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Religious Philosophy of Modern Russia: Ultimate Questions

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swords with those whose exaggerated devotion to the Holy Spirit is accompanied by a belittling of the visible sacramental Church. These "spirituals" or "pneumatists" are in the original *die Pneumatiker*. This is translated "pneumatomachists." And so we read of "Luther with his spiritual church and the pneumatomachists of our own days" (p. 130), for *Luther mit seiner Geistkirche und die Pneumatiker unserer Tage* or of 'the pneumatomachists of the *Una Sancta* movement in Germany" (p. 137), for *die Pneumatiker der 'Una Sancta' in Deutschland*. That the ancient "Pneumatomachoi," those "Spirit-fighters" who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit, should have evolved into proponents of the invisible Church of the Spirit would seem to indicate little history and less Greek in the equipment of those who chose the word "pneumatomachists."

If the defects of this translation have been documented at some length, this has not been done in order to pulverize the translators. They go their ways and from some future eminence will refer, as other writers do, to this first book as "the sin of their youth." No, the purpose is quite other. The "Age of Translation" shows no signs of drawing to a close among Catholic publishers in English-speaking countries. Now Herder is a proud name in Catholic publishing. There are, of course, so many Herders today that any one of them is lost in the crowd and one leans toward parody: "Has anybody here seen—Herder?" Herder of Freiburg did not believe in wasting paper. This led to a layout that was deadly, but the accuracy was equally deadly and this latter is a virtue which might be preserved. Herder of St. Louis, the runaway, had a genius for turning up gifted translators of theology to give us works, among others, like Scheeben's *The Mysteries of Christianity*. Herder of New York seems to have the imagination to turn out books attractive in format. A reading of *A Theology of Proclamation* tempts one to suggest that what is needed is a new "grosse Herder," at least in spirit, combining the virtues of the several "kleine Herders."

JOSEPH F. MURPHY, S.J.

RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF MODERN RUSSIA

ULTIMATE QUESTIONS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF MODERN RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT, edited and with an introduction by Alexander Schmemann. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965. 310 pp.

The essays gathered into this anthology date from the late nineteenth to the first third of this century. The collection is meant to give the non-specialist an idea of Russian "religious philosophy"—

since Russians do not strictly separate theology from philosophy, and a religious note runs through most speculative sciences in non-Soviet Russian culture.

Several of the contributions are splendid reflections on human creativeness, freedom, and love by writers of acumen and depth like Nikolai Berdyaev, Vladimir Solovyov, and Georgy Fedotov. Writing in the last century about believing married love, Solovyov offers a sentiment that would solve many of today's marital problems: "To deserve its bliss, it [believing love] must take up its cross....it is impossible to preserve true love except through understanding...it is a moral task. . . the Orthodox Church remembers holy martyrs in the marriage service and compares the bridal crown to theirs" (p. 139).

Berdyaev too speaks in noble accents of the duty of rendering God creative service: "Everyone is called to creative service in accordance with the special gifts bestowed on him" (p. 243); but in the spirit of Nietzsche, he manages to make it an absolute: "When a man begins to seek moral perfection...he may be lost to creative work. Creativeness requires that a man should forget about his own moral progress and sacrifice his personality.... Creativeness is necessary....for God's work in the world—but it is not at all necessary for saving one's soul" (pp. 249-50).

The essays range over a wide field but tend to develop philosophical, historical, and psychological themes rather than theological in the speculative sense. The range of quality is almost as broad as that of the subjects covered—from serious and carefully reasoned writing to outdated discussions and irresponsible opinion reflecting the sad centuries of antagonism between the Orthodox Church and Rome. Today, for example, few readers could become disturbed, as Vladimir Weidlé does, over an attempt to label Russian culture as Eastern: "The use of 'East' darkens Western as well as Russian minds." "It is impossible to call Christianity Asiatic" (pp. 12-13). Polemical writing too is now out of style, all the more so when it takes on the emotional tone that runs through much of Aleksei Khomyakov's essay "On the Western Confession of Faith," as evidenced in the following citations:

Falsehood is essentially opposed to Orthodoxy as it is to truth.

...In Romanism, however, the teaching which denies its own root principle, falsehood is inevitable (p. 67).

...this last writer (Newman) was scrupulous indeed as long as he confessed Anglicanism, but after converting to Romanism out of scrupulousness (as I assume), there was a sudden loss of scruple (p. 66).

...Protestantism has...reduced the number of reliable data subject to the free investigation of its believers (by leaving

them only the Scriptures), as Rome has reduced this number for most of its laity, too (by depriving them of the Scriptures) (p. 44).

Whether the essence of Christianity can in any sense be expressed in a historical description of the liturgy, as Nikolai Fyodorov proposes (pp. 210-13), is extremely questionable, but the central position this writer accords to public worship is timely and pertinent for today's Christians who share in the liturgical restoration sanctioned by the Second Vatican Council.

To these same Christians of today certain theses advanced in the anthology may seem fantastic, but they undoubtedly further the general aim proposed by the compiler—to acquaint the reader with the viewpoint of the pre-Soviet Russian Christian. An example would be Fyodorov's attempt to reduce all the virtues to commutative justice, called "*the Universal Raising of the Dead* which is a real restoration of all that has been taken away or plundered" (p. 210). Again, Vasily Rozanov may have been able to perceive a valid sequence in the statements implied in the following citation, but it will escape the average reader of a later and diverse cultural background.

Why did Nicodemus not accept Christ? Why did Gamaliel not accept Him, and in general all those kind Jews who were really wholly Christian in heart...? They (the Church's teachers) have said nothing about this... If they had spoken about it... there would have been no destruction by the Inquisition of the Incas and Peruvians. The Jesuit order with its "secrets" would never have arisen, an order fanatical to the point of madness and given to lying like 'forty thousand brothers,' to use Shakespeare's expression (p. 235).

It is important to remember that none of the texts here assembled express the official teaching of the Orthodox Church and that the censorship of this Church originally forbade the publication of some of them in Russia, as the compiler notes in the introduction. But if the collection can be said to reflect modern Russian religious thought as the subtitle claims, this would be so because in most areas, that thought has been retarded by fifty years of severe persecution, under a regime that has sought to erase Christianity and all faith in the supernatural from the minds of its people.

THOMAS J. O'SHAUGHNESSY, S.J.