

do not allow women's ordination as pastors does not seem to have nothing [*sic*] to do with the deep-rooted custom of discrimination against women, which has remained within Korean churches' (p. 234). On a more substantive level the authors state that 'we have attempted to write [about] the trials and growth of Korean Christianity not only in terms of the church structures, modes of faith and theology, but also in terms of the relationships between the church and society, and the church and the state, thus providing a more holistic picture' (p. v). Given such an expansive statement of purpose, and a rather banal thesis embedded in it – that Korean Protestantism underwent trials and growth between 1945 and 2000 – it is not surprising that the book, 236 pages long, with no index, is less monographic and more encyclopaedic. That said, if a reader is familiar with contemporary Korean history and is willing to slog through the book's prose, she will find it a valuable resource, one highlighting most of the issues at the centre of Korean Protestant church history: for example, the Church's involvement in Cold War politics, the harsh fate that it suffered in North Korea, its fissiparousness in the South, the emergence of massive revivals in the 1970s and '80s, the publication of Korean Bibles and hymnals, efforts to theologically indigenise the faith, emergence of urban and foreign missions, and the Protestants' roles in South Korea's democratisation movement.

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The wellsprings of religion. Vol. I of the history of religion. In search of the way, the truth, and the life. By Alexander Men (translated by Alasdair MacNaughton). Pp. 352. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017. \$35 (paper). 978 0 88141 603 9

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This book, remarkably, is a Soviet-era work of Christian apologetics. First published on illegal printing presses and distributed in a so-called 'samizdat' network, it was eventually smuggled abroad for publication in Brussels, first in 1970 and again, after revision, in 1983. Such overtly clandestine activities could have led to the author's imprisonment or exile. Indeed, although he was never arrested, Men was interrogated by the KGB on many occasions between 1960 and 1986 and finally murdered by an unknown assailant on 9 September 1990. Wallace Daniel gives a concise summary of Men's context (pp. 11–14), but, given its significance, one can only wish that this were more extensive.

Wellsprings is the first volume of a six-volume history of pre-Christian religions, but it does not present the reader with 'historical' discussion. Men instead acts as an apologist for 'religion', thus challenging the Soviet intellectual *status quo*. Material is provided for an educated, but non-specialist, Soviet reader to engage in religious questioning. *Wellsprings* has three resulting qualities worthy of remark. First, Men ensures that his writing is attractive for his readers. He referred to his style as 'poetic' in his introduction to the second volume, *Magic, art and monotheism*, and his language is often pictorial or even conversational. Few translations of Men's work have been successful in preserving these linguistic characteristics,

yet MacNaughton's translation into English is exemplary. The translation of the title is a case in point: the Russian 'Istoki' is translated 'Wellsprings' rather than 'Sources' or 'Origins'. Men would surely have approved. Second, Men liberally cites a huge number of both Russian and Western works from many different disciplines. For example, on pages 64–6, he presents the views of no fewer than fourteen contrasted thinkers on the concept of intuition; he cites scientists and philosophers as other Orthodox writers cite the Fathers. Generally, the dissemination of information is prioritised over incisive argument. Some readers might legitimately desire greater analysis of the works cited. Third, Men's extensive footnotes and bibliographies indicate that *Wellsprings* was conceived not as the 'final word', but as an inspiration to further study. That MacNaughton has preserved these footnotes and bibliographies, providing his own translations of Russian titles and citations where English versions are unavailable, is to be commended.

Of the book's three parts, the first, 'The Nature of Faith', is perhaps the most interesting, concerned, as it is, with questions of epistemology and religious experience. Men begins by considering the nature of 'religion', finding 'psychological' definitions inadequate (p. 52), before moving on to discuss ways of experiencing the world. The interrelation of intuition, spontaneous experience and abstract thought, as conceptualised by Bergson and Bulgakov, is seen as a necessary corrective to Kantian thought: 'Kant never saw in the depths of the soul the untapped strength that can cut through the curtain of empiricism' (p. 68). Philosophical intuitionism is then related to religious experience in a discussion of William James's *The varieties of religious experience* (pp. 70–2). A philosophical and historical critique of materialism follows, elaborated by discussions of revelation, dogma, freedom, creativity and the problem of evil. Christian apophatic thought (Maximus) is contrasted with Indian philosophy (pp. 115–16).

The second part, 'The Place of Humanity in the Universe', is, at least for the twenty-first-century reader, compromised by citations of outdated material concerning evolution and artificial intelligence. William Clegg notes in his foreword that the discussion of genetics would undoubtedly have been different had Men been writing fifty years later (p. 20). The ideas of the Catholic priest-palaeontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin are never far from the reader (pp. 143, 167, 181). On page 131 Men states that 'When this book was already in draft form with its religious approach to evolution, the foundational philosophical work of Father Teilhard de Chardin was published [in Russian]. His Christian evolutionism seemed altogether to be very close to the understanding set out in this volume.' Men adopts concepts such as 'noosphere' and compares Teilhard's ecclesiology and eschatology to the Orthodox 'sobornost'.

The third part, 'Before the Face of the One Who Is', discusses the biblical creation narrative (pp. 201–10), allocating interpretive authority to the Russian philosophers Semyon Frank, Nicholas Berdyaev, Sergei Trubetskoi, Vladimir Soloviev and Sergius Bulgakov. 'Fallenness' is contrasted with 'progress' and Bonhoeffer's conception of the world 'coming of age' is subjected to criticism (p. 195). Men's 'evolutionist' interpretations of Genesis and the Fall have been controversial in conservative Russian circles, similar as they are to those of Bulgakov, but there is perhaps little here that will surprise the Western reader. A concluding discussion of primitive religion is a direct prelude to *Magic, art and monotheism*.

The final ninety-two pages of *Wellsprings* comprise a varied collection of material presented in ten appendices. These consider evolution, cybernetics and parapsychology, as well as the scientists Lomonosov and Tsiolkovsky, whom Men presents as theists, despite Soviet claims. The most substantial appendix is devoted to Teilhard. Men's attempt to appropriate Teilhardian thinking in a Russian Orthodox framework is intriguing. His assessment is not without nuance and contains a substantial criticism of Teilhard's views on the problem of evil.

In summary, this work should not be seen as 'academic' theology in the sense criticised by Gutierrez. The task Men sets himself is practical; his style and content are both driven by the needs of his Soviet readers, among whom he wishes to initiate debate concerning religion. None the less, the breadth of cited sources is remarkable. His synthesis of Western theological material with Russian religious philosophy, both in *Wellsprings* and in his many other, as yet untranslated, works, could serve as a helpful aide in assessing the Russian philosophical tradition, while contributing in its own right to theological assessments of Western forms of materialism. MacNaughton's translation of *Wellsprings* is not only a document of Soviet religious history, but a timely introduction to an unfamiliar intellectual tradition.

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Architecture at the end of the earth. Photographing the Russian North. Texts and photographs by William Craft Brumfield. Pp. x+245 incl. 1 map and 195 colour photographs. Durham, NC–London: Duke University Press, 2015. \$39.95. 978 0 8223 5906 7

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The 'Russian North', that is the north of European Russia, north of 60°N and east of 60°W (though for the purposes of this book, mostly east of 50°W) – St Petersburg is just short of 50°N – is the land of the dense, impenetrable forest, known as taiga. It is not, however, uninhabited (though it is growing so); indeed many areas within the region are famous for their monasteries – the famous Solovki monastery in the White Sea (infamous as the beginning of the Gulag archipelago), the monasteries further south in Lake Ladoga (the well-known Valamo monastery) and around the White Lake – so much so that it is often spoken of as the 'Northern Thebaid'. There are also a few towns, such as Arkhangelsk and Murmansk, and many small villages. The local building material is wood, from the taiga, and one of the glories of the region is the wooden churches, both in village and monastery. These astonishing buildings are built with the main structure constructed from tree trunks, the upper parts of planed, and frequently elaborately carved, wood, sometimes mimicking the domes and barrel vaults familiar from the churches of further south, with their golden or blue onion domes. Many of these churches have a dark interior, dimly lit by candles, bearing out John Donne's view (contemporary with some of the earliest of these churches) that 'Churches are best for Prayer, that have least light: / To see God only, I goe out of sight.'

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