

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.

*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-

ing the first time Gilkey called himself a Christian after hearing Niebuhr lecture. Secondly, there is a chapter dealing with Niebuhr's political writings. An insightful chapter entitled, "Meaning, Mystery, Myth, and Revelation," begins the second section; this, and an extended discussion of Niebuhr's conception of history ("The Understanding of History," "The Biblical Understanding of History," "The Enigma of History and Eschatology") demonstrates Gilkey's knowledge of Niebuhr's mature thought. Thus the themes presented in this second section of Gilkey's book are central to Niebuhr's theology. Unique to Gilkey's work is his association of Niebuhr with process thought, bringing his own understanding of Whitehead to bear on Niebuhr (57, n. 3; 60, n. 5). Whereas Whitehead emphasized that the natural process is all there is, for Niebuhr God is not an aspect of process, but rather transcends and creates the natural process.

The author looks at Niebuhr's understanding of historical consciousness. By this he means "the historical awareness of historical change in the forms of communal consciousness: namely their forms of understanding and self-understanding, their interpretation of their world and of themselves in it, their norms for action, and their expectation for life" (229). Gilkey argues that Niebuhr "deeply imbibed the modern historical consciousness and its inexorable implication of relativity" (61).

Gilkey defends the term neo-orthodox as a fitting descriptor for Niebuhr and his theology (26f.). While Gilkey goes into some depth to argue this point, Niebuhr in fact considered himself more liberal than neo-orthodox. Gilkey suggests that Niebuhr seems unaware or loathe to recognize he is buying into modern scientific views when he adopts a symbolic rather than literal hermeneutic of myth (234), but it may be that Niebuhr was purposely distancing himself from the more orthodox Christians of his era.

Gilkey's chapter on "Meaning, Mystery, Myth, and Revelation," is important as these concepts express Niebuhr's grasp of the Christian faith. Niebuhr uses the term "myth" to describe "the two secular religions of progress and Marxism that were dominant in modern, not premodern, life." Second, he used the idea of myth to express "the meaning of history and not just the cycles of nature" (63). Gilkey also examines Niebuhr's use of the term "biblical" in a lengthy footnote (65, n. 12). Niebuhr assumed and argued that his theology was biblical, that it represented the authentic message of scripture.

*On Niebuhr* is a worthwhile investment for anyone considering the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr, of whom Langdon Gilkey is a thoughtful student. *On Niebuhr* was written to capture the whole of Niebuhr's thought (xiii), and in this Gilkey was estimably successful. Gilkey presents a largely personal reading of Niebuhr, referring us to his own: *Naming the Whirlwind*, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, and *Maker of Heaven and Earth*, but discusses few other commentaries on Niebuhr. Thus this book is valuable for Gilkey's reading of Niebuhr, but the author has unfortunately forfeited the opportunity to dialogue with other expositors, such as Gordon Harland.