

Sergej N. Bulgakov, *Trudy o Troichnosti*, A. Reznichenko (ed.), Introduction, Commentaries, Issledovanija po istorii russkoj mysli, M. A. Kolerov (ed.), vol. 6, OGI, Moscow, 2001, 336 pp.

This difficult but absorbing book includes three writings by Bulgakov, which, according to the editor, A. Reznichenko, lie outside the general scheme of classification of Bulgakov's major treatises but share a specific concern with the Trinity. The writings included are: "Ipostas` i ipostasnost`. *Scholia* k Svetu Nevechernemu" (Hypostasis and Hypostasization. Scholia to *The Unfading Light*, 1924–1925), "Glavy o Troichnosti" (Chapters on the Trinity, Paris, 1928–1930), and "Iuda Iskariot – apostol-predatel'" (Judas Iskariot – Apostle-Traitor, 1930–1931). Reznichenko has also included detailed commentaries on the history of each essay, on terminology and names, as well as four letters by Bulgakov's compatriots discussing various aspects of Bulgakov's Sophiology. The book is a fine addition to the existing collections of Bulgakov's works because it restates quite a number of problematic points of his Christian metaphysics in general and of his Sophiology in particular.

The first essay, as its subtitle suggests, can be read as a supplement to *Svet nevechernij* (*The Unfading Light*, 1916), which explored three key themes – God, man and the world. Like *Svet nevechernij*, "Ipostas` i ipostasnost`" addresses the dichotomy of the created and the uncreated, and the question of a creative connection between God and man, a connection that Bulgakov denotes as Sophia. For most scholars concerned with Bulgakov it has become almost a commonplace to differentiate between the creaturely and the heavenly "Sophia" (the former bearing shards of the latter), and also between the earlier (philosophical) and the later (theological) concept of Sophia. In both cases the first conception doesn't seem perfectly reconcilable with the second. In this essay Bulgakov demonstrates a hierarchy in the different incarnations of Sophia. He comprehensively discusses modes and forms of Sophia from the highest in God to the highest on earth, which is identified as the Church. "Sophia" is defined as not as a divine hypostasis but rather as the divine process of "hypostasization," which denotes the potentiality of someone to incarnate the divine on earth, harmonizing it with the autonomous, natural status of his being. Humanity's

true hypostasis is therefore the Church. Hypostasization is precisely what bridges the heavenly and creaturely world, humanity and the Church.

“Glavy o troichnosti” could be read as if Bulgakov now worked in the reverse direction, developing his Christian metaphysics back into theology: on the one hand, it is a masterful comparative discussion of Trinity’s dogmatic history in the West and in the East (including consideration of the Catholic “Filioque” clause). On the other hand, Bulgakov presents his ideas on Trinity as what this reviewer is inclined to call a trinitarian philosophy. From this standpoint it becomes absolutely clear why Bulgakov’s theology has often been deemed unacceptable by the official Russian Orthodox Church. For any non-theologians the most interesting point of those “Glavy” might be the analogy Bulgakov draws reiterating the dogma of trinity within the framework of Christian ontology. He designs a “sobornyj” (derived from the Russian “sobornost’,” in English “catholic” and/or “conciliar”) ontology ascribing to man three qualities. Man embraces the eternally given “I,” the “empirical I” and also the “not-I,” together constituting, so to speak, the triune “I.” The eternal “I” corresponds to the Father, the empirical “I” to the Son, and the “not-I” to the Spirit. Every ontological element plays an equally important role for man’s self-identification denoting a communicative process within the “we,” i.e. the triune “I.” This “we” is the ontological ground of love, love potentially dignifying the world for this threefold ontology corresponds to the heavenly. “Glavy o troichnosti” requires quite an intense, painstaking reading, but it does contain keys to Bulgakov’s Christian philosophy and theology, charging that Orthodox and Western dogma reduced God’s participation in the world to the mere invocation of benediction.

The essay “Iuda Iskariot – apostol-predatel’ ” once again requires that one ignore the traditional differentiation between philosophy and theology. It presents Judas as confronted with the ethical demands of the “sobornyj” ontology. The first part of the essay presents a reconstruction of Judas’ origins, his type of personality, his position amongst the apostles, his love of Christ, and the fact that God didn’t withdraw the apostolate from him. It comprises a compilation of the Scriptural sayings leading to the statement that Judas had not been a traitor from the beginning, but that his

earnest character, and thus belief, tempted him to believe in the Messiah establishing the eternal Sabbath on earth. His betrayal was not for the silver, but because he confused liberty with the national ambition of the Hebrews to achieve political liberation. This, Bulgakov asserts, is the mistaken hope that the world would become the "Kingdom of God" (p. 258). From this standpoint, anti-religious Marxian economic materialism is interpreted as a religious phenomenon, i.e., it is a "religious illness" (p. 261) that threatens every believing person. (The same motif can be found in other writings by Bulgakov, e.g.: "Karl Marks kak religioznyj tip" in *Dva grada* (1911).) What is new here is that Bulgakov ascribes this simultaneity of religious illness and health to the possibility of forgiveness by God, which by extension must therefore be true for Russia. There remains the important question whether "illness" or "health" is a matter of free choice. And so, the second general line of discussion in "Iuda Iskariot" is Providence versus liberty, i.e., whether Judas was forgiven because he acted merely by predestination, or whether he was forgiven despite the fact that he made a free (erroneous) choice. In answering that question Bulgakov recalls the arguments of "Glavy o troichnosti" and "Ipostas` i ipostasnost`." One of the forms or modes of Sophia is man's potential to create himself by reiterating the God-given "I." The "I" resulting out of this communicative process denotes man's partaking of creation. This creative process is what is meant by man's freedom and it arises out of his liberty to strive in freedom toward God's image of him.

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