

Sergij Bulgakov, *The Apocalypse of John. An Essay in Dogmatic Interpretation*. Edited by Barbara Hallensleben, Regula M. Zwahlen, and Dario Colomb. Translated by Mike Whitton, revised by Michael Miller. Epiphania 12. Sergij Bulgakov Werke 4. Münster, Germany, Aschendorff Verlag, 2019, 391 pp. ISBN 978-3-402-12042-2 (HB).

Sergij Bulgakov, *Die zwei Städte. Studien zur Natur gesellschaftlicher Ideale*. Translated by Katharina A. Breckner and Regula M. Zwahlen, revised by Regula M. Zwahlen und Barbara Hallensleben, with commentary by Regula M. Zwahlen. Epiphania 14. Sergij Bulgakov Werke 5. Münster, Aschendorff Verlag, 2020, 780 pp. ISBN 978-3-402-12050-7 (HB).

The series *Epiphania* is a cooperation of the Institute for Ecumenical Studies (Institut für Ökumenische Studien) and the Institute for the Eastern Churches in Regensburg and is edited by Barbara Hallensleben, Guido Vergauwen, and Nikolaus Wyrwoll. The series is published by Aschendorff Verlag. As they explain on their webpage, the editors want to pay attention to voices from the Eastern Churches, in order to enlighten the common theological work by the ‘lux ex oriente’ and arrive at living a responsible Christian life in line with the New Testament and the tradition of the Church in the contemporary world. They want to make sure that the Eastern Sister Churches feel they are taken seriously in their belief and churchly mission.

Within this series, there is a separate subseries dedicated to the Russian theologian Sergij Bulgakov. This subseries is edited by Barbara Hallensleben and Regula M. Zwahlen of the research institute *Forschungsstelle Sergij Bulgakov* at the Theological Faculty of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. As explained in the editors’ introduction, *The Apocalypse of John* represents an unexpected addition to the series. First, because it is an English rather than a German translation and second because it is the translation of the last work of Sergei Bulgakov – published posthumously in 1948 by his faithful student and professor of philosophy at the St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris Lev Zander (1893–1964) – whereas the previous volumes in the series translated Bulgakov’s earlier works. Another difference to the German translations in this series which the editors point out is that this English translation is not annotated in detail, except for the clarifications by the translator.

The editors, however, were convinced to publish this translation by the opportunity to accompany the translation with photographs of Sister Joanna (Reitlinger)’s wall paintings as illustrations (p. xii). In 2016, the publishers received “out of the blue” two e-mails. The first offered the full translation by Mike Whitton of the *Apocalypse* for publication, and the second pleaded the case of publishing photographs of Sister Joanna (Reitlinger)’s wall paintings

as illustrations of Bulgakov's *Apocalypse*. This undoubtedly seemed more than a coincidence to the editors, which resulted in this beautiful edition in which the full text of the original publication by Lev Zander was translated, and published together with photographs of the impressive wall paintings of Sister Joanna at St. Basil's House in Ladbroke Grove, London. This was the House of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, the ecumenical Fellowship of the Anglican Church with the Russian Orthodox Church, of which Fr. Sergius Bulgakov was a founding member. An essay by Bronislava Popova provides an explanation of the history and meaning of the wall paintings.

An interesting fact in the production of the wall paintings by Sister Joanna is that, in the time they were painted from 1946–1948, eggs were rationed, so the tempura was made from donated eggs by members of the fellowship (p. xiii). The paintings were moved and stored several times, but found their new place in 2016 in the Chapel of the Orthodox Christian Church of St. Anne in Northampton where they are on display even now (p. xiv). Mike Whitton, the translator of both the *Apocalypse* and the essay by Bronislava Popova, and Mike Whitton explains that he was inspired to make the translation of Bulgakov's *Apocalypse* by the frescos of Sister Joanna, in front of which he spent many hours in prayer (pp. xvi–xvii). This certainly justifies the joint publication of the translation with the photographs of the frescos and the essay in one volume by the publishers.

The photographs of Sister Joanna's Frescos are reproduced in color on white paper of good quality at the end of the book. Bronislava Popova's essay explaining the wall paintings is placed in the annex at the end of the book, before the bibliography and the photos. The location and the continuous page numbering is surprising, since the essay does not belong to the original publication of the *Apocalypse* by Lev Zander. This is understandable since the bibliography covers the whole volume, including all the introductions, the *Apocalypse* of John as published by Zander in 1948, Bulgakov's publication "Apocalypticism and Socialism" in 1910, and the essay by Bronislava Popova; it also offers further recommended readings on the subject.

The volume was translated along with the four excurses included in the original edition published by Lev Zander. What is not included are three other excurses that were found in the archives of the St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute: "On the Dogmatic Presuppositions of the *Apocalypse*", "On Theocracy" and "On the Antichrist in New Testament Literature." We can only hope that a German translation of the *Apocalypse* together with these unpublished excurses will follow.

The commentary to the *Apocalypse* was Bulgakov's last work and the result of the lectures he gave at the St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute on the topic of revelation in 1941. After numerous pleas from his students, Bulgakov

decided to rework them into a commentary. During this work, as Zander writes in his introduction, Bulgakov became so inspired that the book grew “so much in importance as to be, if not the fourth volume of my trilogy, then, at least, its epilogue.” The trilogy Bulgakov here refers to is his large trilogy and “exposition of dogmatics” (p.1): *O Bogochelovechestve* (On God-humanity. The translation of this crucial term, as the editors explain, is suggested by Paul Ladouceur in *Modern Orthodox Theology* [London, 2019], 231). The trilogy has already been fully translated into English and consists of his Christology *Agnets bozhii* (*The Lamb of God*, 1933), his Pneumatology *Uteshitel'* (*The Comforter*, 1936), and his Anthropology and Ecclesiology *Nevesta Agntsa* (*The Bride of the Lamb*, also published posthumously in 1945).

Thus, the *Apocalypse* also represents the epilogue to Bulgakov's complete work, which is best characterized as sophiology, a study of Sophia – the Wisdom of God. The *Apocalypse* is Bulgakov's attempt at a dogmatic interpretation of the apostle John's Revelation “in the language of sophiology” (p. 36). In the same sense, he calls the fourth chapter “an essential and indispensable, solemn sophiological introduction to the cosmology, anthropology and philosophy of history, to eschatology. Here the sophiological first principle of creation is unveiled, and that is why this chapter must necessarily be understood *sophiologically*” (p. 41).

An interesting ambiguity arises from the translation of the Greek title *Apokalupsos Ioannou* as *The Apocalypse of John*, although throughout the volume this book is referred to as the *Revelation of John*. In Bulgakov's introduction, we are told that the term revelation (*otkrovenie*) is used for the biblical book, whereas apocalypse for describing the literary genre of similar writings coming from Jewish and Christian milieus. This ambiguous use of the terms revelation and apocalypse, as well as the meaning of the *Apocalypse* in Bulgakov's work and in Russian culture are extensively addressed in the editor's introduction (pp. v–xii), but could also constitute a fascinating topic for further research.

In short, the editors can be applauded for publishing Bulgakov's last work in English translation in a series which otherwise consists and will consist in future of German translations of all Bulgakov's works. The rich content, along with its position as the epilogue to Bulgakov's works, justifies its publication outside of the preconceived order. Many positive things can be said about the English translation, but I will mention this particular point: I have read most of Bulgakov's works in their original Russian language of publication, and this English translation truly captures the spirit of the original.

Very similar words can be said about the fifth volume of the series *Sergij Bulgakov Werke*, the German translation of his work *Die zwei Städte* (*Dva Grada / Two Cities*). The book was originally published in 1911 and contains a selection of Bulgakov's articles from the period 1904–1910. In this sense, the book

is a follow up to his anthology *Ot Marksizma k idealizmu (From Marxism to Idealism, 1904)* which described his intellectual development from a Marxist political economist to an Idealist sociologist and social philosopher. In *Two Cities* we can trace his further development into a religious social philosopher, a development that culminated in the published first volume of his *Werke, Philosophie der Wirtschaft (Philosophy of Economy)*.

The editors do not explain – neither in the volume nor on the website of the *Forschungsstelle* – why they decided to translate and publish Bulgakov's complete works in this particular order. Why start the series with his dissertation *Philosophie der Wirtschaft* from 1912, continue with his *Autobiographical Notes* published posthumously in 1946, follow with his *Bibliography* in the third volume, then include the English translation of *The Apocalypse of John* also published posthumously in 1946, and return in volume five to a work from 1911, *Two Cities*? Is it their intention to publish all Bulgakov's works, including his work as a Marxist political economist? It would be appreciated if the editors could explain their publication plans. Like the previous volume, this one is also accompanied by a *Begleitband*, which was the result of a symposium dedicated to this volume: *Sergij Bulgakovs "Die zwei Städte" im intrdisziplinären Gespräch* (iv–167 pp.).

The enumeration of 'chapters' in the table of contents is also slightly confusing. As these are all separate essays and articles, which were previously published in various journals and books and were put together by the author in this anthology in two parts, the word chapter is misleading as it gives the impression of more unity than the author intended. The anthology now consists of 12 chapters which are quite different in size, with the shortest being 24 pages and the longest 85, some of which are subdivided in several parts. The volume is completed by the editors with a lengthy reception history (pp. 571–574), the bibliographical references by Bulgakov (pp. 575–604), explanations to the text (pp. 605–749), and a name register (pp. 750–780).

The volume starts with an introduction by the editors (21 pages) that locates this work in the intellectual development of the author. As they explain, Bulgakov wanted to show in his early work the historical potent contribution of Christianity in the development of the principle of human value: "Religion is the ferment of societal life" (p. iii). His place in the Russian tradition of Personalism, his sometimes sharp criticism of the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Russian State, his critical stance toward the Russian intelligentsia, his quest for the nature of societal ideals, and the inspiration he drew from Max Weber, William James (1902) and other West-European sociologists are briefly touched upon.

The editors also point out that Bulgakov continued in Russia the discussion around the Papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and the Social Question

that took place in Western Europe at the time. The title of his Anthology, *Two Cities*, refers to the two cities in Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, the city that lives according to God, and the city that lives according to humans. Like Augustine, Bulgakov is of the opinion that humanity should freely choose to live according to God and the image of God in which it was created, as a Godman (*bogochelovek*), and not as equal to God, as Mangod (*chelovekobog*), terminology he derived from Dostoevsky and develops in the line of Vladimir Solov'ëv's *Lectures on God-humanity* (1877–1881), and which appears also in his later theological trilogy *On God-humanity*. Bulgakov sees the way of life of the Mangod realized in Positivism and Socialism, but also in the Russian intelligentsia that caused the February revolution of 1917. In his later theology, Bulgakov would further develop his justification of economy, but also of human history and culture, which was already prepared in the articles in *Two Cities*, a kind of Christian project that contests the atheist historical materialism.

As the editors stress, the publication of *Two Cities* in German more than 100 years later, provides the readers with access to articles that have not been so far translated, with the exception of 'Karl Marx as a philosophical type' and 'Heroism and Asceticism'. Although the editors point to the historical context of the volume, many elements are as actual as when it was first published (p. xiii) (e.g., many questions concerning the post-secular age, such as the relation between religion and science, society and state, Enlightenment and Christianity, Church and culture, pseudo-religion and the foundation of human value). In the area of political theology, the position of Orthodoxy is increasingly discussed. The evaluation of Bulgakov as a "post-secular thinker *avant la letter*" (p. xiv) is in this context understandable, although maybe slightly overstated. In the *Begleitband*, the actual value of Bulgakov's work is discussed by various scholars, who engage with social philosophical problems or with the specific themes discussed by Bulgakov. The is a lively and interesting discussion that continues the one initiated by Bulgakov in the anthology.

At the end of the editors' introduction, Katharina Anna Breckner, translator and philosopher who died in 2015 before the publication of the first volume, is remembered for her valuable contribution in the realization of this and other volumes in the series. She and all the contributors to this monumental work deserve many compliments for their accurate and informative work that gives many new insights into this early work of Bulgakov.

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