essence, one unity. However, Florenskij connects only love with God. Through love, a connection is established with a personal Absolute, and only love of this connection is feasible. 'My love is the action of God in me and my action-in God'.⁴⁹ This is based on his own spiritual experience idea, revealed in the concept of a synergy. Florenskij comments in regard to synergy, which is the co-operation of God and man in love. Through this co-action, integration of conditional human being with unconditional, the Divine is realised. In this situation, there is no 'I' and there is no 'You', but there is 'We' and 'I' and 'You' co-existing in 'We'. The person who establishes 'We' in their own heart begins to love all of God's creation and see in every person, in every human the image of God. Such a person 'can liberally embrace all world by own love and then absolute Divine Good is realised'.⁵⁰ He loves all created things in God, and looks at the world through eyes of Divine Love.

Finally, man has established electing love and has joined in personal relationships with Truth and Love. He is coupled with perfection in love. It is a meaning and the ultimate goal of life and cognition.

Conclusion

Thus, we make the following conclusions based on the theory of love of P. Florensky. The main qualities of love are the following:

- 1 The absoluteness of love: God is Truth, God is Beauty, God is Love, but Love is the centralisation of the Godhead-the essence of God. This idea was a leitmotif, the key idea of the Christian philosophy of love of father Paul Florenskij. If God does not live in man, man does not have the love. Love is the connection established by God between people. This connection is based on deep similarities of the soul. As Fernando G. Martin de Blassy noticed, according to these connections, loving persons exist in beloved persons.⁵¹ This connection is deific because the Energies of God pierce the soul of humans with Christian sacrificial love.
- 2 Synergy of love: According to Florenskij, love is not an individual, personal act, but rather is a synergetic process of connection loving people with Divine energy, connection with Absolute, vital Truth, vital Beauty and vital Love. God is not a God if God is not a love, love absolute, with an unconditional being. 'Love' outside God is not a love. It is only a ghost of love-a meaningless nonentity without existence.

⁴⁹ Florensky (2003) 86.

⁵⁰ Valeeva (2011) 16 .

⁵¹ See Martin de Blassy (2014) 629.

- 3 The antinomy of love: On the one hand, love is a boundless act⁵²; on the other, love ‘is not only boundless, but also reserved’.⁵³ This quality is connected with the antinomical and symbolical character of Florensky’s thinking.
- 4 The gradual achievement of love: Four Greek verbs of love *έραν*, *φιλείν*, *στέργειν* and *άγαπαν* represent the four stages of achievement of higher altruistic love-agape.
- 5 Love as a value: Sacrificial love is the supreme good and value.
- 6 Love is jealousy: Jealousy is an energetic effort to maintain, establish, protect and increase the spiritual good of love. In a positive sense, jealousy is one of the virtues.
- 7 Love is ontological: Love, closely connected with Truth and Beauty, is the ontological foundation of the spiritual life of the person.
- 8 Love is mysterious unity in Christ: This unity is a mystery. The ways of love’s creation in humans are miraculous and unsearchable. ‘How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!’ (Romans 11:33). It is possible for God to synthesise love-agape and love-eros in united love. Agapelogical and erotical ‘bezels’ of one jewel of love is aspects of united love, which is given by God. This gift of God is kept by human through the prayer and deeds of love.

In our article, we have highlighted the example of the teachings of love through Florensky’s thought, as symbolical, discursive, antinomic and intuitivistic.

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⁵² Florensky (2003) 99.

⁵³ Florensky (2003) 375.

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