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"Keep Your Mind in Hell and Despair Not": Dealing with the Wounds and Complicities of 20th Century Orthodoxy in Estonia Through the Theology of St Sophrony (Sakharov) and Arvo Pärt

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Abstract

The story of Estonian Orthodoxy, as often told through the narrative of collective trauma, is not homogeneous and uncontested. The co-existence of two Orthodox communities in present-day Estonia, each insisting on exclusive canonical legitimacy and holding different views of the past, the incomplete work of transitional justice, and the untold story of political collaboration appear as irreconcilable differences that challenge the ideals of Christian unity. In order to address these unresolved problems of a traumatic past, the paper will turn to the ascetic theology of twentieth-century Orthodox saints St Silouan (1866–1938) and St Sophrony Sakharov (1896–1993) and to the musical oeuvres of the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt (b. 1935). The approach of these Orthodox ascetics, the article argues, provides an important perspective on Christian mission in a wounded world.

Keywords

memory – post-communism – the Orthodox Church – Estonia – Sophrony (Sakharov) – St Silouan the Athonite – Arvo Pärt – theology of wounds – reconciliation

1 Theology of Wounds and East European Memory of Communism

For people living in the Baltic Soviet republics, the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 coincided with the 50th anniversary of the ill-fated Molotov-Ribbentrop pact

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that led to the Stalinist occupation of the Baltic in 1940. This anniversary was marked by the 'Baltic chain': tens of thousands of people joined their hands and created a live chain across three Baltic states. The 1990s were perceived as the "crisis of truth," when ordinary people took up the role of being witnesses to censored history and the crimes of the regime, bringing in memories of violence and unspoken stories of deportations. During the 1990s the untold story of the Estonian Orthodoxy was likewise told through the language of wounds and trauma. The liberation from the communist yoke and regaining of state sovereignty in 1991 affected the Orthodox church in Estonia which during the 1990s split into two ecclesiastical bodies, the one under the Ecumenical patriarchate of Constantinople and the other under the Patriarchate of Moscow, the situation that repeated in Ukraine in 2018.

There are several theological reflections on the wounds and trauma of the 20th century. The American theologian Shelly Rambo, focusing on the interpretations of wounds in the gospel of St John and in the *Life of Makrina* by St Gregory the Great, suggests that wounds have to resurface in order to be healed, as wounds reveal to us something about "life resurrecting amid the ongoingness of death" (Rambo, 2017). She interprets the Johannine Gospel as a model based on a three part process: return of the wounds, the coming of the Spirit that bears the memory of Jesus' life, the formation of a new community in which the disciples "come to terms with the past and reorient themselves to practices of care and truth telling" (Rambo, 2017).

Rambo's approach, based on the dialogue between theology and trauma studies, is a starting point in the theoretical discussion in this article, in which we deal with the ways in which Orthodox theology responds to the human tragedy and trauma of the 20th century. We are wondering to what extent the focus on wounds is relevant to Eastern Christian theology and whether it is a productive way to deal with traumas of the past. Another theological approach is that of Miroslav Volf, who, in his investigation of memory of wrongdoing, posits the possibility of reconciliation between the victims and the perpetrators. Through a hermeneutical treatment of the Exodus and the Passion as meta-memories, he constructs a four-part scheme: sacred memories shape identity; they are communal; they are concerned with the future not just the past; and, finally, the memories of the Exodus and Passion are memories of God. (Volf, 2006: 97–101). In order to reconcile with his offenders, Volf engages imaginary dialogues between himself and Captain G. of the Yugoslav military, who interrogated Volf as a young man in the 1970s, suspecting him of spying. The dialogues take place in a court similar to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and in a pub. By doing this, Volf demonstrates that remembering rightly is work that needs to be done communally. Including

the readers into the community of those remembering the injustice that happened to him, he brings us to more likely acceptance of the argument that he makes in his book, that "the proper goal of the memory of wrongs suffered – its appropriate end – is the formation of the communion of love between all people, including victims and perpetrators" (Volf, 2006: 232).

Rambo's reading of St John's account of Christ's wounds has implications for dealing with narratives of trauma. She suggests that the resurrection and return of Christ with his wounds may be one 'substructural' belief that, when uncovered and properly interpreted, may be helpful in "detecting, and perhaps unlocking, the negative hold that some of these authoritative and even abusive, narratives have" (Rambo, 2017: Conclusion). She explicitly refers to the American audience, for whom these substructural beliefs are relevant. To what extent is this approach relevant to non-western audiences, those whose substructural beliefs may not have been formed under the influence of western theology and practices, including that of Calvin? Even though the story of the resurrection is shared by all Christians, there are differences in exegesis that allow for different readings of wounds.

In this article we are dealing with antagonistic communities gathering around wounds complemented by a sense of justice, but each nourishing their own exclusive suffering. What kind of theology needs to be developed that does not deny trauma but overcomes the binary between the offender and the offended? In the case of Eastern Christian communities, what kind of exegesis would enable them to deal with unhealed wounds and how?

Reconciliation and healing cannot be done without the work of the remembering subject who "remembers rightly." But what does the work of remembering rightly involve? According to Volf, this can be expressed in imaginative encounters with the wrongdoers whom the remembering subject includes in the community of love formed, again imaginatively, while participating in the sacred rites of the church such as communion. In addition to these imaginative encounters and mental efforts to incorporate offenders in the community of love – itself a form of a spiritual exercise and meditation – there are other methods that need to be addressed and practiced.

This article aims to show that even though the work of western theologians such as Rambo and Volf have much relevance to *Missio ad Vulnera* in Eastern Europe, we will consider indigenous Eastern Orthodox theology that needs to be expounded and applied to specific cases of wounded communities. To illustrate this, the article will present the approach that was developed in the writings of two Orthodox ascetics St Silouan (1866–1938) of Mount Athos and St Sophrony (Sakharov, 1896–1993). The article will bring out the significance of St Siluan's and St Sophrony's approach – "Keep your mind in Hell and despair

not" – for the field of trauma studies, and convince the reader that it is possible to apply it to the conundrum of the memory conflict within the Orthodox communities in Estonia. In order to support the relevance of this approach, we will bring examples not only from the theology of St Silouan and St Sophrony but also from the contemporary Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, who uses the language of music to address the themes of pain and despair, which, despite their universal scope, have a specific historical and cultural context.

2 The Wounds of Estonian Orthodoxy: Confronting the Past in the 1990s

What were the wounds of the Estonian Orthodoxy? We need to distinguish between the relatively fresher 'wounds' of church rift and conflict, when the fabric of the community represented by one multi-ethnic Orthodox church was torn apart, the split reflecting the breakdown of multiethnic Soviet society in the 1990s, and the older wounds of historical communist repressions, deportations, the loss of autonomy, displacement, and the bitterness of moral compromises under communism. The older wounds returned with vengeance during the Singing Revolution (1987–1991) in Estonia, when the Estonians projected self-image as an ethnic group which was mistreated to the point of extinction by the totalitarian Soviet state, while the Russians living in Estonia as the perpetrators of this mistreatment. As the process of re-gaining political independence succeeded in 1991, the Orthodox Church was plunged into a schism that brought about the separation into two autonomous Orthodox churches, one under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople (Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church, EAOC) and the other under the patriarch of Moscow (Estonian Orthodox Church, EOC). Both churches have developed their own narratives about their history and cultural and religious identity. Both have made claims to the same canonical territory and created their own versions of the past (Rimestad, 2017: 297). The split reflected the ethnolinguistic division among Estonian Orthodox believers: the younger Estonian-speaking converts formed communities that sought to distinguish themselves from the parishes filled by descendants of the Russian migrants who were associated with the Soviet occupation. (Paert 2016: 188–211). The newly formed EAOC (Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church) under the Patriarch of Constantinople not only appealed to the idea of restoration of autonomy given in 1923 by the Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios IV, but it "effectively disenfranchised the 'Russian' church" (Englehardt, 2015:27). Having achieved legal status and a settlement regarding the use of parishes from the state in 2000, the two Orthodox churches in

Estonia co-exist in parallel universes: each carrying the scars of their traumatic past, each treating the other side as a rival.

In the crisis over the issue of jurisdiction and ownership of church property in the 1990s, the older wounds resurfaced and quickly became part of the narrative that justified the politics of the ecclesiastical split. Church under the Moscow patriarchate was represented as "an extension of the oppressive Soviet occupational power" (Huttonen, 2002: 406), and accused of collaboration with the regime, russification, and suppression of Estonian Orthodox self-expression. Since the number of Orthodox churchgoers increased in the Soviet period due to newcomers from the Soviet republics, the nationally minded Orthodox activists bemoaned the loss of the Estonian language in the liturgy, the shrinkage of the number of Estonian priests, and the disappearance of local church traditions. During the 1960s, about two thirds of rural parishes closed down and only 10% of priests could speak Estonian. Estonians remain decorations or marionettes in the hands of the Moscow patriarchate, the patriots claimed, and 'this had to change' (cited in Ringvee, 2005: 130). EAOC arguments about the ethnic uniqueness of Estonian Orthodoxy and discrimination against Estonians within ROC corrupted by the totalitarian state during the Soviet period continue to be the basis of the debate.

The argument that justified the registration of the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church as being the legal descendant of the Orthodox church in Estonia before 1940 was based on history. In 1923, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Meletios IV, accepted Estonians, together with Finns, to the jurisdiction of Ecumenical Patriarchate and granted them broad autonomy. In June 1940, after the Soviet Union occupied the Baltic states, the secret police state carried out mass repressions against various groups of people, including Orthodox clergy and members of the lay Russian Student Christian Movement, many of whom were arrested and executed, and thousands were deported. Stalin's machinery of repression did not distinguish between Estonian and Russian 'enemies of the people.'

Moscow did not recognize the 1923 transition of the Estonian Church to Constantinople. In February 1941, all Baltic churches were transferred to the Moscow exarchate in Vilnius. Representing the power of the Russian Church in the Baltic, Bishop Sergii (Voskresensky) clearly had a mandate from the Soviet KGB (Kalkandijeva, 2015: 75–86). He successfully subordinated all Orthodox churches in the Baltic to the ecclesiastical authority of Moscow. In March 1941, the head of the Estonian church Bishop Alexander (Paulus) was summoned to Moscow, where he made an act of repentance for his betrayal of the Mother Church in 1923, signing an oath of loyalty to the patriarch. With this, the Estonian Orthodox Church lost its autonomous status and self-government,

becoming a diocese in the Baltic exarchate under the rule of Metropolitan Sergii, the "Chekist (a secret policeman) in a cassock."

The Second World War affected church politics. After withdrawal of the Soviet troops in 1941 and occupation of the Baltic states by Wehrmacht armies, Bishop Alexander returned to the Patriarch of Constantinople, but many parishes in Eastern Estonia remained under Bishop Sergii. Following the bombing of Tallinn by the Soviet air force in April 1944, members of the Orthodox clergy, including Bishop Alexander, fled from Estonia first to Germany and then to Sweden, where parishes of the Estonian Orthodox Church were established. Altogether, about 40,000 Estonians left their country out of fear of repression. The Estonian Orthodox diaspora was tiny but resilient. In the years that followed, the Orthodox refugees who formed the Stockholm Synod, led by Bishop Alexander, regarded themselves as the only legitimate successors to the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church. In Soviet Estonia, the remaining traces of the Church's autonomy were obliterated, expressions of nationalism punished and the veneration of new martyrs – those who died at the hands of the Bolsheviks – suppressed. From 1945–47 a number of Orthodox clergy were arrested from and sent to the Gulag and the secret police persecuted those clergymen loyal to Metropolitan Alexander. Many remaining Orthodox clergymen had to renounce their links with the Constantinople patriarchate and declare loyalty to Soviet power (Petrov, 2016: 245, see also Sõtsov, 2004). After the death of Stalin in 1953, arrests became rare, but the Church remained under the surveillance of the secret police: sermons were recorded and reported, private conversations wiretapped, and agents recruited amongst parishioners and the clergy. During the Soviet period, the Orthodox Church in Estonia became a showcase for ecumenical international organizations, especially as one of the promoters of the peace movement (Altnurme et al. 2009); nonetheless, it was hostage of the regime.

However, during the 1990s, the lived experiences of the wounds of repression and compromises that the church had had to make under communism were shared by only a few surviving priests and elderly parishioners. During the time when Soviet anti-religious policy relaxed, the majority of the Russian-speaking Orthodox converts perceived the church as the institution that provided continuity, 'lineage of belief' with the authentic pre-communist past, rather than a place where wounds should be exposed (Paert, 2016: 201–202). For the younger Estonian converts in the 1990s, memory of Estonian Orthodoxy was associated with Estonian nationhood, especially that many founding fathers of Estonian independence were Orthodox. "This memory of an Estonian-speaking and Estonian-minded Orthodox Church, which had represented 20% of the population throughout the country, had effectively been stifled and consequently

forgotten during the Soviet occupation," writes one of the actors of the ecclesiastical redress in the 1990s, the Finnish priest Heiko Huttonen (Huttonen, 2002: 400). This narrative had no support among the leaders of the church under Moscow patriarchate (EOC MP) that for ten years (1992–2002) struggled to have legal recognition of its status and the right to use the church buildings (Rimestad, 2017). The perpetuation of the narratives of trauma and mutual offence has continued between 2002 and the present day, as the church actors externalize the agents of their affliction, portraying the other side as guilty and unwilling to reconcile. What concerns the masses of parishioners, with the exception of those who were directly involved in the church politics of the 1990s, is they are not often aware of the canonical and historical arguments and instead chose parishes in accordance with the language of the service, closeness to their homes, and personality of the parish priest.

I moved to Estonia only in 2005, when the peak of the crisis was over and the church under the Moscow patriarchate received legal recognition and a settlement over parishes. I made friends in both churches, but regularly attended a parish that belonged to the Moscow patriarchate. Once, a priest from the Church under the Constantinople patriarchate asked me to translate a section of the book *The Truth About the Orthodox Church*. I agreed: some months later, when the book was published and my name appeared among the translators, I received a phone call from a priest in my parish who could not hide his disappointment when asking me why I was involved in the production of such falsehoods. Only then did I realise that there were invisible lines between the churches, and crossing them would cost me the respect of my community leaders and friendships. I tried to understand this and carried out several interviews with those Russians who had lived through the crisis of the 1990s. I was surprised to find that the question of church jurisdiction was not prominent in memories from this era. People spoke out about their bitter feelings of being sidelined by their former colleagues and friends, their feeling of non-belonging despite being born in Estonia, and losing jobs, careers, and promotions because of their ethnicity. While the trauma of the Estonians is linked to the loss of territorial independence and population depletion from deportations, the wounds of Russian speakers is located in the efforts to provide redress in the 1990s (Aarelaid, Khachaturjan, 2006). Both sides, Estonians and Russians, experienced the schism within the Orthodox Church as a wound. "How would you feel if one of your own fingers was cut off? It hurts and it bleeds," says a priest of Estonian descent who is one of the few Estonians to have remained within the church under Moscow's jurisdiction. The perception of the split within the church as a bleeding wound is an important metaphor for this discussion concerning wounds.

While the Orthodox churches' jurisdictional conflict concerns primarily the clergy and the hierarchs, the public forms of dealing with the past, such as the 'war of monuments' in 2004–2007 (Brüggemann and Kasekamp, 2008) mobilize ordinary citizens who by expressing their attitude, often in emotional and violent ways, demonstrate that the past still has a strong hold on the present. The popular perception of the Second World War remains divisive for the Estonian majority and the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia. The latter emphasize the suffering of the Russian people as a result of the aggressive invasion of Nazi Germany, and celebrate the liberating role of the Red Armies, victory, heroism, and sacrifice, and downplay the role of the Russian military and state in the occupation of Eastern Europe. For the Estonian national narrative, between these two regimes, National Socialism and communism, the latter is regarded as the main evil because it was longer and more harmful (Kattago 2017: 32–33). The members of the church of Moscow patriarchate participate in the annual celebration of victory over Nazi Germany on 9th May, while the members of the Estonian Orthodox church under Constantinople are present in the state commemorations of national independence and allow church walls to be used for commemorative plaques of Forest Brothers, the national guerillas resisting the Soviet occupation in the Baltic (Loonet, Mägi, 2020).

As we see, this resurfacing of the wounds in the case of Estonia, as suggested by Rambo, does not lead to the formation of a new community and coming to terms with the past. There are several reasons for this. On the one hand, the understanding of trauma, which is a secular version of 'wounds,' was deeply problematic because it was used in the nationalist discourse and justified narratives of national suffering and victimization. On the other hand, I believe that the true wounds have been either ignored or misplaced. Since the nationalist discourse externalizes the perpetrator as ethnically different, in the case of Estonia and Russians, there is no or little attempt to deal with one's own people's involvement in the repression and victimization of others, such as the holocaust. Similarly, there is a lack of reflection on the contradiction between the heroic image of the Soviet soldier as the liberator of Europe from Nazism and the shameful image of that same role oppressing the sovereignty of smaller nations.

3 "Keep Your Mind in Hell …": Theology of St Siluan as a Substructural Belief

Both Rambo and Volf turn to the Eastern Church fathers to find some different vantage point for their view of wounds; yet, generally speaking, there is not

much attention to what Eastern Orthodox theology has to say about trauma and reconciliation. The writings of modern ascetics, often categorised as "devotional literature," are not taken seriously enough by academic theology. Even though recently some theologians have discussed the writings of St. Sophrony, it is mostly to produce general introductions to his thought and to bring out his significance as a spiritual writer and iconographer (Sakharov, 2002, Zacharias, 2012, Gabriela, 2019, Louth, 2015). It is true that the drama of the 20th century's two world wars played a large role in Father Sophrony's theology (Banev 2014: 91–123), yet there is more to say about the ascetic's view on the tragedy of the human condition and woundedness.

3.1 *The Origin and Hermeneutics of the Maxim "Keep Your Mind in Hell": St Silouan and St Sophrony* (*Sakharov*)

Having lived through the turmoil of the First World War and Revolution, Sophrony (Sergei Sakharov), an artist-turned-monk, left Russia in 1921 because of art, not politics. Today he is known in the Orthodox world as a respected spiritual father, a theologian, the founder of a monastic community, and a saint. His approach to the human condition and his interpretation of the writings of Saint Silouan, his spiritual father, serve as guidance and an approach to the wounds and complicities of 20th century orthodoxy.

As a Russian émigré in Paris, he sought answers to his existential questions in painting but was overwhelmed by a yearning for prayer that led him to monasticism on Mount Athos. After many years in the Russian monastery of St Panteleimon, where he was a confessor and also lived as a hermit for several years, in 1945 he left for Paris, where he published the notes of Silouan and started a new monastic community that eventually settled in Essex in the United Kingdom.

Father Sophrony's encounter with monk Silouan, by origin a Russian peasant, resulted in many years of spiritual companionship and later a book, *St Silouan the Athonite*, in which Sophrony published the notes of his spiritual father with his own commentary. The Russian peasant Simeon Antonov was born in the village of Shovsk (Tambov province) in 1866. In 1892, after three years of village school and several years of military service, he became a monk on Mount Athos, taking the name of Silouan. While he was not ordained as a priest, he became a spiritual father to monks and lay people who turned to him for advice, in the tradition of the Eastern Christian spiritual directors (elders) whose gift of knowledge of the heart derived from their spiritual insight, not from their status as priests and confessors (Paert, 2010). Silouan's spiritual journey was marked by an unusually profound experience of God's grace and no less profound loss of it that lasted for many years. An analysis of this transition

from initial grace, through the experience of God-forsakenness, to a new gift of God's love, has been made in Father Sophrony's book as well as by other interpreters (Sophrony, 1991, Zacharias, 2012). The words "Keep your mind in Hell and despair not" were the words that the ascetic, exhausted in his spiritual struggle with demons, received as God's answer to his turmoil:

> It was fifteen years after the Lord had appeared to him, and Silouan was engaged in one of these nocturnal struggles with devils which so tormented him. No matter how he tried, he could not pray with a pure mind. At last he rose from his stool, intending to bow down and worship, when he saw a gigantic devil standing in front of the icon, waiting to be worshipped. Meanwhile the cell filled with other evil spirits. Father Silouan sat down again, and with bowed head and aching heart he prayed,
>
> 'Lord, Thou seest that I desire to pray to Thee with a pure mind but the devils will not let me. Instruct me, what must I do to stop them hindering me?'
>
> And in his soul he heard,
>
> 'The proud always suffer from devils.'
>
> 'Lord', said Silouan, 'teach me what I must do that my soul may become humble.'
>
> Once more, his heart heard God's answer,
>
> 'Keep thy mind in hell, and despair not.'
>
> ARCHIMANDRITE SOPHRONY, 1991, 42

The macrocosmic universalist vision is maintained through the constant struggle of the ascetic with his own passions that represent the world, and with pessimism and despair that arise when one realizes the gap between the vision of Christ and the wretched state of humanity. The words revealed to St Silouan "seem indeed paradoxical, even contradictory: after all Dante saw written on the lintel of Hell the words *Lasciate ogni Speranza voi ch'entate* – 'Leave behind all hope, you who enter' – for Hell is a place devoid of hope, a place of despair. To be in hell and not to despair: how could that be?" (Louth, 2015, 309)

There are two levels: the first is personal, ascetic; concerning the state of fallen humanity. To keep the mind in hell indicates a despair for one's own salvation. St Silouan, who for many years followed strict monastic rules and prayed for many hours, experienced a profound sense of God-forsakenness, especially during the years when initial grace left him. Being compared to the 'dark night of the soul' by St Johns of the Cross (Florovsky, 1958) and to the western theology of hope (Mainardi, 2012), Silouan's experience reflected the pattern of the Orthodox ascetic effort. While the sense of being abandoned

by God took a heavy toll on the ascetic's psychology, Father Sophrony distinguishes between "blessed despair" and "ungodly despair." The "blessed despair" is a necessary phase in the development of the ascetic, when he or she learns to stand on his/her own feet and withstand the spiritual struggle. "My profound conviction is that if you – this goes for everybody – do not live through these ordeals [:] poverty, humiliations, perhaps even hunger, utter abandonment by everybody – by men and even by God too … you will never know divine love." (Sophrony, 2016: 219)

The second meaning of keeping one's mind in Hell is universal, which "flowed from the sense of abandonment embraced in praying for the whole Adam" (Louth, 2015: 309). In both Silouan's and Sophrony's thought the tragedy of humanity began with Adam's fall from Paradise. "By opting for knowledge of evil – in other words, by existentially associating with evil, by savouring evil – Adam inevitably broke with God … His sin was to doubt God, to seek to determine his own life independently of God, even apart from Him, after the pattern of Lucifer. Here lies the essence of Adam's sin – it was a movement towards self-divinization.' (Sophrony, 1977: 37) The prayer for the 'whole Adam,' that is for the whole of humanity, is a prayer for the tragedy of humanity, which an ascetic experiences in his heart as his own.

This universal aspect of "Keep your mind in hell" is also contextual, historical. As human beings who are born and live in history, we cannot separate our being in time and our place in society from our spiritual journey in which the relationship with God develops. God speaks to us in time, even though He is outside of time.

St Silouan did not write specifically about his attitude to historical events. He left Russia before the Revolution and had no interest in discussing political events and reading newspapers. A dramatic event in 1913 when the Russian monastic community on Athos was torn by debates over whether God is present in His name (the monastic "Name Glorifiers" movement) had a profound effect on him (Kenworthy, 2020). It resulted in the expulsion of 600 monks by force on the order of the Tsar, and he encountered rage and enmity among his fellow monks who opposed everyone who did not take sides (Sophrony, 1991: 93).

Father Sophrony's theology is inseparable from his personal experience of living through two world wars, the Revolution, and emigration, and listening to people who had shared with him their stories of suffering. "Empires crumble before our eyes, millions of people die of hunger, of illness. Where are You who created us?" he asked God. Father Sophrony was preoccupied with the suffering of the world during two world wars. As a monk on Athos he saw the Second World War unfolding, met soldiers and officers, including Nazi officers, and

developed the unusual position of not taking sides in the war. This position would later cost him expulsion from Mount Athos, and it was a position which some Orthodox theologians, such as Vladimir Lossky, were not able to take. He asked people during confession about their forgotten sin: wishing death to the enemy. Banev writes "His argument is the recognition of the suffering – physical and spiritual – of all sides in every conflict" (Banev 2012: 102). This position is close to but also different from the one proposed by Volf, in that the lines between the 'victim' and 'perpetrator' are blurred.

Father Sophrony, whose brother and sister were living in Soviet Russia, was too well aware of the wrongdoings of communism. The communist regime, in St Sophrony's view, led to the tragic loss of theological and ascetic culture, the results of which he observed when he met people who came to his community after the so-called church revival of the 1990s. Ascetic culture for him was only possible through the presence of Christians actively living the life of prayer and struggle with passions under the guidance of spiritual elders. This was a kind of blood vessel of the church as it helped to maintain the spiritual health of the church.

But it was not only communism which led to the erosion of this culture. Father Sophrony was critical of the western world after the Second World War, characterized by anti-colonial movements, secularism, and student revolutions. He pointed out that fighters for human rights and liberation of the oppressed were often motivated by the call of the gospel not to despise the 'small ones' (Mat 18:10). However, he argued, every struggle, even for the right cause, is associated with violence and has the tendency to turn into a totalitarian regime. Social domination and violence are at the root of the political history of humanity.

This radical interpretation of history brings into focus the human person as the subject of both theological reflection and spiritual transformation. Social and political life are not primary but secondary, a reflection of the moral and spiritual state of humanity. Visible historical events are symptoms of the spiritual illness or health of society. In this sense, the main focus is on the correct organisation of one's own and communal spiritual life, which father Sophrony tried to achieve in the form of his community in Essex. For him, life in Christ was an "expanded being, without borders" (Sophrony, 2007: 67). The model of the monastic community was the model of the world, where people of different nationalities learned to live as one family, as brothers and sisters, because learning to live with one person teaches one to live with the whole of humanity. According to this universal, macrocosmic vision, language and ethnic difference appeared as 'little things.' In practice, the differences are overcome by

using different languages in the liturgy, and monks and nuns learning foreign languages to communicate with each other and read theology. Any expression of nationalism diminishes the vision of humanity as the 'whole Adam.' 'If you downgrade Christ to the level of nationality, you must know that you are in darkness. We can see the realities of life which separate us, but these divisions can be overcome by human effort, while the awareness of Christ as God is given by the Holy Spirit" (Sophrony, 2007: 53).

However, for St Silouan, who stood at the meeting place of despair and hope, the two are linked in the way some existentialist philosophers linked them: one is not possible without the other. This can be interpreted theologically as the way of the Cross, the kenotic self-emptying of Christ and, in Eastern Christian theology, as Christ's descent into Hell (Zacharias, 2006). "Man will never have full knowledge of the mystery of Christ if he, too, has not been through Hell." (Zacharias, 2006, 71) As the resurrected Christ triumphs only after his going down to Hades, the achievement of the authentic virtue of hope is not possible without plunging into the depths of personal and existential despair. The necessity of the downward movement of kenosis and humility in the ascetic life is a predicament on which the upward movement towards salvation is based. Saint Silouan, writes Father Sophrony "condemned himself to hell, and then all condemnation of other people disappeared and there remained only compassion." (Sophrony, 2015: 36).

3.2 *"Despair Not" in the Music of Arvo Pärt*

Both the personal and universal aspects of "Keep your mind in Hell and despair not" can be illustrated by turning to the music of Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. He grew up during the Second Word War when Estonia was torn apart by the rival dictatorships of Hitler and Stalin. He mentions that his uncles found themselves on the opposite sides of the warring dictators. "One member of my family had been recruited by the Russian army and had to undergo the ordeal of a German concentration camp, while another, who had to serve in the German army experienced the same thing on the other side" (Restagno et al., 2012:4). As a young composer in Soviet Estonia, he wrote music that won him awards from Soviet masters and guaranteed lifetime privileges as a member of the Union of Composers, but his experiments with the "western" twelve-tone music, dodecaphony, and collage techniques put him into the category of a musical dissident. The first symphonic composition, "Nekrolog" ("Obituary," 1960) was dedicated to the victims of the holocaust in Estonia. Dedicating modernist works to victims of the Second World War was a clever device used by other composers in the socialist block to smuggle serialist techniques under

the watchful eye of the communist censors, yet it did not spare Pärt's dodecaphonic work from the outrage of the Soviet music censors.[1] Implicitly, however, the work had a larger significance as "an obituary to the world" which he perceived in tragic tones (Pärt, 2020). While the Soviet authorities kicked up a great fuss about the victims of Nazism, the fate of the numerous victims of the Stalinist purges and the Gulag, including Estonian deportees, was left in silence. As Pärt was only 18 when Stalin died, and as he had not experienced the Stalinist repression, he belonged to a generation that was spared the terror and memories of trauma (Restagno, 2012, 7–8).

While pain and trauma may have been hidden from him, the composer personally experienced the pressure of the communist system on artistic freedom. Yet, as anger and protest were sources that informed much of the New Music of the postwar decades, Pärt searched for a way out of the modernist paradigm of atonal music. It is symbolic that the end of the atonal period of the Estonian composer was marked by the oeuvre that made an explicit faith statement, namely "Credo" (1968) in which, during the opening chords based on Bach's Prelude in C-major, the choir sings "Credo in Jesus Christus." What unfolds in this powerful musical piece can be understood as an illustration of "Keep your mind in hell." The work is divided into three parts, with two outer parts structured around Bach's Prelude. The statement of faith framed by the lyrical chords of the Prelude played on the piano is followed by the choir singing in Latin the verses from St Matthew's Gospel: "Ye have heard that it has been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." The lyrical opening turns into an atonal cacophony that is based on the purposeful deconstruction of the musical structure of Bach's Prelude. The Prelude's melody is played backwards using the sequences of fifths, allowing for an "incremental transition from the innocence and purity of C-major into the central image of chaos and disintegration represented by antithesis of atonality, serialism" (Quinn, 2000: 17). In the middle part of the work, Bach's Prelude is played backward from bar 23 to its beginning. The retrograde playing of the Prelude is a mark of Christ's antithesis, and can be interpreted as devilish and Satanic music. In medieval and folk cultures, the contract with evil forces often included reading prayers backward. The culmination of the piece is reached with the choir shouting the words "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" and recedes when the words of Christ are sung: "But I say unto you, resist no evil." During this final part, tonality returns ever more powerfully, even though it is occasionally pierced

1 Hendrik Penderecki managed to fool the authorities about his experimental piece called 8'37" when the work was entitled "Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima" (Ross, 2009, 507).

by the atonal chords that seem to be disappearing like the last remains of the night as the sun rises.

The "Credo" was first performed in Tallinn in 1968, the year when Khrushchev sent the tanks into Czechoslovakia to suppress the Prague Spring, and the effect upon listeners was stunning: some people described it as a cultural shock. The ideological program of "Credo" placed the commandment of non-violent resistance into the center of the work. The devilish cacophony that accompanied the words "eye for an eye" powerfully expressed the composer's belief in the catastrophic consequences of retaliation and mimetic violence that made harmony and bliss impossible. The powerful effect of the performance on listeners, many of whom described it as the most important cultural event of 1968, and the Christian content of the piece, could not go unnoticed by the authorities, who no longer viewed Pärt as a loyal member of the Union of Soviet Composers (Milline teos, 1968: 8). Whether or not the work can be read as a statement of faith or a criticism of communist politics, one thing was certain: it marked the end of the modernist period in Pärt's musical development and signified the beginning of a profound spiritual search, the expression of which was found in a new style of *tintinnabuli* (from Latin 'little bell').

Taking Adorno's dictum "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," Robert Sholl interprets Pärt's discovery of the *tintinnabuli* method as an answer to the world in which hope has ho hope (Sholl, 2012: 151). *Tintinnabuli* was a musical technique invented by the composer in the mid-1970s after years of studying medieval music and Gregorian chant. Trying to get away from the twelve-tone principles of composition but not returning to romantic styles of tonal music, the composer found a musical language that was based on the use of two voices, the triad T-voice and 'melodic' M-voice, the relationship between which is very strictly structured. According to Sholl the modernist obsession with dissonance "was a symptom of the way in which (socially responsible) art reflected disenchantment and an obsession with death that led straight to the gas chambers" (Sholl, 2012: 152). Tonality and melody, aestheticization of death as in the works of great German or Austrian composers, were expressing a false metaphysics of hope that was no longer there (Sholl, 2012: 152). *Tintinnabuli* stood between consonance and dissonance, providing a musical expression of the dialogue between painful remembrance and utopian hope, and promising the possibility of fulfilment, salvation and the restoration of hope. In a word, *tintinnabuli* is the musical interpretation of Silouan's "Keep your mind in hell and despair not."

As his encounter with Orthodoxy took place in the 1970s, Pärt read the writings of St Silouan before he emigrated from the Soviet Union. Meeting Archimandrite Sophrony in person and finding a spiritual home in the

monastery that the starets founded led to a number of works that were directly influenced by Slavic Orthodox spirituality in general, and St Silouan's writings in particular (*St Silouan's Song*, 1991, *Kanon Pokaianen*, 1997, *Adam's Lament*, 2010). *Adam's Lament* (2010) is based on a section of St Silouan's book, a meditation on the theme of Adam's fall from paradise. The text of the lament is constructed as Adam's prayer and a dialogue between Adam and his children. The grief of Adam after being banished from paradise was not only over the loss of grace and communion with God, but also his sense of compunction at the result of his personal sin. "Adam knew great grief when he was banished from paradise but when he saw he saw his son Abel slain by Cain his brother, Adam's grief was even heavier. His soul was heavy, and he lamented and thought. "People and nations will descend from me, and multiply, and suffering will be their lot, and they will live in enmity and seek to slay one another." The première of *Adam's Lament* took place in Istanbul, in the church of St Irene, where an orchestra from Istanbul and a choir from Estonia performed the new musical opus in 2010, the year that both Tallinn and Istanbul held the title of cultural capitals of Europe.

In his music, Pärt expressed "the theory of St Silouan's maxim" (Zacharias, 2006). Ascent is not possible without descent, rebirth without sacrifice. The naked truth of "Keep your mind in Hell and despair not" informs the creative approach of the composer who said, "It is always a beautiful time when you are at an utter loss: when you seek for almost nothing. First of all, you must make yourself nothing. There must be silence. You must make peace with your powerlessness, and that which is then given is like a gift" (Pärt, 2020b) As the search for a way out of the modernist impasse took years and caused deep psychological suffering, Pärt's words strike us as paradoxical: to be filled one first has to become empty, impoverished, taking the position of a beggar (Hyde, 2012: 25). The kenotic act of emptying oneself – an act that has nothing artificial or pretentious in it – is the way of following Christ to Golgotha and to the infernal regions of Hell.

Emigrating to the West in 1981, Pärt realized with surprise that while modernist artists in the Soviet Union directed their anger against communism, the Western proponents of New Music fought against capitalism. His distancing from New Music, which carried with itself the germs of conflict and hidden aggressiveness, reflected his personal belief that to change the world was only possible from within, not from without (Restagno, 2012: 22). The microcosm of the person is linked with the macrocosm of humanity. It is significant that the downward movement of repentance as in *Miserere* and *Passio* "emanates from a single person, always in the first person singular, an 'I' as in the 'I' form of a literary work." In *Passio*, four, and in *Miserere*, five voices sing the part of the Evangelist, since "everything comes from the same person."

4 Conclusion

To what extent does the theology of 'non-despair' of St Silouan and St Sophrony provide a response to the conundrum of Estonian Orthodoxy? And, more generally, how does this theology respond to human tragedies of the 20th century? The first and foremost is the personal-ascetic level: reconciliation is only possible through an act of personal repentance, kenotic self-emptying, and condemnation of oneself to Hell. The ascetic downward movement is a prerequisite for following Christ, who descended into Hell to save sinners, and emptied himself on the Cross. The act of kenotic humility is not a singular act of conversion but a life-long process that unfolds and deepens with every step that one takes whilst mourning one's own separation from God. Through this process one learns to love and pray for the rest of humanity, including one's enemies. Thus reconciliation is not an outward but inward process that begins and ends in a person's heart. Unlike Volf's imaginary dialogues with his offender, an Orthodox ascetic converses with God asking Him for forgiveness of his own sins and, through this, he is able to be reconciled with his enemies and pray for them.

Both Rambo and Volf emphasize the necessity of the formation of a new community and new solidarity between those who bear the wounds and their offenders. In his suggestion regarding the solidarity of all, Volf's thought is close to St Silouan's, whose universal vision of humanity as Adam's children did not distinguish between wrongdoers and victims but included everyone in a single kinship, the whole Adam. Problems of justice and responsibility cannot be resolved through violence, even in milder forms of legally justified coercion. Archimandrite Sophrony shunned the taking of sides, even under conditions of warfare during the Second World War, and he demanded that people confess the sin of wishing death for their enemies in war. He did not side with post-Second World War liberation theology and regarded politics as hypocritical and generating mimetic violence. Withdrawal from social action and political theology, however, can also be regarded as a political stance in a world riveted by ideologies and social activism. Perhaps the theology of the Athonite ascetics cannot be used as a basis for developing an Orthodox social ethics and a kind of theological transitional justice, but this theology reflects a sense of deep awareness of human fallibility whilst opening an eschatological horizon of salvation.

As the story of Orthodoxy in 20th century Estonia has demonstrated, the wounds that are being exposed in the ecclesiastical conflict of the late 20th century are multiple: historical wounds overlie the fresher ones, caused by recent experiences of separation and hostility. Evoking the wounds of the past

and demanding justice for the offence committed against members of one's own ethnic group is often accompanied by mistreatment of ethnic minorities within one's own society. As Robert Schreiter has pointed out, nationalism, once a source of resistance, survival, and liberation, can turn into the basis for a return to authoritarian rule (Schreiter, 2019). In order to avoid this danger, instead of rallying behind the nationalist political agenda, theologians and church leaders should lead the public process of reflection and self-disclosure, adopting the "metanoiain search of deep transformation" (Schreiter, 2019). This metanoian search that begins from inwardness and prayer guides a missionary on the path of humility that opens unlimited resources for accepting into one's heart pain and suffering of all, nourishing compassion and ability to serve those in need and pray for the world.

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摘要

爱沙尼亚东正教的故事，经常通过集体创伤的叙述讲述，不是同质、没有争议的。两个东正教社群在今爱沙尼亚共存，每个社群都坚持排他性规范的合法性；对过去持有不同的看法；过渡时期司法工作的不完整；政治合作上鲜为人知的故事，这些不可调和的分歧似乎是挑战基督教合一的理想。为了处理这些尚未解决的创伤性的过去，本文将转向 20 世纪东正教圣徒的苦行神学：圣西卢安（1866–1938 年）和圣索夫罗尼·萨哈罗夫（1896–1993 年），以及爱沙尼亚作曲家阿尔沃·佩尔特（生于1935 年）的音乐创作。　文章认为，这些东正教的苦行家为在受伤世界中的基督教使命提供了重要视角。

Resumen

La historia de la ortodoxia estonia, a menudo relatada a través de la descripción del trauma colectivo, no es ni homogénea ni exenta de cuestionamientos. La coexistencia de dos comunidades ortodoxas en la Estonia presente, cada una de ellas insistiendo en la legitimidad canónica exclusiva, y teniendo diferentes puntos de vista sobre el pasado, el trabajo incompleto de la justicia transicional, y la historia no dicha sobre la colaboración política parecen ser diferencias irreconciliables que desafían los ideales de unidad cristiana. Para tratar estos problemas no resueltos de un pasado traumático,

este trabajo consultará la teología ascética de los santos ortodoxos del siglo veinte: San Silouan (1866–1938) y San Sophrony Sakharov (1896–1993) y a las obras musicales del compositor estonio Arvo Pärt (b. 1935). El articulo argumenta que el acercamiento a estos ascéticos ortodoxos provee una perspectiva importante sobre la misión cristiana en un mundo herido.