

Rasputin/Russian Revolution/Romanov books

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Norman, apologies—I thought I printed and sent this yesterday and didn't. The "good stuff" starts with ~~4)~~ and my notes follow.

Reception into Russian Orthodox Church

from: **Error! Bookmark not defined. of Error! Bookmark not defined..**

2.) What is the meaning of oikonomia?

As modern reviews of the subject have demonstrated, there are nearly as many definitions of "the principle of oikonomia" as there have been writers on the subject. (3) At one end of the spectrum (e.g., Androustos and Dyovouniotis among the Greeks, Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky among the Russians) are those who would invoke the Cyprianic principle according to which the sacraments of the non-Orthodox are utterly null and void, so that by strictness (akribeia) all "converts" should be received by baptism; and if they are received in some other way kat' oikonomian, this in no way implies any recognition whatsoever of an ecclesial reality in the group from which they come.

Others (e.g., Zernov and Florovsky) have rejected this "economic" approach to the sacraments altogether. Still others have adopted its vocabulary only to modify it in diverse significant ways: economy "cannot create out of nothing" but is rather a matter of healing that which is infirm (Abp. Alexis van der Mensbrugghe); (4) it can come into play only when "something exists but presents a curable defect" (Abp. Peter L'Huillier); (5) it is a matter of "discernment" of the "presence or absence of the mystery of the Spirit" (Fr. John Meyendorff). (6) Thus influenced understood, the "principle of oikonomia" suggests that outside the Orthodox "there is a Christian reality that possesses a certain significance for the universal Church", that "the heterodox have maintained a certain relationship with the Church and therefore the possibility of enjoying the grace of the Church" (Fr. Ion Bria). (7)

The SCOBA Guidelines, of course, were intended to present what is held in common by all the member jurisdictions. It is understandable why these Guidelines sometimes become rather general and imprecise, leaving questions like the foregoing unanswered. Unfortunately the guidelines of the various Orthodox churches and jurisdictions, though sometimes more detailed and specific, likewise do not permit formulation of a single, consistent answer to these questions. Rather, they reveal not only diversity of practice but also divergent approaches to ecclesiology and sacramental theology. Two main lines of approach can be discerned in contemporary practice, one which for convenience may be called the "Russian", the other the "Greek". The situation is further complicated by the fact that contemporary practice of some jurisdictions in North America has conflated these two approaches in various ways.

The "Russian" approach

would absolutely re-confirm her—"crismation," they call it. And then there would be a formal profession of faith

Obviously, we need a good biography to probe her motives. It does seem that if her brother hadn't married somebody she loathed—she might have been content to remain his hostess, and Nicholas' proposal wouldn't finally have been accepted. But would so emotional a woman have believed both her beloved grandmother AND her Nicky were going to hell since they belonged to "wrong" churches?

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There was a young mystic of Dheel
Who said although pain isn't real,
If I sit on a pin
And it punctures my skin
I dislike what I fancy I feel.

Of course, most of the schools of thought with the "it's all illusion" also teach any number of practical techniques for transcending, using, getting beyond suffering—or at the least, latching onto a better class of illusion!

Finally, theology with its endless talking and nattering may be the wrong tack to take. Small children, most animals, and a few mystics simply "get it," at least occasionally. From Zen's blunt, "chop wood, carry water," to the Sufi "sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment," to Teresa of Avila's "Let nothing disturb thee, let nothing fright thee, God is all, and God suffices," we are urged over and over to do more, be more and argue less. Be concerned with being good humans—our job—and let God worry about being God. Of course, mystics tend to be a bit suspicious of theologians. It is a saying from one of the Hindu (I think) masters with which I wrap this up, a question he suggests should always be asked of oneself before speaking: "Is it kind? Is it beautiful? Is it necessary? Does it improve the silence?" Unless you can answer at least one in the affirmative, you should keep quiet. One does have to wonder how much theological writing passes that test.

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