

Research Article

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Ivan Arkadievich Lagovsky as a Christian Pedagogue

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ABSTRACT: This paper looks at Ivan Arkadievich Lagovsky's contribution to Christian pedagogics in the Russian emigration. The author draws attention to the fact that Lagovsky's contribution is tightly bound up with the Russian Student Christian Movement (RSCM), which was a sort of laboratory for his development of new methods and forms of pedagogy. Lagovsky was V. V. Zenkovsky's primary aid at the latter's Office for the Teaching of Religion in Paris; Lagovsky organized pedagogical meetings and seminars, gave papers, and coordinated the RSCM's work with children. After Lagovsky's move to Estonia, he established the RSCM's work with children in the Baltics. Lagovsky's primary contribution in terms of the theory of pedagogy was his development of V. V. Zenkovsky's idea of a "holistic (integral) school". Lagovsky stresses that such a holistic approach may be used not only in religious, but also in anti-religious schools (such as in Soviet Russia), and that in the case of religious schools, "holistic" refers not to the degree to which secular and religious subjects are integrated or to the amount of religious content, per se, but to the rethinking of the fundamental mechanism of pedagogy, itself. Lagovsky believed that attention to the spiritual life of the pupil, his spiritual growth, and the event of his meeting with Christ must be the primary focus of Christian pedagogy, for which purpose it is necessary to take into account the spiritual state of contemporary youth, give attention to physical education understood as the "religious culture of the body", and development of pupils' creative abilities and integration with culture. The paper covers those religious-philosophical and theological ideas of Lagovsky, which aid the reader to better understand his theory of

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pedagogy, including: an Orthodox Christian philosophy of embodiment, the theology of culture, and “realism” in theology. Particular attention is given to the importance not only of conversations about Christ but also of witness to Christ. Such a witness was, in Lagovsky’s life, his achievement of martyrdom: he was arrested by the NKVD in Estonia and executed by firing squad. In 2012 he was canonized as a new martyr.

KEYWORDS: theology, Christian pedagogy, V. V. Zenkovsky, Russian Student Christian Movement, Russian diaspora

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Ivan Arkadievich Lagovsky (1889–1941) found his calling and unique gift within the Russian Student Christian Movement (RSCM). When he joined the RSCM in 1924, Lagovsky had managed to graduate from the Kiev Spiritual Academy (1913), work as a teacher in Yekaterinoslav, and become a promising student at the Pedagogical Institute in Prague, where he was noticed by V. V. Zenkovsky, who immediately involved him in pedagogical work by inviting him to join in the organization of an Office for Pedagogy and asking him to study current trends in Soviet pedagogy. At the same time, Lagovsky joined the Prague RSCM circle and became a spiritual child of Fr. Sergei Bulgakov. Upon completing his education at the Prague Institute in 1926, Ivan Arkadievich was asked, by V. V. Zenkovsky, to move to Paris, where he became Secretary of the RSCM and a teacher at St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute. Lagovsky’s pedagogical activity developed within a very particular sphere, inside the life of the RSCM Movement, which was characterized by all the inspiration of the new movement, the experience of unification around the eucharistic chalice as the continuation of the “Prague Pentecost” that jump-started the RSCM abroad, and its ideas about “making life ecclesial” and the creation of an Orthodox culture. These tasks were directly understood as the tasks of every member of the Movement, within an atmosphere of stringent intellectual discussion about the Movement’s developmental vector and forms for its embodiment. Within the RSCM, pedagogical work became one of his many ministries, along with secretarial work (from 1926 at the Central Office, and from 1934 in the Baltics, where he served in the creation of the RSCM amongst rural youth), publishing the RSCM Journal,

constantly reviewing for the Movement the situation of the Church, which was constantly repressed in Soviet Russia, as well as leading a liturgical circle. Despite all these responsibilities, church pedagogical work became one of Lagovsky's primary focuses.

Ivan Lagovsky's Pedagogical Work

In 1927, V. V. Zenkovsky created the Office for the Teaching of Religion for the coordination of all the pedagogical work at St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute and within the RSCM, as well as for the development of teaching methodology. Lagovsky quickly assumed the role of deputy in these efforts. Originally intended as an organization closely affiliated with St. Sergius Institute, at which Lagovsky served as Assistant to the Head of Psychology and Pedagogy and taught Old Testament¹), the Office for the Teaching of Religion occupied premises not far from the Institute and began to pull together a pedagogical library, which was available for use by staff and students, alike. As Zenkovsky recalled, however, "during the first year of work it was already clear that the laboratory which Lagovsky and I might have used for methodological study was simply the Movement, and nothing more" [*Zenkovsky 2014, 131*]. Thus, in 1928, the Office moved to the RSCM Headquarters (Montparnasse 10) and focussed its work on forms, methods and organization of pedagogical work within the Movement. Gradually it became clear that the most effective forms of work were the organization of groups of boys and girls (troops, scout groups²), schools that met on Sundays and Thursdays (twice per week), and RSCM summer camps, that proved the most effective and continue to this day. In addition to the direct organization of work, the Office published the "Bulletin of the Office for the Teaching of Religion" and an almanac, entitled "Questions on Religious Education and Upbringing". It regularly held meetings on religious pedagogics (and later special pedagogical conferences), organized seminars on religious teaching at RSCM congresses, and was always actively engaged in research. Notable examples of its research included: surveys with the goal of determining the spiritual

1. For more detail about Lagovsky's teaching at St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute, see: [*Viktorova*].

2. Scouts who were boys were called "Vitiazī", which is probably best translated as "Folk Heros", "Warriors", or "Knights". Girls were referred to as "Druzhenitsy", which is just the feminine form for a friendly patrol, or

one who keeps watch. For the purpose of this article and given difficulties of understanding in translation, I have used the single word, "scout" to indicate troop members of both sexes. While some cultural connotations are thereby lost, the flow and primary meaning of the text is, I believe, better maintained in this fashion. — *Translator's note.*

profile of contemporary youth; the study of contemporary pedagogics and psychology, with special focus on Christian methods of work with children, collating bibliographic material and endeavouring to apply best practice from others' findings and achievements; and the study of pedagogy in Soviet Russia and its systematically anti-religious campaign, on which Lagovsky was the leading expert. Lagovsky made a summary of all the materials available to him from Soviet periodicals, and thought hard about what good might be extracted from the terrible experiment, so as to better organize and fortify the responding battle against atheism and bring up young people who might one day be able to help Russia free herself from the yoke of communism and atheism³.

Ivan Arkadieovich does not only appear to have been a scholar and methodologist who stands in background at the Office, developing delicate strategies and pedagogical schemes. We can see that he also had fellowship with the children; he was personally present right at the heart of the children's movement. In two issues of the 1927 *Journal of the RSCM*, he gives his report on a visit to the first RSCM summer camp for boys, paying close attention to work organized by teachers and questions of organization. But, most importantly, he provides a living portrait of the children's engagement in an interested and loving tone: they did everything themselves — “they pitched their own tents, put down the floors in their own quarters, and made their own tables and benches” [*Lagovsky 1927a, 14*]; they outfitted the church themselves, choosing “a parish council and its chairman, who were entrusted with close care over the church” [*Lagovsky 1927a, 15*]. Lagovsky describes how they made their confessions (many for the first time) and received communion, and how they sang Russian songs “so harmoniously, ruefully and warm-heartedly, that a peasant wandering past on his way to do a household errand might have heard their singing, stopped in wonder and forgotten his errand, altogether” [*Lagovsky 1927b, 16*]. Zenkovsky recalls that in 1932–1933, as they were discussing work with teens, Ivan Arkadieovich, “with his usual fervour, threw himself headlong into work with the older boys with firm hope that he could fully link these scouts with the Movement” [*Zenkovsky 2014, 201*]. In describing the schismatic conflict between scout leader N. F. Feodorov and the RSCM, Zenkovsky notes that if Lagovsky had not already moved to Estonia but had still been in Paris “when the

3. For more details on the work of the Office for the Teaching of Religion, please see: [*Gutner 2023, 273–280*].

conflict flared up, then not all of the older scouts would have left with Feodorov” [*Zenkovsky 2014, 208*].

In 1933, Lagovsky moved to Estonia, the homeland of his wife, Tamara Pavlovna Lagovskaya (maiden name Bezhanitskaya), to take up the role of RSCM Secretary in the Baltics. There, he was required to deal with many details of the Movement’s teaching work in the Baltics, up to and including the tiniest organizational details. Irina Paert notes that Ivan Arkadievich played an important role, for instance, in the organizing the Movement’s kindergartens, at which women who were RSCM members worked with children⁴. At the same time, Lagovsky and his wife were among the primary organizers of children’s camps in Estonia. We find a description of the creative atmosphere of freedom harmoniously entwined with disciplinary requirements at one such camp in the text of a letter from Lagovsky to A. V. Morozov, dated 17 July, 1936. This is how he describes the opening festivities at the camp, which happened to occur during pouring rain and hail:

So we celebrated during the pouring rain and hail. At the end I gave a speech expressing hope that the camp, having begun in such an unusual and giddy fashion, would continue as one of the best. “Scouts, recall our moto!”... and the children happily answered, “For the faith, and for truth!” “Quick, run back and dry off!” Off they ran, under the pouring rain and hail. It was so much fun. They laughed so much looking at each other and seeing that each person was like a living source of water... it made for the best camp opening yet. And afterwards... all the sweaters, trousers and shirts hung out on clothes lines... While the campers waited for their uniforms to dry, they put on an unexpectedly hilarious mascaared, in costume. By evening, the irons were at work, and our girls rescued both their own beauty, and that of the boys. The opening wasn’t deceptive — the camp really did come off wonderfully [*Letters, 227*].

Recollections of Lagovsky from one of his girl scouts have also been preserved. This is what she writes:

Ivan Arkadievich, Secretary for the Baltics and sent to us from Paris, was his own man. Although he lived in Tartu, he often came to us in Tallin and directed our

4. See: “In its work with pre-schoolers, the RSCM sought to combine efforts with the Lutheran organization called “Society for Help in the Baltics” (“obshchestvo pribaltiiskoi pomoshchi”), which ran Russian-speaking kindergartens in poor regions of Estonia. Lagovsky met with the Society’s leadership

in 1939 and 1940, and discussed plans for two-year courses which would prepare teachers for work at the kindergartens. It was presumed that some women who were RSCM members would become students of these courses, which were due to open in July-Aug 1940” [*Paert, 346–347*].

work here. He was very interested in the young people and in the life of our scout troop. He knew most of us by name. I can still see his stooped figure sitting among us, his long arms, always gesticulating, and hear his kind stutter, which did not bother us at all. He spoke often and for a long time, driving home truths that were still inaccessible to us then. We even argued with him — while trying to prove something to us he would get angry and come at us with new arguments. It was all very interesting and instructive [*Plyukhanova*, 152].

M.B. Plyukhanova also notes the atmosphere of internal freedom which was characteristic of the Movement, in which there was not

any sanctimony or pressure from above. <...> Everyone could find his place in our society, and everyone felt at ease before the leadership... or I should better say, before the voluntary and self-sacrificial care of our leaders [*Plyukhanova*, 153].

Testimonies similar to this one make it possible for I. Paert to speak of the primary pedagogical method in the Estonian RSCM as “absence of pressure and manipulative indoctrination upon the children and teenagers” [*Paert*, 349]; work was structured “around common activity, egalitarian organization, common interest, and fellowship” [*Paert*, 348].

A Christian Pedagogical Theory

Lagovsky’s contribution to Christian pedagogical theory extends and develops various aspects of Zenkovsky’s thought. Zenkovsky was his mentor and the founder not only of the Office for the Teaching of Religion, but of a whole new concept of “religious pedagogy”⁵, along with its attempt to create the basis for an Orthodox Christian system for nurturing children in the context of a holistic Christian school, the primary goal of which was the spiritual nurture and growth of each child in such a way as to help the child reveal the image of God within. Unlike his mentor, Lagovsky did not think up a holistic pedagogical

5. This developmental vector in pedagogical thought was called “religious”, as opposed to “naturalistic” (Soviet pedagogy) or “idealist” (S.I. Gnessen), by Zenkovsky, himself, in his work entitled “Russian Pedagogy in the 20th Century” (“Russkaia pedagogika v XX veke”); he considered himself, Lagovsky, and various other members of the Office for the Teaching of Pedagogy (including Fr. Sergei Chetverikov, L.A. Zander,

A.S. Chetverikov, Fr. Nikolay Afanasiev, and S.S. Shidlovskaya-Kulomzina) to be representatives of this developmental vector [*Zenkovsky 1960*, 50]. For more detail on Fr. Vasily Zenkovsky’s theory of pedagogy and the movement he created, please see: [*Divnogortseva; Lyuban; Lychkovskaya; Masharova, Sakharov, Sakharova; Ramazanova, Togailbayeva et. al.*].

system. He was more a practitioner, though some questions of theory which arose in the course of practical work with children and teachers are thoroughly developed in articles, which were published abroad, in the RSCM Journal.

In a jointly-written introduction to the almanac they published, entitled “Questions of religious upbringing and education”, Zenkovsky and Lagovsky connect the necessity to develop new pedagogical methods and the search for these methods primarily with the fact that “children, not only in Russia but even in the emigration, are so different from those of previous generations” [*Zenkovsky, Lagovsky*, 3] that previous methods, both in school and at home, have become ineffective. “Our current generation of youth belong to a new time and bear the whole burden of this age upon themselves, internally working upon all the ensuing tangled spiritual difficulties” [*Zenkovsky, Lagovsky*, 4]. The attempt to paint a spiritual portrait of modern youth which captured all the generational specifics of those pupils to whom teachers’ efforts in the emigration were directed, was one of the theoretical tasks that the Office for the Teaching of Religion (OTR) posed for itself. Ivan Arkadievich explores this theoretical task in a number of his essays. He takes a close look at Soviet youth, trying to extract a coherent picture through the lens of the dehumanizing mechanism of Soviet atheistic propaganda affecting the young people. He tries to see growth in their young lives, which are vivacious despite the onslaught of the reigning petty ideology aimed at their spiritual death. He also makes a careful study of the effects of atheistic propaganda, for without doing so there was no way to assist the religious rebirth of the future Russia⁶. He finds that within the young people “a search for new paths is beginning. The will to overcome the desperation brought on by communistic nonsense is, evidently, alive and growing” [*Lagovsky 1930*, 18]. His 1934 essay “Russian youth here and there” (“Russkaia molodezh’ zdes’ i tam”) is aimed at painting just such a spiritual portrait. Lagovsky shifts the primary focus from “denationalization”⁷, which was unavoidably thrust before Russians in the emigration, to “dechristianization”, which is related to: the discontinuity caused from loss of “the strongest of human ties and bonds” (homeland, family, way of life) [*Lagovsky 1934*, 9]; with direct

6. See: [*Lagovsky 1927c, Lagovsky 1928b*].

7. On the struggle of emigrant pedagogy with the problem of denationalization and the role of church organizations, and in particular the RSCM, in it, see: [*White, 140*].

experience of life under harsh conditions of physical labour and the battle for survival, and with “radicalism in terms of social ethics” [Lagovsky 1934, 13]; with “the disappearance of a sense of eternity” [Lagovsky 1934, 15]; and with “the spiritualization of all technology” [Lagovsky 1934, 16]. But no matter how dechristianized and impoverished our young people are, it is precisely in them that “meaningful, chaotic life-force” is found [Lagovsky 1934, 16], thus we must harness it, because it contains our future: “paraphrasing the words of one of Dostoyevsky’s heroes, we might say that the focus of the battle between God and the devil happens in the hearts of our youth” [Lagovsky 1930, 18]⁸. B. V. Plyukhanov records the words of Lagovsky at the second RSCM Congress in the Baltics (1929): “Our youth, like the lame man (from John chapter 5), are searching for Christ and reaching out to him. We need to use every possible means to help them reach Christ” [Plyukhanov, 98].

One of the principle points of Zenkovsky’s pedagogical system was the “issue of the holistic school” [Zenkovsky 1960, 37] as a school “with ecclesial properties” (“otserkovlennaya”) — living after the manner of the Church; it was an both an ideal indicating the vector for development and the general ideal that life should be lived as “ecclesial”⁹. Lagovsky laid out his contribution to the development of a “holistic pedagogical system” and the “holistic school” in a 1929 article entitled “Urgent Things” (“Neotlozhnoe”). Ivan Arkadieovich begins by noting points of departure that look similar for both religious and anti-religious schools (he tirelessly studies exactly what the anti-religious Soviet experiment is doing with schooling):

The primary and fundamental thing for the holistic school is to awaken and create that force in a person, which organises the integrity (unity) of his life, creating a living and dynamic centre out of which come all his love and hate and within which all manifestations of internal and external life come into holistic and personal creative relationship, are freely chosen or rejected by the person, and distribute themselves hierarchically [I. L. 1929, 1].

Soviet anti-utopia might serve as a lesson of warning to us in the daily creative work and development of a “holistic religious school”, along

8. In the same article, “Global Godlessness (work amongst youth)” (“Mirovoye bezbozhie (Rabota sredi molodezhi)”), Lagovsky notes that Catholic and Protestant societies have already managed to take account of this need in our times and answer it by creating “a

strong religious movement” amongst the youth, while Orthodox societies are still trying to pose the question” [Lagovsky 1930, 18].

9. For more detail, see: [Lychkovskaya 2010, 110–114].

with its ideal. A similar lesson of warning might be gleaned from the experience of pre-revolutionary religious schools, which succeeded only in preparing a child for future religious life and “forming good morals” by focusing only on education, without paying particular attention to the formational process, itself. Bringing religious elements into the educational process (icons, lamps, prayers before lessons, and even religious subject matter) could hardly make a school religious in a holistic fashion. The whole structure and priority of values needed tweaking to produce intended results. Focus needed to be placed not upon the moment of teaching, not on religious upbringing — even all of that must be viewed in an innovative fashion at this point, not as preparation for a religious life, but as the careful and attentive attitude toward the spiritual life which already lives in the child, and to his spiritual life as to

the mysterious conjunction of the fullness of religious, ecclesial experience with my personal response to it as the revelation provided in my unique effort and movement toward the face of Christ, shining through my experience [*I. L. 1929 2*].

In this case, the whole teaching process will be understood as “a mysterious miracle of religious life” [*I. L. 1929, 2*], which considers not only natural factors, but also the hidden work of grace which transforms a person in the course of his personal growth; as

an entirely different quality of spiritual integrity, the basis for a new hierarchy of values and the free recognition and manifestation of active disclosure of one’s faith in life’s achievements as the leading and integrally defining principle of life as a whole [*I. L. 1929, 2*].

Ivan Arkadievich never forgets to advise caution as to the danger of turning the ideal of a holistic school into a search for utopia, which rather than guiding work will only hinder it. In terms of practical pedagogical work, in his essay on “Church and School” (“Tserkov’ i shkola”), which was given at the Religious-pedagogical congress in Rēzekne (Latvia) in 1930, Lagovsky warns of the necessity to maintain realism and remember “about the interactions between the realities of the school environment with the surrounding environment” [*Chronicle, 6*]. At a religious-pedagogical seminar in December 1929, he gives a report on “Family and school” (“sem’ia i shkola”), in which he warns of the possibility of disbalance in the relationship between school and family, in either direction, under prevailing conditions:

It is only proper for a religious school to act as a helping factor, and the primacy of the family must, in any case, be affirmed. For the Christian, the family is a “little church”, and this can never be said of a school. A religious school must first accept the family, as a unit which fits into the school organism [*Protocol 1930, 8*].

Ivan Arkadievich also pays attention to the element of physical education in the school programme, about which he writes in his article on the “Religious culture of the body” (“Religioznaia kul’tura tela”). Lagovsky recalls that a flattened religious consciousness “characterized by rejection of the value of being embodied” is but “an escape into one-sided spiritualism” [*I. L. 1930, 1*]. But the whole person, in the form in which he is known in the Scriptures and in the experience of the Church,

is precisely the unique miracle of the conjoined opposites of spirit and material, the form given once and for all in both spirit and body, as a unique person in which the duality of spirit and material is overcome [*I. L. 1930, 1*].

Thus, the effort of the Christian teacher must be aimed at the living conjunction of soul and body in a particular person, and on the development of that individual person who relates to his or her body with respect, as to the “temple of God”. This approach makes it possible to speak not about “physical education”, as is usual in the tradition of pedagogy, but specifically of a “religious culture of the body”, as is fitting in the context of a holistic religious school. In this context, the issue of the body takes on a new depth, revealing “a whole host of difficult and complex questions”, relating to our recognition and acceptance of embodiment (“for instance the quest of chastity, its meaning and significance, the question of the showing the body’s natural beauty and its animation” in, for instance, rhythm, plasticity and dance; “the task of making use of the body’s potential as, for instance, sport and gymnastics, and creation of ‘beautiful living conditions’, etc.” [*I. L. 1930, 2*]). These questions become not stumbling blocks, but new opportunities for the integral development of the human person.

Another point of central importance in holistic religious education, according to Lagovsky, is heightened attention to the pedagogical function of creativity and art, and to the continuity of teaching with its cultural context and with culture, in general. In his article entitled “Urgent Things” (“Neotlozhnoe”), Lagovsky writes that “organization of the internal world, the ordering of natural chaos, and the maintenance of pure and fresh sources of creativity and the

integrity of a person's soul — these are the 'heart' and soul of the holistic school" [*I.L. 1929, 1*]. Of course the moment of intellectual action upon the child and the formation of his technical abilities should not be left to the side when the programme for such a school is being designed, but the hierarchy of values itself must be different and should be oriented toward attracting the children into a creative process. And we should not forget about the cultural environment and cultural-religious media, without which a holistic school remains but a utopia. We shouldn't forget about our general work of making culture ecclesial, or about the imperial connection between culture and love, without which we will be left with "acculturation" rather than real culture [*I.L. 1929, 1*]. And we should remember, also, the need for a level of culture amongst those who do the teaching. In his report at the Religious-pedagogical conference in 1929, Lagovsky urges, "We must remember that our work comes into contact with authentic culture, and any degree of inauthenticity is a judgement upon us, ourselves" [*Protocol 1929, 8*].

In his posing the question of culture in such a way as to demand creativity not only from the student but also from the teacher, yet another aspect of Lagovsky's particular pedagogical thought becomes clearly visible: he pays attention to the role of the teacher and not only to methodology and pedagogical tasks. If the centre of attention in a holistic school is the spiritual development of the child, then our task is impossible, in principle, if the teachers don't have a spiritual life and personal relationship with God. The primary question for Lagovsky's pedagogy is "how do we help children in their striving toward Christ" [*Lagovsky 1929, 20*]? Thus teaching is understood as witness to Christ, as a humble attempt amidst all the well-recognized imperfection of the teachers, to nevertheless bring children and youth to Christ and "plug them in" to authentic spiritual life and beauty:

We need confessors who will manifest their ideal in action, turning it into the experience of personal life. <...> The magic of a teacher is not in his knowledge but in his experience, in his spiritual beauty, and in those super-sensible currents which flow from him or her [*Lagovsky 1928a, 24*].

Lagovsky calls [teachers] to be like St. Juliana of Lazarevo, who baked bread from weeds called saltbush: "We will distribute our substandard, good-for-nothing bread, and endeavour to enflame the souls of others with the flame in our own souls" [*Plyukhanov, 100–101*]. This requires an environment of freedom in which the "transmission" of

a religious worldview occurs not in some “finished and polished form” [I. L. 1931, 25], but where a student can work it out for himself. It requires not strict teaching of religious doctrine and propositions, but participation in a mysterious meeting between the living pupil and the living Christ.

The Religious-Philosophical and Theological Underpinnings of Lagovsky’s Pedagogy

When speaking about Lagovsky as a thinker, we should note that his pedagogical ideas are but the tip of an iceberg, the foundation of which is the religious-philosophical and theological ideas that he works through in a series of articles published in the *Journal* in the emigration. Here we will look at just a couple examples that may provide Lagovsky’s pedagogy deeper weight and perspective.

His ideas on physical education as “religious culture of the body” come out of a broader Orthodox philosophy of embodiment, which Lagovsky develops in his 1932 article “Salvation and Culture” (“Spasenie i kultura”). In a detailed fashion, he focuses on the problem of the human person as conjunction of body and spirit, “as the miracle and mystery of a unique unmerged connection of two natures” [Lagovsky 1932, 21]. This is related to the fact that the body is in no way equivalent to embodiment as pure materiality, but is, rather, materiality already imbued with form that relates it to the principles of rhythm, beauty, and harmony. For this reason — and only for this reason — we have access to the fulness and joy of being. Therefore, all manifestations of a person’s spiritual life are linked, in a fundamental fashion, to the “function of embodied manifestation” [Lagovsky 1932, 22]. The human spirit

finds spiritual being in images of embodiment and demands further embodied manifestation of these intuitions, ever striving for new solidity of embodiment — in artistic images, in thoughts, in sounds, etc. All creativity, whether artistic or scholarly, the whole culture of creativity both ascends to and flows out of this unavoidable mystery — the mandate for double objectivity (of spirit and material. — *Translator’s note*) [Lagovsky 1932, 22].

Thinking through the question of embodiment is but one aspect of the theology of culture that Lagovsky works through in trying to elucidate his thought about the significance of culture and creativity vis-à-vis religious education. The main theme of “Salvation and Cul-

ture” is the idea that culture is an additional route toward salvation which though perhaps not on par with traditional ascetic “rejection of this world”, is nevertheless “just as much a part of the picture, contains equal power” [*Lagovsky 1932, 25*], and does not stand in opposition to traditional ascetic practice. One-sided asceticism “tempts our mysterious depths, feeding and giving life to itself” [*Lagovsky 1932, 25*], and as a result we end up with nothing but various imitations of real faith: “monasticity”, as opposed to real monks, various inauthentic protective mechanisms that only hinder us from reaching the kingdom, as opposed to helping [*Lagovsky 1932, 25*]. Lagovsky directly links two dangerous roads man uses to ascend to God with creative abilities. These are prayer and repentance. He writes that the culture of creativity (not only ecclesial, but creativity understood in the broadest sense) needs to be understood “with all the weight of religion and its attendant house-keeping responsibilities” [*Lagovsky 1932, 33*]. Creativity should be understood as ecclesial, blessed by the Church, and well-considered as a manifestation of kingly service to Christ in the post-Ascension world. Creativity should be understood as the transformation of the world and as “the force of God’s world-saving grace in man” [*Lagovsky 1932, 33*]. Therefore, anyone who works in the field of creative “wise action” (scholar, artist, poet, and even teacher), “is called to the priestly action of ‘liturgy in the world’ outside of God’s temple” [*Lagovsky 1932, 33*].

In his two-part article from 1937 entitled “Intelligentsia and building the Church” (“Intelligentsiia i sozidanie tserkvi”), Ivan Arkadievich considers the creative labour of the intelligentsia specifically as a type of church ministry. He looks not only at the role of church culture, which is inseparable from “the life of the Church” [*Lagovsky 1937a, 16*], but at culture in general as independent of its religious character, stipulating only that such culture must be authentic within the Divine Economy. Lagovsky believes that it is culture, in particular, which works “with the unenlightened chaotic forces of the spiritual and psychic world of human existence”, “with the depths of our personal and common human underground, and with the depths of human passion” [*Lagovsky 1937b, 10*]. Only the Church can fully enlighten and transform this “ocean of common spiritual and psychic life”, but it is precisely culture which prepares and begins the work of transformation; becoming a live wire for the light of Reason and for grace, culture is an instrument which transforms the world. As such, “the ministry of the intelligentsia, whether they are in the church or not, is a holy and religious ministry and ecclesial, at heart” [*Lagovsky 1937b, 12*].

This makes the task of “bringing culture into the church” even more relevant and urgent, given that without posing this task, all religious pedagogy is only just another utopia:

The unified process of building the Body of Christ and his Church is, on the one hand, the process of striving for personal achievement and holiness, prayer and liturgical life, and on the other hand a process of working toward common enlightenment, bringing grace into the chaotic forces of our spiritual and psychic life, work on the creation of culture which finds its completion and acme in being brought, along with our lives, into the Church [*Lagovsky 1937b, 16*].

Finally, the ideas of holistic pedagogics and the holistic school are themselves, within Lagovsky’s creative contribution, inseparable from his general intuition of the living unity and integrity of being, upon which he expounds in his articles entitled “Dogmatic Experience and Dogmatic Schemes (in judging Fr. Sergei Bulgakov’s teaching)” (“Dogmaticheskii opyt i dogmaticheskie skhemy (k ‘osouzhdeniiu’ ucheniia o. S. Bulgakova)”) and “Returning to our Father’s House (Nominalism and Realism in Theology)” (“Vozvrashchenie v otchii dom (Nominalizm i realizm v Bogoslovii)”. In both articles, Lagovsky polemicizes vis-à-vis those who oppose Fr. Sergei Bulgakov’s sophiology as heresy. Lagovsky carefully considers the theological grounds used by Fr. Sergei’s accusers and finds a propensity for nominalist and “hands-off”, rationalist theology that is at odds with the tradition of the Holy Fathers [*Lagovsky 1935–1936, 33*]. He juxtaposes this position with the “realistic”, down-to-earth, authentic tradition of Scripture and Holy Tradition as the ontology of fullness and joy: “All created being is integral and unified, because it is shot through with the life-creating and ever-flowing rays of the one and ever-flowing life of ‘Divine principles’” [*Lagovsky 1997, 49*]. This sort of theology is dynamic because it lives “the dynamic mystery of the Kingdom of God as unending growth and never ceases, itself, to be growth” [*Lagovsky 1997, 51*], it is plugged into “the bright joy of all patristic and liturgical common feeling” [*Lagovsky 1997, 61*]. Within such a vision, the holistic school is but one instance of that joyful integrity of being in communion with God and self that the authentic teacher, living an authentic spiritual life, brings to the pupil, in helping him to take his own, independent steps toward the fullness of joyful life in Christ.

Martyrdom and Witness

Lagovsky thought continuously about the importance of witness to Christ's teaching not only with his words but with his entire life (without which authentic Christian pedagogy is impossible). One of his ministries in the RSCM was to closely follow processes inside Soviet Russia — not only by following anti-religious propaganda and persecution of the church in the USSR, but also in his relentless attempts to see, through the lens of Soviet reporting, the silent spiritual achievement of those who kept the faith under persecution “the martyrs and confessors who stood firm for the faith”, and “the rank and file disciples of God, who with their widow's mite as confessors, bore witness to the force and truth of Christ's teaching, as sparks lighting up the darkness and harbingers of Resurrection” [*Lagovsky 1931b*, 19]. He considers the “fundamental meaning of martyrdom as witness and proof of readiness to give everything, even death, as living proof of the fact that I do not doubt my faith, whom I serve, or to what I am giving my life” [*Lagovsky 1931a*, 25].

On the 5th of August, 1940, after the Soviet Army entered the Baltics, Ivan Arkadieвич, who was living in Estonia, was arrested by the NKVD in the Soviet state's case against “anti-Soviet activities of the RSCM in Estonia”. Records of his interrogation from the KGB archive show us how firmly and bravely he stood up under questioning. He denies being involved in any armed resistance but calmly admits:

The Movement set as its task the battle against materialism and atheism, attracting youth to the church, and interaction for the development of a religious worldview. The movement was based on principles opposed to those of communism. I consider it important to mention our work was related specifically to the principles of worldview [*Delo RSKhD*, 197].

From interrogation records, quite apart from anything else, we learn details of Lagovsky's pedagogical work in Paris and in the Baltics, its forms and tasks, and of the fact that its anti-Soviet character was related to its goal of “developing programmes and methods for working with children in an anti-materialistic and anti-communist spirit (given that communism is related to godlessness), and with the spread and distribution of such programmes and methods” [*Delo RSKhD*, 210]. Ivan Arkadieвич was executed by firing squad in Leningrad, on 3 July, 1941; the place of his burial is yet unknown. On 11 May, 2012, he was

recognized as a saint and martyr of the Orthodox Church by the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Ivan Arkadievich Lagovsky made an important contribution to Christian pedagogics in the 20th century. His theoretical achievements include: further development of the concept of the holistic Christian school, his work on the physical culture of the body, and his work on the role of creativity in upbringing and education, with the goal of drawing souls towards Christ. His practical achievements include: new forms and methods for working with children developed under the RSCM... and his entire life, which he gave completely to Christ, even unto martyrdom, serving as a witness to Christ not only for his pupils and contemporaries, but also for future generations.

Translated by Georgia Williams

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