

which discovers God's presence in all experience. The great enemy is depression: "This passion, depression, kills everything holy, everything living and human". But prayer, Fr. Zachariah teaches, is the beginning of eternal life, the door through which we enter the Kingdom of Heaven, "... a road which leads us to the Lord and unites us with him". In the life and teaching of Fr. Zachariah we have a witness to the continuing existence of Holy Russia.

LYLE DENNEN

The Religion of the Russian People

by Pierre Pascal. Translated by Rowan Williams.

Mowbrays, London and Oxford, 1976, 130 pp. + ix, £2.95.

This book reminds me of Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* for two reasons. Firstly, within the compass of quite a short work, several different literary genres are held together by an underlying unity. Secondly, "the religion of the Russian people" – rather than any particular named individual – is a hero of our time; and the veteran French slavonic scholar Pierre Pascal is here paying homage to that heroism. He is well served by a clear and accurate translation by Rowan Williams who also supplies a foreword and a helpful glossary. He is less well served by the proof-reader and by the fact that no indication is given of the date of the original. This makes it difficult to assess for example the claim that "at the present time it is still prohibiting to bring a copy of the Gospel into the USSR", (p. 97).

The work consists of three main parts. The first is an extended essay on the religion of the Russian people, full of lightly carried learning, illuminating flashes of insight and challenges to superficial received opinions. M. Pascal is concerned not only to explain Russian popular religion but also to defend it against detractors in the West. Much of what he says suggests common factors – an underlying sympathy – between Russian and English folk-religion as compared with "continental" Catholicism and Protestantism. Perhaps his apologia succeeds too well, for in his account there is really no darkness at all. The most convincing portraits usually contain at least a little shadow; and without some depiction and analysis of the failings of popular religion it is difficult for the reader to see why everything in the garden not only is not – but was not – lovely. He does give, however, one clue to the tragic side of Russian history. "Humility is so characteristic, so marked, and so consistent a feature of the Russian Christian that no other nation has taken so small a part in its own government" (p. 32). It is not only the Russians who have suffered involuntarily from the politico-military outworking of that abnegation.

It is the third section, entitled "The Resistance of the Russian People

to Persecution", which readers of this journal may find the most interesting. It contains the best short, clear account I know of the period 1917–1941. No new facts emerge, but in a series of brief chapters M. Pascal sets before us a mosaic in which a pattern of persecution, survival and even revival emerges. His method, here as in the first section, is to combine the brilliant abstract generalization with a well-chosen anecdote as an illustration – one might almost say an icon – of the truth he is conveying. This is most effective and stimulating in a work of this length, and it whets the Western appetite for more facts and more analysis. I missed in both Parts I and III some account of collectivization and the adjustment of popular religion to it. And I should like to have had more from M. Pascal's pen about what is involved morally and religiously in the practice of constantly dissimulating the faith: "The Russian faithful made a show of submission, but then set about discovering all kinds of new ways to satisfy their religious needs in spite of all" (p. 115).

But the most remarkable section is the second, which consists of a translation, together with introduction, commentary and notes, of a medieval text, "The Pilgrimage of the Mother of God". This is that "Little monastic poem, translated from Greek of course" with which Ivan Karamazov introduces his own "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. It is good to have the text available; but, more than that, it is genuinely edifying to be compelled – by the very way in which this interpolated prose poem both separates and unites the two main sections – to meditate upon the great mysteries of human freedom, responsibility and sin and of divine judgement and mercy. As Rowan Williams writes, "It is as if she (the Mother of God) spoke with the critical and radical voice of the Russian, protesting against all tyranny which affronts the values, not so much of 'freedom', as of acceptance, forgiveness, the indestructible possibility of reconciliation on the far side of the most searing outrage".

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