

divinization of the human soul. The author does not try to "prove" the reality of the events of their lives, for their involvement in the sphere of divine energy puts them, to some extent, beyond elementary physical laws.

Svetlov's book contains three main themes. First, the political history of Israel and of the countries linked with it. This is described by Svetlov in terms of the fulfilment of Divine Providence. Second, the activity of the prophets, their historical role, the nature of their preaching, and the circumstances of their life. Third, the revelation of God given to the prophets. Amos, Micah and Zephaniah saw God as the terrible Judge, but to Hosea He revealed Himself as the merciful and all-forgiving God, as the love, which awaits a response and suffers when there is unfaithfulness. In Isaiah's vision He appeared as the unapproachable King of Glory; to Jeremiah He was the "inner voice" which constantly made itself heard in him; and to Ezekiel was given a series of visions, through which he understood the will of God.

This book contains many truths which are important for the Christian mind. Its approach is reliable and clear, its thought lucid and its language poetic. In fact it is a joy to read.

ELYA PYATIGORSKAYA

The Tragedy of the Russian Church, 1917-1945

(*Tragedia Russkoy Tserkvi, 1917-1945*)

by Lev Regelson, YMCA Press, 1977, 625 pp. No price.

This remarkable book is the first history of the Russian Church from the Revolution to the end of the Second World War to be written in Russian. It is perforce published abroad, but it was written in the Soviet Union without access to a great part of the sources for the period. Fr. John Meyendorff in his postscript to the book indicates some points where material published in the West but inaccessible to Regelson – and still more material that is not yet available anywhere – might alter the picture, but the main outline will remain.

Lev Regelson is a young Orthodox layman of Jewish origin, brought up among the Soviet intelligentsia far from any influence of the Church, who has been converted to Christianity, like so many of his generation. He was co-author with Fr. Gleb Yakunin of the famous letter which brought the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Nairobi to take the persecution of religion in Eastern Europe seriously for the first time. That was the act of a brave man, and I join with Fr. Meyendorff in calling the writing of this book a heroic feat. Regelson is a brilliant physicist but he now has no work in his own field, beyond giving some

private lessons. It is scarcely possible for anyone who does not know the Soviet Union to realize what enormous and continuing difficulties must have been overcome in collecting so many unknown documents and unearthing so many facts and dates, some of them rendered very obscure by the secretiveness of the Soviet authorities, and in ordering and digesting this bewildering material.

I will not say that the book is an easy read, though Regelson writes clearly. The YMCA use an excellent clear type face but it is a little too small for the length of the line and quotation marks are used so sparingly that one has to check again and again to know when one is reading some unknown document or Regelson's opinion about it. Soviet *samizdat* historiography rightly gives one enormously long extracts from the documents it uses, because in most cases one cannot refer to them elsewhere.

Regelson gives a vivid and circumstantial account of the great Council of the Russian Church in 1917-18, which re-established the Moscow Patriarchate and conciliar church government, after 200 years of bureaucratic rule by the Tsarist State under a Synod that at times hardly represented the Church better than the Synods that have been established under Soviet rule. The first Patriarch, Tikhon, emerges as a great Christian leader, but for 20 years after his death in 1925 the Soviet government succeeded in bringing the affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church into great confusion. The election of a new Patriarch was not allowed until 1943. Candidates for the succession were arrested, and often done to death. Few bishops remained at liberty and few churches were open in the '30s. It was not easy to know where authority resided.

It so happens that I myself visited the Moscow Patriarchate in the winter of 1943. There was as yet no Patriarch and I was received by the *locum tenens* of the Patriarchate, Metropolitan Sergi. The "Patriarchate" was a log cabin in an unpaved street on the outskirts of Moscow. I asked no questions but I could see that few letters were received by the acting head of what is perhaps the greatest national Church in the world. There was nowhere to keep files and no staff to conduct correspondence.

Regelson praises Tikhon, the first Patriarch, but he is strongly critical of Sergi, as *locum tenens* and eventually Patriarch. It will be argued till the end of time whether Sergi gave in too much to Stalin, what powers Sergi had by canon law, whether he claimed more powers than he was entitled to and whether he was too harsh in asserting whatever powers he had. No man could have been in his position at such a time without making mistakes, but it is not for us to judge. I can only say that some Russian Christians, who have shown as much courage as Lev Regelson himself but, unlike him, lived through Stalin's terror, take a more favourable view of Sergi's conduct of church affairs. And Fr. Meyendorff draws attention to a number of works published in the West and not available

to Regelson, which might lead him to modify his condemnation, though not, I suppose, to retract it.

It is greatly to be hoped that there will be an English edition of *The Tragedy of the Russian Church*, and I hope that foreign editions will keep the wonderful photographs of Russian church leaders, many of them martyrs or confessors. This book is a history of the episcopate rather than of the life of the faithful in parishes, concentration camps and exile. But the faces of these leaders show the life that upheld them.

JOHN LAWRENCE

Marx and the Bible

by José P. Miranda, SCM Press, 1977, 338 pp., £3.50

It is a sound rule never to review a book which excites one's hostility. Any exceptions must be in a good cause. The denunciation of Miranda is a very good cause.

I started reading his work on Budget Day. It was therefore a little difficult to accept his picture of down-trodden workers who are being systematically robbed and who are obliged to capitulate to Draconian employers. His point is that the worker is not really equal in the contract of employment, only theoretically equal. It is a very 19th century view, and one does not wish to deny that in many parts of the world, including no doubt his own Mexico, the 19th century situation still obtains. But Miranda is not talking about Mexico. He generalizes. He is talking about the whole world.

He says, bold fellow, that he is a "traitor" to the West. Now he defines the "West" solely in terms of capitalism. Time and time again he prompts questions about whether we live in the same world and how accurate is his factual information. Thus he informs us that "the media of social communication which, *as we know*, are controlled by the social classes which are most favoured by the prevailing system: the advertising of the corporation is today an indispensable source of financing the mass media". How indispensable? What about the BBC? It does not depend on advertising revenue.

Miranda is constantly nudging in this way his sympathetic reader. *We all know*, he confidently tells us, that "the educational system is designed to reproduce the prevailing social system" with the result that "people's ideas are fabricated from within and thus there occurs in history the most perfect type of slavery there has ever been: that of not only not knowing one is a slave, but of holding as an ideal of life a situation which objectively is slavery". Let this serve as an example of his style, and of the palpable rubbish of which he is capable.

In the years after 1917 the Bolsheviks' anti-religious policies, the loss of the former western territories of the Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union's isolation from the rest of the world and the consequent separation of Russian emigrants from the church were disastrous for the church, which declined very significantly in the 1920s and 1930s. He agreed a Concordat with the church in 1943, and continued to encourage the church, especially its claims to jurisdiction over émigré Russian orthodox churches, in the immediate postwar period. Based on extensive original research, the book puts forward a great deal of new information and overturns established thinking on many key points. *Tragedy of the Russian Church, 1917-45* by Lev Regelson, 9780232515244, available at Book Depository with free delivery worldwide. We use cookies to give you the best possible experience. By using our website you agree to our use of cookies. [Home](#). [Contact us](#).