

”THE RADIANT BEAUTY”

“Spiritual beauty as the criterion of truth of the Orthodox Church in Pavel Florensky’s ‘ The Pillar and Ground of the Truth’

“The spiritual beauty can only accrue to the ascetic*, the one absolutely pure in heart. Only the ascetic can be transparent so that the radiant beauty of the Trinity God can shine through him.”



“Why is the asceticism necessary? It removes the veil of the sin, makes the heart pure: “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God”. It restores the human being to her origin as the image of God, radiant with beauty. It makes community with God, and uniting with the whole creation possible, prepares the coming of the Holy Spirit, that crowns the ascetic with beauty.” “What characterizes, according to Florensky, the beauty itself? ”Beauty, as a certain manifestation or disclosure of that which is objective, is essentially connected with light, for everything is precisely light. (...) Thus if beauty is precisely manifestation and manifestation is precisely light, then I repeat, beauty is light, and light is beauty. Absolute light is absolutely beautiful. It is Love in its perfection (...).”

Florensky, who worked in the Russian religious environment where the hesychasm was common, names it of course as the light of Tabor. It is the light of the Trinity God, The light of Truth, lit in the world with the birth of Jesus.

The whole liturgy and a great number of hymns testify about this, he points out, and adds that the holy liturgy where created by deeply spiritual people with experience of the light of God. The light is in itself beautiful, yet it makes everything illuminated beautiful. The light of Tabor transforms the body of the saint and makes it radiant.”

“From the ascetic the veil caused by sin is removed, so that he is able to see the original, undestroyed, perfect creation – which Florensky calls Sofia** - radiant beautiful. Therefore he loves everything created: the human being and her physical body, the animals, nature and cosmos. He finds himself full of burning love for all living beings, and with an intensive compassion to them, he cannot stand any harm or pain being inflicted on anything created.”

“The pure-hearted man has through asceticism restored the image of God from within, and has become a reflection of the radiant beauty of God.”

“With their radiant beauty the great ascetics, saints and starets reveal the “true church”, the mystery of the life of church.

* Asceticism – methodical practising to overcome one’s lower self-centred nature to regain identity with God.

** (Teo) Sofia – (God’s) wisdom.

Extract from a research work of Anna Smidhammar, who also has translated the book “Salt of the earth”, of Pavel Florensky, into Swedish.