

Extracts from *The Spirit, the Soul and the Body*

Archbishop Luka wrote this book in 1946-47 when he was in official favour and had been re-instated as a surgeon. But unlike his book on septic surgery, three editions of which have been published in the USSR, *The Spirit, the Soul and the Body* has never been published in the Soviet Union. According to Mark Popovsky (p. 101) this was "the first example of religious samizdat". The Russian text was published in 1978 by the Foyer Oriental Chrétien in Brussels, and the following extracts are published with their kind permission.

The first extract is taken from Chapter I, entitled "What conclusions may be drawn from the contemporary state of natural science?" (pp. 22-6).

In our time physics has refuted the hypothesis about the existence of some kind of weightless and at the same time absolutely resilient substance - ether - replacing it with the concept of the electromagnetic field. An electromagnetic field is not a substance in the normal mechanical understanding of that word. It possesses neither weight, nor hardness, nor resilience; it does not consist of particles etc. But it does possess energy, and in this context it is useful to look at it as a form of the existence of matter. It arises from the movement and interaction of elementary particles - electrons and others. On the other hand, it does itself act on these particles and under certain known conditions can even create them.

In place of weight, hardness and resilience etc., the electromagnetic field has other characteristics which determine its properties. These characteristics are its size and the direction of the electrical and magnetic forces in different points in space. [..]

It has been established that light is also a form of electromagnetic energy, and electricity has a corpuscular or, as some people wrongly call it, an atomic structure (needless to say, one must not use the word "atom" for these corpuscles, or electrons, of which electricity consists). [..]

The corpuscular theory of electricity is a great achievement of theoretical physics. But it must not, of course, be

said that as a consequence of its corpuscular structure electricity has somehow stopped being energy and has become something material. The physicists do not say that, they only affirm that energy possesses mass, and that mass belongs to some reality - matter. This, of course, is not an identification of energy with matter, and electricity, however close its nature is to matter, remains energy to us, and at that the most important, basic part of atomic energy.

The basis of the physical life of the world became known to us, however, only 300 years ago, at the time of Volt. For thousands of years electricity remained unknown to man.

Only 50 years ago science was enriched by the knowledge of new, extraordinarily important forms of energy - radio waves, infra-red rays, cathode rays, radioactivity and intra-atomic energy. This last energy, great and powerful beyond imagination, lying at the base of all earthly dynamics and giving birth to the inexhaustible and undimmed thermal energy of the sun, became known 300 years later than electricity. [..]

Thirty four per cent of the spectrum of sunlight is invisible to the eye. And only a very insignificant part of that 34 per cent - ultra-red, ultra-violet and infra-red rays - have been researched and have had their basis understood. But how can one object to the assumption, even certainty, that behind the multitudinous Fraunhofer lines many secrets are hidden, many forms of energy unknown to us, perhaps more delicate than electrical energy?

From the material point of view these forms of energy as yet unknown must be particular forms of the existence of matter.

We can make no objection to this, as we believe in the power of science. But if electricity cannot be called matter, but without doubt is energy, into which can be passed particles of matter and by which particles of matter are created - particles of matter having determined mass and physical properties - then do we have the right to suppose that in time forms of the existence of matter (or rather, energy) will be discovered

which by their very characteristics must, with more foundation than electricity, be called semi-material?

The very concept "semi-material" contains within itself the admission of the existence of "non-material".

Where is the basis for rejecting our faith and certain belief in the existence of a purely spiritual energy, which we hold to be the origin and primary source of all physical forms of energy, and thus of matter itself?

What do we imagine this spiritual energy to be?

For us it is the all powerful love of God. Love cannot be confined within itself, for its basic property is the necessity to flow over anyone and anything, and this necessity led to the creation of the world by God. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made: and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth" (Ps. 33:6).

The second extract is taken from Chapter 2, entitled "The heart as the organ of the highest knowledge" (pp. 29-32).

In a far off epoch, when our forebears were in a zoological stage of development, they reacted to any irritation almost exclusively by muscular action which predominated over all other reflex actions. Muscular activity has the closest ties with the activity of the heart and blood vessels. In contemporary civilized man muscular reflexes have been almost reduced to a minimum; changes in the heart's activity, which are linked with these reflexes, have been well preserved . . .

Contemporary civilized man by working on himself learns to hide his muscular reflexes, and only by changes in the activity of the heart can he indicate to us his emotional experience. [. . .]

Let us add to this a few observations: the innervation of the heart is astonishingly rich and complicated. It is all woven in with a net of fibres belonging to the sympathetic nervous system and via it in the closest way connected with the brain in the spine and the head. The whole system of cerebral fibres flows into it from the vagus nerve, via which the many complicated influences of the central nervous system are transmitted to it, and, very probably the centripetal

sensual impulses of the heart to the brain. The functions of the sympathetic and vegetative nervous systems have been little studied and are full of uncertainties, but it is already completely clear that they are very important and many-faceted. And what is especially important for us, these bundles and fibres undoubtedly have a very important role in the physiology of sensitivity.

In this way, our anatomical and physiological knowledge of the heart does not only prevent us thinking, but rather encourages us to think of the heart as the most important organ of feeling, and not just as the central pump of the circulation of the blood.

But Holy Scripture tells us much more about the heart. There is scarcely a page in the Bible without something about the heart, and reading it for the first time one cannot help but notice that the heart is given significance not only as the central organ of feeling, but as the most important organ of knowledge, of thought and as the organ which perceives spiritual realities. More than that: the heart, according to Holy Scripture, is the organ of man's intercourse with God, and therefore it is the organ of the highest knowledge.

[. . .]

Many saints and men of great holiness speak about feeling the presence of God, or rather the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit on the heart. They all felt more or less that which the prophet Jeremiah felt: "But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire . . ." (Jer. 20:9).

Where does this fire come from? Ephraem the Syrian, that great vessel of God's grace, answers us: "The One whom the mind alone cannot comprehend enters the heart and dwells therein; invulnerable, the Holy One abides secure in the heart. The earth praises Him, and the pure heart bears Him within" and, we can add, contemplates Him without eyes according to Christ's words: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God". We read something similar in St John of the Ladder: "Spiritual fire which has come to the heart brings prayer to life: by the raising and bearing to heaven of that prayer, the fire of heaven descends into the chamber of the soul".