

The work of the great Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin has been examined from a wide variety of literary and theoretical perspectives. None of the many studies of Bakhtin begins to do justice, however, to the Christian dimension of his work. *Christianity in Bakhtin* for the first time fills this important gap. Having established the strong presence of a Christian framework in his early philosophical essays, Ruth Coates explores the way in which Christian motifs, though suppressed, continue to find expression in the work of Bakhtin's period of exile, and re-emerge in texts written during the time of his rehabilitation. Particular attention is paid to the themes of Creation, Fall, Incarnation and Christian love as they operate within metaphors of silence and exile, concepts which inform Bakhtin's world-view as profoundly as they influence his biography.

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CHRISTIANITY IN BAKHTIN

God and the exiled author

RUTH COATES



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For my mother and father

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xi
<i>Note on translation and citation</i>	xiii
1 Introduction	I
2 Fall and Incarnation in ‘Towards a Philosophy of the Act’	25
3 The aesthetic gospel of ‘Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity’	37
4 Was Bakhtin a Marxist? The work of the Bakhtin Circle, 1924–1929	57
5 Falling silent: the critical aesthetic of <i>Problems of Dostoevsky’s Creative Work</i>	84
6 The exiled author: ‘Discourse in the Novel’ and beyond	103
7 Christian motifs in Bakhtin’s carnival writings	126
8 The fate of Christian motifs in Bakhtin’s work	152
<i>Notes</i>	177
<i>Bibliography</i>	187
<i>Index</i>	200

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Abbreviations

WORKS BY M. M. BAKHTIN

'Author and Hero'	'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' (c. 1920–4)
'Changes to <i>Rabelais</i> '	'Additions and Changes to <i>Rabelais</i> ' (1944)
'Chronotope'	'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' (1937–8)
'Content, Material and Form'	'The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Creative Literature' (1924)
<i>Dostoevsky's Creative Work</i>	<i>Problems of Dostoevsky's Creative Work</i> (1929)
<i>Dostoevsky's Poetics</i>	<i>Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics</i> (1963)
'Epic and Novel'	'Epic and Novel (towards a methodology for the study of the novel)' (1941)
'Exercise Books'	'From Draft Exercise Books' (1943–61)
'Methodology of the Human Sciences'	'Towards a Methodology of the Human Sciences' (1974)
'Notes of 1970–71'	'From Notes of 1970–71'
'Philosophy of the Act'	'Towards a Philosophy of the Act' (c. 1920–4)
'Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse'	'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse' (1940)
'Problem of the Text'	'The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology and other Human Sciences (an attempt at a philosophical analysis)' (1959–61)
<i>Rabelais</i>	<i>The Work of François Rabelais and Popular Culture of the Middle Ages</i> (1965)
'Reworking of Dostoevsky'	'Towards a Reworking of the Book on Dostoevsky' (1961)
'Speech Genres'	'The Problem of Speech Genres' (1952–3)

WORKS BY P. N. MEDVEDEV

*Formal Method**The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A
Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics (1928)*

WORKS BY V. N. VOLOSHINOV

*Marxism and the
Philosophy of Language**Marxism and the Philosophy of Language: Basic
Problems of the Sociological Method in the Science
of Language (1929)*

Note on translation and citation

In deciding to render quotations from primary sources in translation, I have been faced with the dilemma of whether to use available translations or to do my own. As a result I have adopted a hybrid system: I use official translations where these exist except for ‘Philosophy of the Act’, ‘Author and Hero’, and ‘Content, Material and Form’ (because the chapters which deal with these essays were complete before the appearance of Vadim Liapunov’s translations), and also the late texts ‘Problem of the Text’, ‘Notes of 1970–71’, and ‘Methodology of the Human Sciences’ (because I have reservations about Vern McGee’s translation of them). This practice is reflected in the form of my references. Where two figures are given, it indicates that I have used an official translation. In such cases the first figure refers to the page in the Russian original, whilst the second figure, given in square brackets, refers to the page in the translation, thus: (‘Discourse in the Novel’, 112 [299]). Details of translations may be found in the Bibliography after their Russian originals. Where only one figure, that of the original, is given, it indicates that I have translated the text myself. Primary texts are referred to using the abbreviations listed on the previous two pages; secondary literature is referred to by the author–date system.

I have used the British system of Cyrillic transliteration, but rendered -iy as -y, as do *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, at the end of personal names. Quotations from the Bible are from the New International Version.

Finally, when translating from Bakhtin and when commenting on his texts, I frequently encountered the problem of masculine gender bias in his use of personal and possessive pronouns. Occasionally, in the absence of a stylistically appropriate alternative, I have found it necessary to reflect this bias in my own syntax.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

This book is about Christian motifs in the writings of the philosopher Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895–1975). As such it is already contentious if one is to judge by the way in which this writer's work has been received, especially in the West. For although Bakhtin has been appropriated for a wide variety of critical and literary theoretical positions, ranging from Marxism to post-structuralism, it has been generally assumed that he is a secular thinker even where it has been accepted that he was a religious man. I believe that this assumption stands in need of some correction. If at first critical neglect of Christian motifs in Bakhtin was due to pardonable ignorance – certain crucial, early and late, texts being made available only by the mid 1980s (in Russia) and the early 1990s (in the West) – it now seems attributable to a certain, uncanny 'blindness', at least among Slavists, who have had time enough to respond to this particular voice among the many that contend for attention in Bakhtin's work. By focusing on the Christian voice in Bakhtin to the exclusion of all others, I hope to provide what I believe to be a necessary counterbalance to extant readings, and something of an 'eye-opener' for those who would dismiss the idea of a religious dimension in his work as unfounded, irrelevant or naive. I do not, however, take on opposing views within the bounds of the book; my task is to demonstrate the presence and development of Christian influences in Bakhtin's work. Although there is biographical evidence to support the view that Bakhtin was acquainted with and sympathetic to Christianity, I do not appeal to this in the body of my text, as I hope that my reading will be found justified on purely textual grounds. However, for background and general information with a tangential relevance to my topic I have devoted the first part of the Introduction to a review of Bakhtin's 'religious biography'. The second part aims to situate the book with respect to

critical literature on Bakhtin; since a total orientation is unfeasible, I have restricted my overview to full-length works on Bakhtin and articles in English and Russian which touch on my subject. Finally, I give some attention to the title, content and structure of the book.

BAKHTIN'S RELIGIOUS BIOGRAPHY

L. E. Pinsky is reported to have said, in a lecture at a conference held in Bakhtin's honour shortly after his death, that Bakhtin was a *filosof-molchun*, a philosopher and a man who kept silence (Kagan 1991, 87). In particular, his friends and helpers of the sixties and seventies agree that he rarely and with great reluctance talked about himself (for example, Kozhinov 1992, 111; Gachev 1993, 106–7). This, taken together with the fact that he was one of the last survivors among the intelligentsia of the early decades of the twentieth century (both time and the Stalinist purges having taken their toll), means that almost nothing is known of his life, still less of his inner life. Even the taped interviews with V. D. Duvakin, recorded in the last years of Bakhtin's life and later transcribed serially in the journal *Chelovek* (Duvakin 1993a–1994d), yield next to nothing about Bakhtin's personal convictions. Nevertheless, there is a general consensus among those who knew him that Bakhtin was a religious man. And indeed, it is possible to piece together the little reliable data available to us and construct a fragile framework that might be called Bakhtin's 'religious biography'.

In doing so, it is first necessary to say something about the only full-length biography of Bakhtin that has been written to date: Clark and Holquist's *Mikhail Bakhtin* (1984a). Clark and Holquist also construct a framework from firm documentary evidence and mostly reliable anecdotal evidence (interviews with Bakhtin's young and old acquaintances), padding it out with information about the social, intellectual and political conditions of the time drawn from a wide range of sources unconnected with Bakhtin. The result is an apparently seamless narrative which creates an image of Bakhtin as an integral personality with a well-documented personal history. This image is, however, deceptive. Whilst both methodologies are valid in their own right, Clark and Holquist's combination of the two can result in a misleading impression of substantiality. Bakhtin is placed into his historical context in such a way as to suggest he had definite connections with trends of thought, even specific organisa-

tions, when in fact there is no hard evidence that he did. Or if there is hard evidence, Clark and Holquist do not attest it: there tends to be scanty or non-existent footnoting at precisely those points in their narrative where the attested historical Bakhtin is blended so seamlessly with the attested historical Vilnius, or Odessa, or Vitebsk, or Petrograd. If one is acquainted with the primary biographical material on Bakhtin, Clark and Holquist's sources are sometimes detectable, leading one to suppose their lack of attestation to be the result only of negligence, but such an acquaintance can also leave one wondering how they came to certain conclusions. In general, a more scholarly approach to Bakhtin's biography is needed in order to inspire trust in the narrative, which seems in places to border on fiction.

One of the weakest chapters of the biography in this respect is, unfortunately, Chapter 5, 'Religious Activities and the Arrest' (1984a, 120–45), the chapter which deals with Bakhtin's religious orientation. It opens in this way:

Bakhtin was a religious man. In his childhood he had had a conventional upbringing as a Russian Orthodox. By the 1920s, religious thought had become one of Bakhtin's central interests. He was known in intellectual circles of those days as a *cerkownik*, a 'churchman' or 'adherent of the church'. This term does not mean that he was a churchgoer but implies simply that he was ideologically committed to the church. Although he later became less involved with religion, he remained a believer in the Orthodox tradition all his life.

The only attested statement in this paragraph is that which refers to Bakhtin's reputation as a 'churchman', taken from an interview with V. Shklovsky in 1978, yet in their footnote Clark and Holquist qualify even this by admitting that 'Shklovsky may have exaggerated Bakhtin's involvement in the church, since he himself was far from those circles' (1984a, 370). Chapter 5 continues with a description of the nature of Bakhtin's religious convictions:

Bakhtin was never a conventional Russian Orthodox in the sense of conforming to an organized religion. Rather, he was a religious intellectual from the Orthodox tradition. His religious views came not so much from traditional Orthodox thinking within the church as from the religious revival in the early twentieth century among Russian intellectuals who sought to break new ground in theological thought. Bakhtin's Orthodox theology was not of the run-of-the-mill seminary but of the highbrow

intelligentsia. Indeed, he was not interested so much in religion as in the philosophy of religion. (1984a, 120)

However plausible this account may be, and however attractive to a late-twentieth-century readership, it is pure speculation, based, one must hazard (since the reader is not informed), on the tenor of Bakhtin's writing.

Clark and Holquist proceed to give an informative and lively overview of religious–intellectual life in Leningrad in the 1920s as it went on in the form of various societies, periodically giving the reader to understand that Bakhtin took an active part in them. However, on close examination it becomes clear that there is almost no proof of any connection, and many of Clark and Holquist's bridging statements are qualified with a 'probably', 'possibly' or 'almost certainly'. To cite some examples, in reference to the Free Philosophical Association it is said 'it is possible that Bakhtin attended occasional meetings of the association on his visits to Petrograd' (1984a, 125); of Voskresenie they write 'Bakhtin was not definitely a member of Voskresenie, though Yudina and Pumpyansky attended meetings from the fall of 1920' (1984a, 126). (Yudina and Pumpyansky were members of the so-called Bakhtin Circle. Frequently the religious activity of Bakhtin's friends is adduced to enforce speculation about Bakhtin's own leanings, a practice which seems not entirely satisfactory. Often, even these 'facts' are not attested.) With respect to the Brotherhood of Saint Seraphim, 'there is no conclusive evidence that Bakhtin was a member' (1984a, 133), further, 'Bakhtin is not known to have been a member' of the True Orthodox Catacomb Church (1984a, 140). Bakhtin is associated with some of these groups by alleged friendship with their leading members. Specifically, he is said to have known A. A. Meier of Voskresenie, A. V. Kartashev of the Brotherhood of Saint Sophia, and Archpriest F. K. Andreev of the Josephite schism, although no proof is offered. Another way of linking him with religious intellectuals is by way of intellectual affiliation, Clark and Holquist providing brief surveys, for example, of his alleged affinities with Fr P. A. Florensky, S. A. Askoldov and G. P. Fedotov. But these approaches, I suggest, do not in the end tell us anything substantial about what Bakhtin really believed during the 1920s, let alone, of course, during the rest of his life.

What, then, can be said about Bakhtin's religiousness from the

biographical evidence available? Bocharov testifies that in 1916, while he was studying at Petrograd University, Bakhtin was introduced to the Religious–Philosophical Society by Kartashev, where he made the acquaintance of D. S. Merezhkovsky (Bocharov 1993, 81; see also Clark and Holquist 1984a, 29–30, where the influence of Fr Florensky and Meier is also claimed, but not substantiated). In the Duvakin interviews, Bakhtin confirms that he attended meetings of this society (Duvakin 1993b, 141; 1993c, 147–51). It is known that on 27 November 1918 Bakhtin took part in a debate entitled ‘God and Socialism’ in Nevel’, where he lived between 1918 and 1920, because a review of the debate in the local newspaper, *Molot*, has been preserved. Nevel’skaya (1981) quotes extensively from the not unbiased reviewer, who writes:

After comrade Deikhman comrade Bakhtin took the floor. In his speech, in which he defended religion, that muzzle [*namordnik*] of darkness, he hovered somewhere in the region of the heavens and higher. There were no living examples from the life and history of humankind in his speech. At certain points of his discourse he showed recognition and appreciation of socialism, but could only wail and was disturbed that this same socialism showed no concern at all for the dead (what, it doesn’t celebrate requiems?) and that, as he put it, with time the people would not forgive it for this. When, I wonder, ‘won’t it forgive’? In 100 years from now or more? – when the people will be 100 times more enlightened than the present generation! ‘That won’t happen,’ someone answered Bakhtin. Generally speaking, listening to his words you might think that any minute now all the hosts lying decayed in their graves will be resurrected, rise up and sweep all communists, and the socialism they are carrying out, from the face of the earth. (Nevel’skaya 1981, 274, quoted from *Molot*, 3 December 1918, No. 47)

From the same newspaper we know that there were other public meetings devoted to topics including ‘On the Meaning of Life’, ‘On the Meaning of Love’, ‘Christianity and Criticism’ and ‘Nietzsche and Christianity’ (Bocharov 1993, 84; see also Clark and Holquist 1984a, 42–3).

The next set of documentary evidence provides glimpses of the religious Bakhtin in Leningrad, to which he returned in 1924 and where he lived until he was sent into exile in 1929. Recently, a set of lecture notes made in 1924–5 by Pumpyansky, one of the original members of the Bakhtin Circle, has been published, and provides an invaluable insight into the circle’s activities during that period (Nikolaev 1992). The notes include a paper on ‘The Problem of Well-

founded Peace' read by Bakhtin, in which he outlines what he considers to be the proper task of the philosophy of religion, analyses the position of the tax collector of the gospel parable as one who finds justification not in himself, like the Pharisee, but in an 'incarnated Third Person' (Nikolaev 1992, 235), and posits well-founded peace as that which is reached when one abandons self-assurance and passes through a period of restlessness and penitence to arrive at a condition of trust in God (Nikolaev 1992, 236). Pumpyansky also notes Bakhtin's responses to papers given by M. I. Tubyansky on Schell's theology at the end of 1925; these include an especially interesting analysis of the self-revelation of God as personal in character, and of the relationship with God as a relationship of two consciousnesses: 'A personal relationship with a personal God: this is the sign of religion, but it is also the special difficulty of religion, thanks to which a peculiar fear of religion and Revelation may arise, a fear of its personal orientation' (Nikolaev 1992, 246). That theology was one of the main preoccupations of the circle in 1925–6 is attested further by Pumpyansky's reading list of the period (Nikolaev 1992, 251), and by a letter of 1926 from Pumpyansky to another founding member of the circle, M. I. Kagan, then resident in Moscow:

We have been missing you . . . all this year – all these years – but especially this year, because we have been doggedly studying theology. The circle of our closest friends remains the same: M. B. Yudina, Mikh. Mikh. Bakhtin, Mikh. Izr. Tubyansky and I. Believe me, we often exclaim: what a shame that M. I. isn't here, he could have helped disentangle that question! (Nevel'skaya 1981, 265–6)

In the night of 24/25 December 1928, Bakhtin was taken into custody as part of a wave of arrests connected with the liquidation of Leningrad's religious society Voskresenie. The documentation of the affair, held to date in the KGB archives, runs to five volumes (Savkin, 1991, 108–9). Savkin relates that he and other scholars were allowed access to the material, but that they were unable to complete work on it for reasons outside their control (1991, 108). However, they were able to collect and publish transcripts of Bakhtin's interrogations under Stromin (on 26 December) and Petrov (on 28 December). It appears that Bakhtin was accused of participation in the 'counter-revolutionary' organisation Voskresenie, but that nothing Bakhtin said during his interrogations supported the claim (1991, 109). It is

known, however, that Bakhtin was well acquainted with the leader of the society, A. A. Meier; Bakhtin's literary executor, S. G. Bocharov, testifies that Bakhtin made Meier's acquaintance while still a student and spoke of him as one of those closest to him during the 1920s (Savkin 1991, 109–10; see also Bocharov 1993, 82). In the Duvakin interviews, Bakhtin confirms that he knew Meier and found him very impressive, but did not sympathise with his views and did not attend his meetings; rather, it was Meier who occasionally visited Bakhtin (Duvakin 1993c, 151). During his first interrogation Stromin wrote down from Bakhtin's words, 'Political convictions: Marxist-revolutionary, loyal to Soviet power, religious' (Savkin 1991, 110). Strangely, Yu. P. Medvedev's citation of the same interrogation differs somewhat: 'no party affiliation. Marxist-revisionist. . . religious' (1992, 97). Which of these is the more accurate cannot as yet be verified, but Bakhtin clearly admitted faith in God.

During his interrogations Bakhtin was asked to give information about his lecturing activities in Leningrad, where they had taken place, who had attended, and what they were about. To this end he outlined the content of two papers given on M. Scheler, in which his treatment of the concepts of confession and resurrection were examined:

According to Scheler, confession is the laying bare of oneself to others, making social ('discourse') what used to strive towards its extra-verbal limit ('sin') and was an isolated, unconquered, alien body in the inner life of a person. The second paper was about resurrection. The gist: life will rise from the dead not for its own sake but for the sake of that value which only love can disclose in it. (Savkin 1991, 111)

Meier had taken part in the discussions following one of these papers (Savkin 1991, 111). Bakhtin was released on 5 January 1929, but interrogated again on 13 March. This time he admitted to meetings held at his flat for former students of the Petrograd Theological Institute, which had been closed down in 1923 (Clark and Holquist 1984a, 138) but had continued to operate in private homes under the organisation of one of the teaching staff, Shcherboi (Savkin 1991, 113; Clark and Holquist call him Sherbov, 1984a, 138). In the end Bakhtin was sentenced to five years in prison camp on the Solovetsky Islands (Savkin 1991, 114), commuted after a great effort on the part of his friends to a period of internal exile in Kustanai, Kazakhstan.

For about thirty years after Bakhtin's departure into exile there is next to no documentary evidence about his life, let alone his religious

life, whose public dimension naturally vanished in the wake of his conviction and under the pressure of a militant ideological atheism. In the early 1960s, however, three graduate students at the Institute of World Literature in Moscow (S. G. Bocharov, V. V. Kozhinov and G. D. Gachev) discovered that Bakhtin was still alive and began to visit him in exile, eventually rehabilitating him, seeing through the publication of his works and resettling him and his wife in Moscow. The first visit took place in June 1961 (Bocharov 1993, 76). Both Kozhinov and Bocharov recall that on their very first meeting Bakhtin went out of his way to assure them that he was not a Marxist (Bocharov 1993, 76–7; Kozhinov 1992, 113). Before long, other scholars also began visiting the philosopher; two of these, V. N. Turbin and L. S. Melikhova, became intensively involved in the physical care of the Bakhtins. As a result of these working relationships with Bakhtin, which extended until his death in 1975, we have sporadic but highly trustworthy anecdotal evidence that he had not abandoned his faith during his long period of obscurity but had continued to meditate on religious themes. Kozhinov, for example, relates the following in an interview with the editor of a new journal on Bakhtin:

What Bakhtin often used to call the ‘philosophy of dialogue’ lay at the basis of all his literary-critical works: all of life is a dialogue, a dialogue between person and person, person and nature, person and God . . . Even simply the very existence of a person, if you like, is also a ‘dialogue’, the exchange of substances between the person and the surrounding environment. And in this regard Bakhtin several times repeated the phrase that, as it were, objective idealism maintains that the kingdom of God is outside us, and Tolstoy, for example, insists that it is ‘within us’, but I think that the kingdom of God is between us, between me and you, between me and God, between me and nature: that’s where the kingdom of God is. (Kozhinov 1992, 114–15)

If God is related to Bakhtin’s dialogic concept, his other famous conceptual tool, carnival, appears also to have been associated with religion in Bakhtin’s mind, judging by Turbin’s testimony that Bakhtin once reflected in his presence that ‘the gospel, too, is carnival’ (1990, 25). Melikhova, for her part, likes to show visitors the icon of St Seraphim of Sarov which the Bakhtins held in their flat in the 1920s and which accompanied them (albeit hidden away) into exile. She relates that Bakhtin considered the saint to be his ‘heavenly protector’ (Bocharov 1993, 87; Clark and Holquist 1984a, 133).

Bocharov’s recent publication, ‘Ob odnom razgovore i vokrug

nego' ('On and around a certain conversation') (1993), sheds highly interesting light on Bakhtin's attitude to his own silence on religious matters in his work, indicating that the fear of repression was influencing him even in the 1920s. Bocharov relates a conversation that took place on 9 June 1970, from which I quote the relevant passage in full (the two books referred to are Voloshinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* and Bakhtin's first monograph, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Creative Work*):

BAKHTIN: Everything that was created over the course of this half-century on this graceless [*bezblagodatnoi*] soil under this unfree sky, it is all depraved to some degree or other.

BOCHAROV: Mikhail Mikhailovich, leaving [Voloshinov's] book aside for a moment, that's a complicated matter, but what is depraved about your book on Dostoevsky?

BAKHTIN: Oh come now, could I really have written like that? I tore the form away from the most important thing, you know. I couldn't talk directly about the main questions.

BOCHAROV: Which questions, M. M.?

BAKHTIN: Philosophical questions, what Dostoevsky tormented himself with all his life: the existence of God. I had to prevaricate all the time, to and fro. I had to take a firm hold of myself. As soon as a thought got going it was necessary to stop it. To and fro (Bakhtin repeated this several times during the conversation). I even qualified what I said about the Church. (1993, 71–2)

A little later on in the conversation Bakhtin implicitly accused himself of treachery. Referring to the literary-critical work of Bocharov and his colleagues he said: 'You, at least, do not betray. If you don't assert, it's because you're not sure. But I prevaricated – to and fro' (1993, 73). What did Bakhtin feel he had betrayed? Gachev's recent reminiscences give the answer: whilst consulting with Bakhtin about a book he was planning to write on the history of conscience, Bakhtin asked him: 'But what point of support will you adopt for conscience? For me that point of support is God' (1993, 107).

CRITICAL LITERATURE ON BAKHTIN AND THE QUESTION OF A CHRISTIAN READING

Full-length works

There are many possible ways of dividing up the list of full-length works on Bakhtin that are currently on the market: those written by

Slavists and those by non-Slavists, by Russians and non-Russians, by Europeans and non-Europeans, and so on. A discussion of the secondary literature under these headings would yield interesting results, not least from a culturological point of view. What does it say about the West and the East, for example, that to date only one slim monograph has been produced on Bakhtin in his native Russia,¹ where there is no language barrier to prevent access to Bakhtin's entire *oeuvre* and where the texts have been available for a long time, whereas upwards of twelve books devoted to him have appeared in the West over the past thirteen years, despite cultural and linguistic barriers to understanding Bakhtin and with some key texts unavailable in translation until very recently. Russian scholars have tended to comment on this phenomenon in a self-critical spirit; Volkova, for example, laments the slowness of native scholars to respond to Bakhtin, pointing out the discrepancy between the quantity of articles and books published in Russia and the West (a ratio, she claims, of 285 to 412 as of the end of 1990) (Volkova 1990, 5), whilst Averintsev (1988b) finds the feet-dragging attitude of the Soviet/Russian academic establishment to its national heritage scandalous. However, a Western 'other' might point out, to the Russians' credit, a certain modesty in their measured appropriation of Bakhtin from which our rather brasher, more hasty Western academics might learn. The broad thrust of Russian literature on Bakhtin has comprised meditative conceptual studies and contributions towards his historical contextualisation, in particular his position in the history of Russian thought, whereas Western literature has tended to concentrate on 'extensions and challenges' (as Morson and Emerson's 1989 collection of articles is succinctly headed), the application of Bakhtinian concepts or their refutation, perhaps before they have been adequately understood. These two, intensive and extensive, approaches are, of course, complementary: what is needed, perhaps, is more communication between them.

Most of the full-length studies of Bakhtin discuss his writings as a whole, although their methodologies differ widely. Of the three comprehensive introductory works available, Todorov's pioneering monograph (1981, translated into English in 1984) comprises a systematic, synchronic exposition of Bakhtin's thought; Clark and Holquist (1984a), as we have seen, take a chronological and a biographical approach; whilst Morson and Emerson (1990) opt to combine the two in their long book, which presents thematically a

view of Bakhtin's thought as developing over time. In general, the publications of the nineties build on these general surveys by offering an interpretation of Bakhtin within more specific comparative frameworks. Thus Holquist's study (1990) offers an interpretation of Bakhtin's 'dialogism' as one of the great paradigm shifts of the twentieth century, Gardiner (1992) compares Bakhtin to the hermeneutic giants Gadamer, Habermas and Ricoeur as a cultural theoretician of the left, and Bernard-Donals (1994) considers his relationship to Neo-Kantianism and phenomenology, on the one hand, and materialism (including Marxist materialism), on the other.

With the single exception of Clark and Holquist's biography, however, none of the above-mentioned books even begin to do justice to the religious dimension to Bakhtin's work. Todorov merely notes Bakhtin's 'interest in religious subjects' in his first chapter's biographical sketch (1984, 4); Gardiner, apart from a faintly patronising remark in his Introduction to the effect that Bakhtin has 'even' been portrayed as a religious thinker (1992, 2), relegates the matter to a single footnote (1992, note 6, 215)²; Holquist frankly concedes that as a non-believer he only concerned himself with Bakhtin's own faith when collaborating on the 1984 biography out of a sense of responsibility before the facts (1990, xii), and proposes now to concentrate on aspects of Bakhtin in which he has a personal interest; Bernard-Donals does not mention the matter at all. Morson and Emerson devote fewer than 5 pages of text, put together, to an examination of Christian themes and allusions in Bakhtin, out of a total of 530. Where possible their treatment of this area is confined to the categories of analogy (1990, 239-40, God and the Dostoevskian author) and allegory (403, Christ's metamorphosis of God into slave). They acknowledge Christian figures in Bakhtin only where it would be impossible honestly to pass them by, but do make some succinct comments, such as 'Bakhtin's theology, to the extent he had one, is not of resurrection but of incarnation' (1990, 61).

Whatever the shortcomings of their book, Clark and Holquist (1984a) deserve great credit for their conscientious documentation and discussion of this aspect of Bakhtin's life and work. They record what is known of his beliefs, and they incorporate a discussion of certain religious elements of his thought into their survey of his early essays and of his monograph *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984a, 82-7, 248-52). If their coverage of this aspect of Bakhtin is limited, it is due in part to the limitations of the book as a whole: firstly, the

very comprehensiveness of Clark and Holquist's project means that no one theme is given the full attention it deserves, thus the passages on Christian motifs in texts written before Bakhtin's exile raise the reader's interest but are not followed through by any investigation of what happens to these motifs in later texts. Likewise, after the fifth chapter (on Bakhtin's religious activities in Leningrad) no more is said about Bakhtin's Christian practice or beliefs until he is on his death-bed and waves away the priest (1984a, 343). The book also suffers, however, from a lack of scholarliness and an alarming degree of speculation (see my discussion above), which undermines the real value of the religious theme. Nevertheless, to give it its due, *Mikhail Bakhtin* can be said to perform a useful function in raising awareness of this topic (as of many others), and is best viewed as an introductory stimulus to further research. Indeed, my own project was in part prompted by undeveloped ideas in Clark and Holquist's book.

There is one monograph, Patterson's *Literature and Spirit: Essays on Bakhtin and his Contemporaries* (1988), which, as its title suggests, takes Bakhtin's spiritual dimension consistently seriously. But the book is a comparative, not an expository, study; thus Bakhtin's spirituality is assumed rather than laid bare, irritating the reader (such as David Shepherd (1992, 66)) who is not sympathetic to a religious reading of Bakhtin. Patterson proceeds from the, regrettably, unexamined assumption that 'operating from a generally religious and distinctively Christian viewpoint, Bakhtin embraces the Johannine concept of the word and regards the dialogical dimensions of literature as a revelation of spirit' (1988, 3). He goes on to draw Bakhtin's ideas into a 'dialogue' with those of Foucault, Berdyaev, Gide, Lacan, Levinas and Heidegger. Various concepts from these thinkers come together in Patterson's imagination to suggest rich possibilities for interaction. His book is more a meditation than a scholarly work, as the flyleaf suggests, but even as a meditation it is imperilled by Patterson's difficult, one feels bound to say contorted, style, which is unfortunate, since the comparisons he undertakes surely bear much promise and because, it seems to me, there really is a spiritual core to Bakhtin which deserves to be taken seriously and to gain wider recognition among his readership. At least in the West this ground has not been broken, but a different kind of study to Patterson's is needed before his book can even begin to be, if not accepted, then at least meaningfully criticised.

There are of course a great many monographs which use Bakhtin

to illuminate another author or discipline, rather than analyse Bakhtin himself. Particularly relevant to this book is Jones' *Dostoevsky after Bakhtin: Readings in Dostoevsky's Fantastic Realism* (1990), which, although it takes Dostoevsky as its object of investigation, finds itself in intense dialogue with Bakhtin insofar as Dostoevsky is read in the light of the new paradigm, as Jones puts it (1990, viii), which has been brought about in Dostoevsky studies by Bakhtin's authoritative reading of him in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Yet in a second sense the book is about Bakhtin in that Jones, in his own reading of Dostoevsky, subjects Bakhtin's work to a certain respectful critique, partly extending the latter's concept, partly pointing out its inadequacies. Jones' main criticism of Bakhtin is that he failed to take account of the destructive, violent nature of much Dostoevskian verbal interaction, for which the author is famous, and of dialogic breakdown and failure: polyphony, after all, is a harmonious concept. In this Jones is palpably correct, and his examination of this aspect of Dostoevsky's texts persuasively develops his point. Jones' extension of Bakhtin, however, goes some way to redressing the latter's oversight, and in a direction which bears indirectly (sometimes directly) on my own thesis. For Jones attempts to extend Bakhtin 'in the direction of a Christian poetics' (1990, 199): first, by showing, in his chapter '*The Brothers Karamazov: The Whisper of God*', how crucial elements of the Christian kerygma are suppressed, both in the text of the novel, and in the minds of certain of its characters; second, by suggesting that a Christian reading of *The Brothers Karamazov* might productively employ a concept of language as 'fallen' in the interpretation of this suppression. Jones appears to be unaware that Bakhtin, as I hope to show, developed a keen awareness of the fallenness of discourse which is reflected in his mature writings. In his Preface Jones writes (in the context of a discussion of how Bakhtin's work might be assimilated to a number of theoretical approaches to literature):

In my own view . . . he could just as easily be assimilated to a Christian literary theory of a new kind and, despite the neglect in his writings of the Christian tradition – he was after all writing in Soviet Russia – his personal adherence to Orthodoxy makes one think that he would not have been altogether surprised or dismayed by such a suggestion. (1990, xi)

I endorse this comment without hesitation, and hope that my study goes some way to providing the groundwork for such a literary theory.

Finally, the work of theologians influenced by Bakhtin should be mentioned. In his article of 1984 Polzin uses the concepts of 'authoritative' and 'inwardly persuasive' discourse in a Bakhtinian analysis of the book of Deuteronomy, referring the reader to his monograph of 1980 (but see also its sequel of 1989) for a more thorough treatment of certain key questions raised by his essay. These monographs analyse the narrative of Deuteronomy in an attempt to elucidate the question as to its ultimate semantic authority. H. C. White (1991) investigates Genesis in terms of author-character relationships, and Reed (1993) enlists Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope to work out a poetics of the Scriptures centred on the three generic paradigms of law, prophecy and wisdom.³ Of course, the application of Bakhtin's discourse theory to biblical texts is no indication of Bakhtin's own attitude to the Bible, although with Prickett (1986) I agree that the textual evidence shows Bakhtin's apparent consignment of Holy Writ to the realm of epic not to be as straightforward as it might at first appear: this is another area which I do not touch on here, but which could be profitably investigated.⁴

Related articles

Although it is true that a full account of the reflection of Bakhtin's religious beliefs in his work has not been written,⁵ there is a small body of articles devoted to this and related subjects. Most of these articles have come out in Russia, where they constitute a growing trend and make up a not insignificant proportion of Russian secondary literature on Bakhtin taken as a whole; in the West, by contrast, the interest shown in this aspect of Bakhtin has been minimal and barren in the sense that it has not given rise to further interest or a multiplication in the number of publications. Apart from an uncanny unwillingness to face the evidence, one might point by way of explanation for this phenomenon to the literary orientation of most Western Bakhtin scholarship over and against the philosophical orientation of its Russian counterpart, combined with the lack of availability, until very recently, of an English version of the texts in which Christian motifs are most apparent. Thus most of the few works on this subject that have come out in the West have been written by Slavists.

Ann Shukman's articles were a voice in the wilderness during the 1980s. In two articles about Bakhtin's treatment of Tolstoy (1984b;

1989), and in a review article of Clark and Holquist's biography and Emerson's translation of the book on Dostoevsky (1986), she approaches Bakhtin's Christianity tangentially. But in the one article devoted solely to the subject (1984a) she addresses the issue through what she terms Bakhtin's personalist 'philosophy of man', after a discussion of his relationship with his Neo-Kantian influences – Dilthey, Rickert and Cohen. Shukman appeals to rarely quoted passages in Bakhtin's early essay 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' and from his late essays to support her argument that Bakhtin is primarily concerned with personality in relation, including relation with God (1984a, 245–7). In the Tolstoy articles she uses much the same passages to provide a background against which the crudely Marxist Tolstoy Prefaces of 1929 and 1930 must, in her view, be understood, namely as examples of double-voiced discourse, in which Bakhtin responds to the times by producing an ideologically acceptable critique of Tolstoy's religious views whilst highlighting those same views through various devices, and ironising his critique by exaggeration. Although Shukman's studies serve as necessary reminders of an unpopular aspect of Bakhtin, they are, however, in themselves too short and insufficiently systematic to do full justice to the subject; rather they are pointers to a potentially rich area of enquiry.

Apart from Shukman's work, there appear to be no more than a few isolated essays in print in the English-speaking world which focus on Christianity and related themes in Bakhtin. Nina Perlina's article on Bakhtin and Buber (1984), to my knowledge, still stands alone, although there are signs that Western interest in Bakhtin's affinities with the other (religious) 'dialogic' thinkers of the twentieth century (Buber, Rosenzweig, Rosenstock-Huussy) is on the increase.⁶ Perlina claims that 'Bakhtin's discourse-utterance theory provides the linguistic basis for the existentialist and Judaeo-Christian philosophy of Martin Buber' (1984, 25), but she does not develop her claim into a comparative analysis of the specifically religious in Bakhtin and Buber, and does no more than mention Bakhtin's 'dialogue between man and God' (25). Her article outlines common intellectual influences and affinities in their respective understanding of dialogue, and common ideal authoritative–dialogic figures (including Christ), but the existence of spiritual affinities between Bakhtin and Buber, although implied throughout, is not made explicit. Barbara Thaden's untypical essay (1987) challenges Kriste-

va's appropriation of Bakhtin for deconstruction by asserting that Bakhtin 'does not deny the authorial voice in Dostoevsky, does not claim that Dostoevsky has lost control over his characters, and does not completely deconstruct the "I"' (1987, 200). For Thaden, the incomplete Bakhtinian 'I' is rather to be understood within the Judaeo-Christian tradition as that which is in need of the other, of communion, for completion; that is, as a refutation of egoism (1987, 205), indicating grounds for comparison of Bakhtin with religious existentialist thinkers like Buber and Jaspers. This needs to be investigated in much more detail. Other Western scholars who have produced article-length comparative studies of Bakhtin with religious philosophers include the Italians Augusto Ponzio (writing on Levinas, 1987) and Donatella Ferrari-Bravo (on Florensky, 1990).

Russian Federation Bakhtin scholarship was slow in starting up but has recently taken off at enormous speed judging by the amount of publication that has been going on in the area since the early nineties. Broadly speaking, one may divide Russian-language philosophical articles on Bakhtin into those which explicate concepts or works, those which discuss Bakhtin in his Russian intellectual context, and those which compare his work to Western philosophical trends. Within the last two categories there are subdivisions according to whether his intellectual predecessors, contemporaries or descendants form the object of comparative analysis. The categories are subject to overlap, as a great many publications attempt in a small amount of space to cover an enormous range. A small proportion of these articles focus on topics related to a Christian reading of Bakhtin.

Turbin's maverick article (1990) cannot be consigned to any of the above outlined categories, however. It is not a scholarly analysis of Bakhtinian texts so much as a deeply personal, and reverential, meditation on the themes of hunger and pain in Bakhtin's life as an experience in microcosm of hunger and pain in post-revolutionary Russia, on one level, and, on another, as a reflection of the hunger and pain undergone by Christ during His Passion. This, Bakhtin's, experience of universal suffering, is said to have given rise to his writings on carnival, which Turbin asserts to be 'the interpretation of the material world from the point of view of the spiritual, non-material world' (1990, 22), a 'witness by contrast' to the existence of another realm (1990, 23). Throughout, Bakhtin is portrayed as a saintly and wise spiritual figure, with unmistakable inferences as to

a common bond with Christ. Despite this, and although the essay is purely speculative, it is a rare example of an attempt to reconcile the anticlericalism of *Rabelais* with a spiritual interpretation of it, and, as such, shares a common bond with my own chapter on Bakhtinian carnival.

Perhaps the earliest chiefly ‘conceptual’ article on the subject of Bakhtin’s religious thought is that of Il’insky (1985), whose stated goal is to ‘attract the attention of the reader to Bakhtin’s personality and work in their religious aspect’ (1985, 61). Il’insky sees the roots of Bakhtin’s dialogic philosophy in the man/God relation of ‘Author and Hero’, and of his aesthetics generally in Christian concepts. He further attempts to show, albeit briefly, how his later, apparently unspiritually oriented work, does not contradict Bakhtin’s early views (for example, *Rabelais*, discussed on pp. 68–9). In these two aspects my thesis entirely corresponds with his, although it departs from it in that Il’insky does not indicate any development within the function of Christian motifs in Bakhtin’s work. They also have in common the view that his Christian foundation is not specifically Orthodox (65).

Il’insky is unusual in that he does not contextualise ‘Author and Hero’ by ‘situating’ Bakhtin within his own native religious-philosophical tradition. A scholar who frequently publishes in this area is K. G. Isupov, who produces careful, text-based and well-documented comparative studies. His article of 1990 discusses Bakhtin’s work of the early 1920s as part of a Russian philosophical tradition exploring the interrelationship of art and life. He draws in a very wide range of Russian thinkers, both Bakhtin’s predecessors and his contemporaries, for comparison, with special attention given to Florensky and Meier, but not neglecting Herzen, Karsavin, S. Bulgakov, Fyodorov, Rozanov and Dostoevsky, among others. The article includes a condensed survey of Christian motifs in ‘Author and Hero’ (which I deal with at greater length, but on essentially the same basis, in Chapter 3) (1990, 33–4, 39, 40). A scarcely revised version of this article was published in 1992 under a different title (1992a). Isupov has devoted whole articles to the intellectual relationship of Bakhtin with Meier and Florensky. His article on Bakhtin and Meier (1991b) compares and contrasts their respective views on the ‘other’, at the same time placing them in the Russian early-twentieth-century context of literary and philosophical debate. Isupov maintains that Bakhtin’s early work ‘quotes’ Meier’s writings

of the twenties and thirties (1991b, 61). Their differences are said to lie in Bakhtin's aesthetic as opposed to Meier's ontological approach to the I/other relation, his positive attitude to culture over against Meier's suspicion of it, and the absence in Bakhtin of 'gothic transcendence' (1991b, 69). The thrust of the article suggests that Christianity as it is traditionally understood could hardly be said to be an ultimate authority for Bakhtin: 'For Bakhtin neither Marxism nor Christianity were authorities at the level of final questions' (1991b, 65). In his article on Bakhtin and Florensky (1992b) Isupov locates both writers in a trend of the Russian religious renaissance towards recasting traditional philosophical problems into the language of aesthetics, describing Bakhtin's world-view as 'aesthetic Christianity' (1992b, 161). He goes on to explore the aesthetic functions of grace and self-sacrifice, sin and repentance in 'Author and Hero', and the functions of guilt and responsibility in 'Philosophy of the Act'. According to Isupov, the main difference between Florensky and Bakhtin is that Florensky stands for saving the other at the cost of your own life as a work of art, whereas Bakhtin emphasises the salvation of oneself in the other, and life as a work of art (Isupov 1992b, 167). Unlike Il'insky, Isupov does make use of such Orthodox concepts as *sobornost'* and the guilt of each before all. Finally, in another article (1991c) Isupov looks at *Rabelais* in the light of Russian philosophical criticism of Renaissance humanism from a Christian perspective, asking the question 'why did Bakhtin erase his early Christian anthropology and anthropodicy in his treatment of the Renaissance?' (1991c, 139).

Bonetskaya's articles on Florensky stress the differences between him and Bakhtin far more than the points of comparison, indeed her comparative essay of 1991 opens on a forthright statement to this effect: 'In their work Bakhtin and Florensky reveal the two opposite poles in Russian philosophy of the 1910s and twenties' (1991, 52; see also 1988, 10). Whereas Bakhtin is oriented towards the West and towards culture, Florensky is a conceptual descendant of the Slavophiles; Florensky's Platonic metaphysic is anathema to Bakhtin, whereas Florensky had no greater philosophical enemy than Kant, Bakhtin's greatest source of inspiration. The only thing they have in common is said to be their 'thirst for communication' (1991, 53). So this lively article goes on, comparing in the main the two thinkers' respective concepts of communion; Florensky's vision of the merging of lover and beloved, Bakhtin's insistence on separateness as a

fundamental precondition of communication. Interestingly, Bonetskaya is disinclined to align Bakhtin with the ethos of Orthodoxy, finding him to draw much more on the 'Judaeo-Protestant' tradition (1991, 54). She does not, however, broach the subject of Bakhtin's religious beliefs, and in her denial of the influence on Bakhtin of the image of the church as the body of Christ (1991, 57) indicates she might have reservations about such an investigation.

Bonetskaya's excellent, long and detailed article on the problem of the author in Bakhtin (1985) anticipates my study in significant ways. She follows a single concept, that of the author, chronologically through Bakhtin's entire *oeuvre* as it was then available (that is, without 'Philosophy of the Act'); this is the only Russian-language study I know of to do so in any detail. I, also, trace various motifs in a basically chronological study, chief among which is the figure of the author, whose fate I believe to be inseparable from the fate of God in Bakhtin's thought. Moreover, Bonetskaya identifies certain periods of Bakhtin's work with the diminishment of the author as the creative origin, and even touches upon authorial silence at the very end of her essay. Had she couched her discussion in terms of Christian motifs, centred on the figure of the author, her views would for the most part likely have coincided with my own. However, she does not do this, with the exception of a rather ambiguous passage on *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* in which Dostoevsky's faith is asserted to provide the foundation for his poetics and Christ is declared to be Dostoevsky's ideal human being and author, whereby it is unclear whose view Bonetskaya is representing at this point (1985, 97–8). She does not develop the concept of incarnation and its role in Bakhtin's work any further than this, nor does she extend her initial discussion of aesthetic love (1985, 66–7), and indeed manages to outline concepts of salvation and eternal life in 'Author and Hero' without once making the, it seems to me, natural inferences as to their Christian basis.

In a complex article Grois (1989) seeks to resolve certain ambiguities in Bakhtin's work (the confusion of art and life, and the ambivalent status of the author) by aligning him with similar ambiguities in the Russian philosophical tradition, with particular reference to Soloviev. However, he does not discuss any putative links on the level of the philosophy of religion; rather he considers Bakhtin's theory to represent a secularisation of Soloviev's religious philosophy (1989, 125).

Finally, Babkina (1992) discusses Bakhtin's early work (up until 1929) in its relation to Orthodox mysticism and dogma, isolating three Bakhtinian concepts as securely rooted in the Orthodox dogmas of immortality and incarnation ('outsidedness'), Trinity (dialogue) and the creation of man in God's image and likeness (the author/hero relation). Hers is the most direct appeal for a consideration of the Christian dimension to Bakhtin since Il'insky's, and contains much that is interesting. She draws her definition of what constitutes Orthodox doctrine from the writings of V. N. Lossky, although much of what she attributes to Orthodoxy may just as well be said of, for example, Protestantism (such as the emphasis on a living communion with God, 319; the relation of the Persons in the Trinity, 320; and the balance of determinism and free will in the relation of the creation to the Creator, 323). There are, however, exceptions, as for example the notion of divine Energies (1992, 322), and the apophatic bent of Orthodox theology (1992, 319–20), which Babkina sees as informing Bakhtin's practice of employing a variety of terms to signify the same, elusive, thing. Babkina introduces her paper by maintaining that 'the search for a religious meaning to Bakhtin's ideas is not a tribute to 'Christianising' fashion, but one of the potential means of 'unsealing' his works, which have not yet been conceptually examined' (1992, 317). This reference to 'fashion' highlights one of the reasons why the idea of Bakhtin as a religious thinker, initially spread by his literary executors and acquaintances from the sixties, who themselves belong to the religious, 'right' wing of the Russian intelligentsia, should hold wide currency in the Federation. It also confirms my general point that the topic has received too little serious, analytical attention.

CHRISTIANITY IN BAKHTIN: GOD AND THE EXILED AUTHOR

With the exception of a couple of articles on the subject of carnival, all of the literature on religious concepts in Bakhtin has been confined to an examination of texts from the early period of Bakhtin's intellectual career. Whilst agreeing with much of what has been written, I have aimed to treat these insights into Bakhtin's early work at greater length, without the distraction of bringing in comparable thinkers, and to extend the subject to embrace his career as a whole.

This book does not, in contrast to those of Todorov, Clark and

Holquist, and Morson and Emerson, attempt a comprehensive explication of Bakhtin's central concepts, nor does it provide an initial brief survey of them, as does, for example, Gardiner; rather it assumes a working knowledge of Bakhtin. With the exception of the chapter on Voloshinov and Medvedev's relationship with Bakhtin, it does not incorporate a comparative component, and in this respect differs from all the monographs 'about' Bakhtin that I have been reviewing. I do not polemicise with Bakhtin, but seek to understand him better, that is, more fully, because in looking at Christian motifs in his work I am addressing an aspect of Bakhtin which to date has received no treatment in a full-length study either in Russia or the West, despite the acknowledgement, however cursory or reluctant in some places, of its existence by most of the authors discussed above.⁷ This does not mean that my treatment of Bakhtin is intended to be exhaustive; I focus on one aspect of his work to the exclusion of all others because I believe it to have been neglected, even suppressed (perhaps in the same way that Jones understands suppression to work in Dostoevsky), and in need of the focused treatment that Clark and Holquist were unable to give it. For this same reason I do not enter into debate with the many other current assimilations of Bakhtin, which would not have left room for a satisfactory treatment of my topic, although it would doubtless be interesting to consider how (or whether), to name one example, Gardiner's appropriation of Bakhtin can be reconciled with a religious reading of him. But the book is not conceived as a meditative, personal reflection on Bakhtin in the spirit of Holquist or Patterson; perhaps rather unfashionably, I consider certain Christian elements to be 'there' in Bakhtin's text and endeavour to make the reader aware of them in what is essentially an exercise in close reading, an 'immanent' exploration of Bakhtin, although of course using the advantages of my 'outsiderness' to construct a rather dramatic story of revelation, development, crisis and recovery.

I believe it is more proper to speak of 'Christian motifs' than of 'Christianity' or 'Christian theology' in Bakhtin's work. This is because certain elements of the Christian kerygma (the fundamental points emphasised in the proclamation of the gospels) are highlighted by him to the almost total neglect of certain others. Highlighted elements include, for example, Creation, Fall and Incarnation; neglected elements include Resurrection and Judgement. Thus it cannot be said that Bakhtin's Christianity as it is

manifested in his texts conforms fully to any of its traditional systematic-theological renderings. Bakhtin is not a theologian; he is not even a Christian philosopher or literary theoretician; he is rather a philosopher whose work is fed by certain aspects of the Christian vision of and for the world. Personally, I am not convinced that Bakhtin's unorthodox Christianity is of an Orthodox persuasion, which is why I have not considered specifically Orthodox motifs here. From his background in the Western Judaeo-Christian philosophical tradition, but more importantly from specific preoccupations in his work (its international orientation, its opposition to authoritarian structures, the anticlericalism of his book on Rabelais), it seems impossible that he could have embraced Orthodoxy unequivocally. Some of the motifs claimed for Orthodoxy by Russian commentators like Isupov and Babkina appear to me to be equally appropriate to, say, a Protestant world-view. However, since the Orthodox voice is alien (*chuzhoi*) to my own, I concede ignorance as an outsider, and look to further studies of Bakhtin from a strictly Orthodox point of view to supplement and deepen my own where necessary. Quite possibly I do not hear the Orthodox voice in Bakhtin, not being sufficiently familiar with its dialect.

In developing my argument I will have recourse to the metaphors of silence and exile. These are intended to work on several levels. Firstly, they may be applied to Bakhtin himself, who was forced into silence at a young age by political circumstances over which he had no control. On one level, the most obvious, he fell silent by ceasing to publish almost immediately after he started. Following the Tolstoy Prefaces of 1929 and 1930 there followed a period of thirty-three years during which Bakhtin literally 'wrote into his desk', as the Russians say; his voice was not heard in the scholarly dialogue. This period of silence almost exactly coincides with his years of exile, for five years understood in the literal sense of banishment from cultural centres by law, and thereafter as enforced life in the provinces pending rehabilitation. Thus, for Bakhtin, to be silent was also to be absent, hidden from public view. On a second level, Bakhtin fell silent, again for reasons beyond his control, in that he ceased to write in his chosen way about his chosen topics. This process started even before his exile: one recalls his remark to Bocharov about how he neglected the most important questions in preparing *Problems of Dostoevsky's Creative Work* for publication. He became unable to write philosophy and was forced to channel his ideas through literary

criticism.⁸ And of course he became unable explicitly to write about theological matters, which, starting with the Dostoevsky book and continuing into his writings of the thirties and forties, went into exile, as it were, along with their author. Thus between *Dostoevsky's Creative Work* (1929) and 'Reworking of Dostoevsky' (1961) the Christian themes of Bakhtin's early essays disappear from his major writings, revealing themselves only in notes not intended for the public eye. However, as I hope to show, they continue to make themselves felt even in the exilic texts, although in an indirect form.

A second subject of exile is the author figure of Bakhtin's analysis. He, too, has his discourse taken away from him by a series of cultural-ideological changes which rob him of the right to, or possibility of, his own authoritative word. I am referring to the historical shift away from authoritative discourse and monolithic, politically enforced world-views, in the course of which, according to Bakhtin, the heteroglotic novel developed. The non-monologic writer of fiction, as I shall demonstrate, is obliged to hide his or her true face, to become discourse's fool, a master of indirect speech, which for Bakhtin ('Notes of 1970-71', 352-3) is a form of silence. Naturally, there is a parallel between the silent/exiled author and the silent/exiled Bakhtin who elaborates the theory: even in the twentieth century, he implies, there are, ironically, somewhat different cultural conditions under which even a writer of non-fictional prose cannot allow him or herself the luxury of direct speech. But in Bakhtin's theory of the silenced author the notion of 'falling' silent, if I may be allowed the licence of a play on words, may be lent, I believe, a theological interpretation. As will be argued in Chapter 6, the authoritative, direct authorial word becomes suspect precisely because discourse itself becomes suspect in Bakhtin's view, corrupted by violence and falsehood, that is to say, by the effects of the Fall on language and, behind it, language users. Silence in Bakhtin, on all levels so far discussed, is at once the result of and the response to the Fall.

Finally, it is possible to speak of the silencing, or exile, of a third subject, God Himself, whose supremely authoritative discourse has been squeezed out of the world of culture as a result of the same paradigmatic shift which, if Bakhtin is correct, forced the writer of prose fiction to hide his or her true self. Bakhtin closely associates God with the author in his early and late work; their fates are intertwined. Yet although evil (the Fall) comes between God's word

and the world, it does not mean the death of God for Bakhtin, any more than it means the death of the author. In his late essays, when Bakhtin is at once emerging from his physical and literary exiles (his move to Moscow in 1969; the republication of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and the publication of his dissertation on Rabelais in 1963 and 1965 respectively), he takes up the themes of God and Christ again, working towards an integration of his exilic discoveries about silence and the renewed possibility of raising one's voice in genuine dialogue.

It remains to say a word about the structure of the book. Chapters 2, 3, 5 and 6 together comprise a narrative of development in Bakhtin's Christian worldview from its open, fully elucidated character in 'Author and Hero' to the emphasis on silence in the late work. Chapter 4 comprises what I consider to be a necessary diversion to consider the question of Bakhtin's Marxism or non-Marxism, and Chapter 7 offers an 'alternative' analysis of the writings on carnival. These chapters are so ordered to preserve the basically chronological approach to my subject. Finally, Chapter 8 goes over old ground to bring motifs already discussed into a thematic order, leading in each case to an examination of Bakhtin's final position as it can be ascertained from his late texts.