

able resource for what it does contain that is useful in Levine's study of the P corpus of the Pentateuch.

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*The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology: The Love Paradigm and the Retrieval of Western Mysticism in Modern Russian Trinitarian Thought (from Solovyov to Bulgakov).* By Michael Aksionov Meerson. Studies in Franciscanism.. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1998. ISBN 0-81-990987-4. Pp.xx + 255.

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"God is an absolute being because He is the substantial act of love, act-substance. God, or the Truth, not only has love but, above all, 'God is love, *ho Theos agape estin*' (I. John 4:8, 16). That is, love is God's essence." So wrote Pavel Florensky in *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, his monumental meditation on the relation of truth to the Church as a sharing in the perichoretic life of love of the Holy Trinity. Florensky is one of many Russian thinkers analyzed by Fr. Meerson in his important study of Augustinian love mysticism in modern Russian thought. Meerson is an appropriate author to exegete this tradition, for he comes out of it himself, having studied at two of its best known institutions in the West (i.e. Institut de Theologie Orthodoxe Saint-Serge of Paris and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary of Crestwood, NY). He is also interested in a dialogue with western theology (*The Trinity of Love [etc.]* 1-19, 189-192), and like Bulgakov, Florensky and, more recently, Alexander Men, he has combined Christian faith with political action: evident, for example, in his running of a religious *samizdat* press from 1965-1972.

Borrowing from Western medieval love mysticism, which itself drawn from the Trinitarian theology of Augustine, as well as German Idealism, Russian theology fashioned a conception of reality that saw God and all else patterned after him. In particular, the consciousness of the person is thought to be made in the *imago Trinitatis*, as *sobornyi* or conciliar in its very being. To be *sobornyi* is to find one's life not in the solitary ego (e.g. Max Stirner's "Unique One" as an "exclusive I"), nor in the love-as-selfishness of *I* mirroring *I* (e.g. Donne's amorous solipsism of "The Sun Rising"), but in a life of sacrificial lifting, emptying and giving up of oneself as *I* to another *Thou* who presupposes a *he*, both of whom transcend one's own transcendent existence as a physical, intellectual and spiritual being. Only in God as the Absolute Subject is this sobornal reality complete as a Trinity of persons mutually encountering one another in a kenotic circle of indwelling love. Yet God does not remain locked up in himself, for creation is his gift of this sobornal reality to another beside himself. The one who is the exemplification and mode of this call to ever greater loving unity is Jesus Christ as the God-man in whom the spiritual and material worlds are united in one voice of praise to God.

The book's subsequent chapters summarize this personalist turn: contemporary Western theology's interest in a perichoretic Trinitarianism (Moltmann, Kasper, Boff, Kasper etc.) (1-19); Solovyov, the father of the whole tradition of Russian love metaphysics, who saw, in his "concrete Idealism," God's Total-Unity of love given concrescence in the Godmanhood of Jesus Christ (*bogochelovechestvo*) (21-47); the influence of Solovyov's exemplarism traced in Russian symbolism (49-61, 63-78); the novelist Merezhkovsky's influence on theogamy (81-97); Berdyaev arguing that God wishes to free creation for the spirit seen in the absolute symbol of the union of heaven and earth, Jesus Christ (99-115); Florensky who used Fichte to argue for the relational foundation in love of consciousness (117-136); Karsavin who developed an immanent kenoticism of God long before Moltmann (139-157); and finally the great Bulgakov who not only saw reality as *sobornyi* but attempted to apply the insights of the tradition to overcoming the *filioque* controversy (159-186). This work, then, besides being an excellent, albeit dense, introduction to modern Russian thinking on Trinitarianism and Christology, has a decidedly ecumenical drive in trying to overcome differences between the East and West over the Trinity, which both parties see as, in the words of Vladimir Lossky from his *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, "a primordial fact."

In regard to flaws one would have hoped for greater attention to small editorial errors, a much more comprehensive bibliography of translations, an actual chapter on Augustinian theology instead of the scattered analysis it receives, attention paid to Augustine as the main source of Trinitarian love metaphysics (cf. *Trin.* VI.v.7ff., XV.xvii.27ff., *ep. Jo.* VI-IX, *f. et symb.* 9.19, *Jo. ev. tr.* XXVII, XXXIX) and criticism of the tendency of this type of Neo-Platonically tinged metaphysics to make creation a necessary overflow of divine love instead of a free gift. Despite these flaws, Meerson has given the student of Russian thought a treasure trove of Russian thinking on personalism which itself acts as a scholarly symbol of the continuing divine-human dialogue in love between heaven and earth.

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*On Niebuhr: A Theological Study.* By Langdon Gilkey. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. ISBN: 0 226 29341 6. Pp. 249.

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*On Niebuhr* examines the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr by looking at both his early political writings and his mature theology. Gilkey focuses on what he deems the core of Niebuhr's thought: *Beyond Tragedy, Faith and History, Moral Man and Immoral Society, The Nature and Destiny of Man*, and *Reflections on the End of an Era*.

Gilkey divides this book into two parts: "First Encounters and Early Political Writings," and "Niebuhr's Mature Thought." The first chapter includes anecdotal references to Langdon Gilkey's first recollections of Niebuhr, includ-