
NEWS OF THE PROFESSION

GEORGES V. FLOROVSKY, 1893–1979

Rather like his father Vasilii and his mother's father (and his namesake), Georges Florovsky (he adopted the French spelling of his first name and kept it) was a priest, but devoted much of his life to teaching and scholarship. (He became an archpriest [*protoierei*]; many thought he should have become bishop or patriarch; aside from the fact that his wife lived till his old age, there would have been obstacles, for he was more wedded to truth than diplomacy.) Born near Odessa, he won honors in a classical gymnasium in that city and attended its university, from which he was graduated in 1916 and took his master's degree in 1919 and where he served the following academic year as privatdocent. The family emigrated in 1920 to Sofia. There he became a prominent member of the so-called "Eurasian" circle, but he did not fully share their enthusiasm for the Mongol inheritance in Russia and was rather developing his interest in the Byzantine shaping of the Orthodox church to which he was to recall Russians and all Christians. At the end of 1921 he began a stay of several years in Prague, where he married Xenia Ivanovna Simonova. He helped organize an Orthodox seminary abroad, finally established as the Saint Sergius Theological Institute in Paris in 1925. A year later he became professor of patristics as a layman, being ordained priest only in 1932. His lectures were the basis of two books on the Greek Fathers of the fourth century (1931) and the fifth to the eighth century (1933). What he saw as the Westernizing of his superior, Sergius Bulgakov, and the latter's speculations on the Holy Wisdom, shared by other colleagues, led to his pursuit of what in contrast he termed "neo-patristic synthesis." He critically examined the development of the whole of Russian religious thought in *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (1937), of which a long-delayed English translation is about to be published. In this, his most important work, he traced Russia's departure from the Byzantine path, managing to find fault with both Peter the Great and the Slavophiles, Western influences and Russian responses. But he did not propose retreat into any sanctuary of Greek virtue. From the time he came to Paris he became increasingly involved in contacts with Roman Catholics and Protestants of varying persuasions, and was active from 1929 in the (Anglican-Orthodox) Fellowship of Saints Alban and Sergius. I later heard him tell an enthralled but baffled Presbyterian audience, "When West and East meet in the study of the Greek Fathers, that is a meeting indeed!" This was in fact the core of his message to the whole church: "re-Hellenization."

The Florovskys spent much of the war in Bela Crkva, Yugoslavia, and then Prague; at the end of 1945 they managed to return to Paris. After the World Council of Churches was effectively constituted in Amsterdam (1948)—he objected to the use of "churches" in the plural but in vain—he became professor at Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary in New York and from 1951 to 1955 dean. In 1954 he and his wife became United States citizens. In 1955 his deanship came to an end; at issue were his insistence on a solid curriculum and his vision of a united and American Orthodox community, but, as noted, he was not a diplomat. After a part of a year at the Greek Orthodox Theological School in Brookline, he went to Harvard as lecturer and then professor of Eastern church history, later also affiliating with the Slavic Department. He retired from Harvard at seventy in 1964, but was then invited by Princeton to be visiting professor in history and Slavic, where he taught up to a few months before his death. The death of his wife in 1977 removed an essential part of his life, and made it additionally hard for him to

transfer to paper the enormous learning and wisdom which many of us who loved him feared would die with him. And so it proved.

Florovsky was a theologian—some think unsurpassed in his day in any Christian church—and an ardent though critical ecumenist; he was also a scholar—historian, philosopher, Slavist, and *littérateur*. An incomplete bibliography in the Festschrift entitled *The Heritage of the Early Church*, coming up to 1969, covers fifteen pages of entries in eleven languages. Nordland Publishing Company is bringing out a set of his Collected Works in English. George H. Williams's fine one-hundred-page essay in the *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* (1965) supplies the best treatment of Florovsky's religious ideas but pays little attention to his contributions to Slavic studies—a lack that this short notice cannot remedy. Some such contributions are still to appear, in the sense that he inspired many of his own graduate students at Harvard and Princeton, and many who never studied formally with him but sought to emulate his methods and pursue his insights. Some of their publications lie in the future. Those men and women, at least, recognize that his formidable combination of the best European education of its greatest era and towering intellect cannot be expected to appear again in our time, among Russians or Americans. For us, his long life was not long enough.

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BERNARD GUILBERT GUERNEY, 1894–1979

Bernard Guilbert Guerneý was one of the handful of translator-artists who emerged in this century to revitalize classical Russian literature for English readers. A sweeping glance over the shelves that hold the vast collection of Guerneý's papers, manuscripts, correspondence, memorabilia, and published works suggests the scope of the man's contribution. It is probably safe to assume that many Slavists in this country were nurtured on Guerneý translations, for he introduced the American reader to an extensive amount of Russian literature translated directly from the original Russian. Guerneý's strikingly fresh editorial comments on these poems, plays, short stories, and novels gave an unpretentious but knowledgeable account of the history of Russian literature.

If Guerneý had done nothing else, his monumental translation of Gogol's *Dead Souls* would have been enough of a contribution. First published by the Readers' Club in 1942, under the title *Chichikov's Journeys, or, A Home Life in Old Russia*, his translation of *Dead Souls* has been issued several times in both one- and two-volume editions. Guerneý's sensitivity to Gogol's poetics gave a definitive English rendering to a work that, according to Vladimir Nabokov, had existed previously in only "ridiculously garbled versions."

Guerneý was born Bernard Abramovich Bronstein, son of Ol'ga Grigor'evna and Abram Iosipovich Bronstein. He spent his first eleven years in Russia—in Nikolaev and Dnepropetrovsk. In 1905 the family joined his father, who had been in New York City since 1900.

Guerneý claimed that he learned to read at the age of two and was forever after fascinated by the written word. His was a life-long devotion to the world of letters as writer, publisher, translator, editor, reviewer, and bookseller at his own Blue Faun Bookshop, a prominent setting for the literary activities of this confirmed New Yorker. Guerneý began to write his own stories while in his teens, using a pen name taken from the title character in Theodore Hook's novel *Gilbert Gurney* (1834). His original work was first accepted for publication in 1917 under that