

Aleksandra MACINTOSH*

SHESTOV'S QUEST FOR CERTAINTY OF FAITH

And faith is a mad struggle for the impossible – precisely that which Job undertook and about which Berdyaev and Kant are silent. Faith begins where, according to all evidence, every possibility comes to an end, where both our experience and our reason testify unhesitatingly that there is not and cannot be any hope whatever for man.

Lev Shestov, *Gnosis and Existential Philosophy*

Historians of Russian non-Marxist philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries agree that its roots are to be found in the Orthodox religion. This is because the Orthodox religion described the main philosophical questions of the time. The concepts of 'All-unity' and of 'Godmanhood' are among these issues. The concept of all-unity refers to unity of existence, inter-permeation and separation of components of existence, i.e. Pascal's multiplicity in oneness and oneness in multiplicity. This concept was a main pre-occupation of Vladimir Solovyov, who initiated the philosophy of all-unity. This was further developed by other Russian philosophers: Pavel Florensky, Lev Karsavin, Siemion Frank, Nicolay Lossky and others¹. The concept of divine humanity is another essential philo-

* Aleksandra MACINTOSH, MA – Research Assistant, London.

¹ The interest in Russian proponents of the concept of all-unity and the concept itself is shown in recent non-Russian publications: 1) A. Posacki, *L'esperienza tragica come iniziazione: Lev Šestov*, Dissertatio ad Doctoratum in facultate Philosophiae Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianaе, Cracoviae 2004, 2) B. Glatzer Rosenthal, M. Bohachevsky-Chomiak, M. Schwartz; *A Revolution of the Spirit: Crisis of Value in Russia, 1890-1924*. Fordham University Press, 1990, 3) P. W. Carey, J. T. Lienhard, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Theologians*. Greenwood Press,

sophical concept. It derived not only from Orthodox theology, but from its earlier Byzantine origin. Faith in divinity and the humanity of Jesus Christ is its essence. Among the proponents of this view are Eugene Trubietzky, Nicolas Berdyaev, Sergey Bulgakov and Lev Shestov².

Lev Shestov (*née* Yeghuda Shvartsman) (1866-1938) is one of the Russian religious existentialists. Born in Kiev, Shestov studied law at Moscow University. Whilst at university, Shestov developed an interest in politics and as a consequence became a follower of legal Marxism. His dissertation concerned economics and legal aspects of life of the working classes in Russia. However, Marxism is not what inspired Shestov. An intrinsic part of Shestov's thought is the idea that faith is closely connected with the philosophy of God. Before he wrote his main work concerning faith, *Sola fide. By faith alone* (1913), he rarely read theological essays. Before 1913 he wrote two rather literal critiques as opposed to purely philosophical works (*Shakespeare and Brandes* and *The Good in the Teaching of Tolstoy and Nietzsche*). At this time he formed his philosophy of tragedy (*Dostoevsky and Nietzsche: Philosophy of Tragedy*) and following on from this he condemned almost everything (*All Things are Possible (Apotheosis of Groundlessness)*) and he lost the ground.

Only after a few years of philosophical suspension (groundlessness) and quest did Shestov find his inspiration through the works of Martin Luther. These had an important influence on the philosophical thought of Shestov. It was in Luther's work that Shestov found the formula: *Sola fide, therefore faith alone can be the foundation of renaissance of human being*.

The philosophical roots of this concept are found in the writings of Martin Luther. Shestov thought that Luther, as a monk and a Catholic, was convinced that every person will stand in front of his judgmental God. Either life everlasting or eternal damnation awaits all mankind. Despite his despair leading to scepticism and criticism of all philosophical and theological heritages, he never doubted that the judgment day will come to pass. He did not question the existence of heaven and hell. He wanted to know the way for man to obtain salvation, and how to avoid eternal damnation. Raising this kind of question led Shestov to relate Luther's thought

2000, 4) J. P. Scanlan, *Russian Thought after Communism: The Recovery of a Philosophical Heritage*. M. E. Sharpe, 1994, 5) S. L. Frank, B. Jakim, *Man's Soul: An Introductory Essay in Philosophical Psychology*. Ohio University Press, 1993, and others.

² Outside Russia the following thinkers have been interested in this concept: 1) C. Evtuhov, *The Cross and The Sickle. Sergei Bulgakov and the fate of Russian Religious Philosophy*, Cornell University Ithaca and London, 1997, 2) and older one N. Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century*. Harper and Row 1963, 3) A. Collier, *In Defence of Objectivity and Other Essays*, Routledge, 2003, 4) B. B. Page, *Marxism and Spirituality: An International Anthology*. Bergin & Garvey, 1993. and others.

with Tolstoy's philosophical quest. Tolstoy was not aware that Luther's works followed the same spiritual routes. This is why Shestov wrote, 'I started reading Tolstoy's works most of all to link his works with the Middle Ages and Luther, and via Luther and partly St Augustine, with Paul the Apostle'. Paul the Apostle believed that the words of Chapter 3 of the Bible, 'For we account a man to be justified by faith, without the works of the law' (R 3, 28) are the key words of the New Testament. These words were for Shestov the very essence of the Gospel revelation. Martin Luther, however, interpreted the Greek version of this paragraph in his own way. The Letter to the Romans (12, 1) and the Letter to the Colossians (1, 9-10) are two of many extracts of the Bible which show that neither Luther nor Shestov (where Shestov actually followed Luther's interpretation) attached any significance to the importance of reason in man's life. This is possibly because of Luther's rejection of nominalistic philosophy and in particular Gabriel Biel's interpretation of the Bible.

His translation of the sentence reads 'the human being justifies himself with faith', interpreted from Greek into Latin as: *hominem sola fide iustificari* (man can be redeemed by faith and faith alone). Contemporary theologians pointed out that by adding the word 'sola' to the translation, Luther incorrectly interpreted the Greek version. Luther's reaction to this allegation was, '*Sic volo, sic iubeo – sit pro ratione voluntas*'. To emphasise the importance of faith, Martin Luther affirmed *The General Epistle of James*, part of canonical scriptures, to be apocryphal. The reason for this kind of understanding is that *The General Epistle of James* contains the words quoted by the opponents of Luther, 'So faith also, if it have not works, is dead in itself' (J 2, 17) and 'Do you see that by works a man is justified; and not by faith only' (J 2, 24) and also 'For even as the body without the spirit is dead; so also faith without works is dead' (J 2, 26). Shestov did not defend Paul the Apostle's pronouncement. Even if Paul says in the book of Romans: 'The love of our neighbour worketh no evil. Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law' (R 13, 10). This contrasts with Matthew's gospel where he said that works of mercy guarantee man life everlasting (Mt 25, 31-46).

It was in his *Sola fide*, that Shestov analysed the spiritual evolution of Martin Luther. Shestov focused on the earliest part of Luther's religious life, when Luther was a monk experiencing the greatest crisis of his faith. According to Shestov, the crisis of Luther's faith was pivotal as it led to his religious regeneration. It inspired him to discover a new formula: 'Faith and salvation are one and the same. Those who believe, also obtain salvation. Those who obtain salvation – also obtain faith'³.

³ L. Shestov, *Sola fide* [Только верою] *Tolko veroyu*. YMKA-Press, 1967, p. 259.

Shestov's faith departs from traditional theories. It gives 'neither peace, nor certitude, nor stability, faith does not know its limits. Opposed to reason, faith will never find self-satisfaction. Faith is anxiety, anticipation (expectation), yearning, hope, never ending sensing a great oneness of humankind, solicitude and being not rewarded with temporality and impossibility to foresee the future'⁴.

This kind of faith is expressed in the relationship between God and the individual. Also we need to remember that only because of faith this kind of relationship is possible. Faith alone 'opens the way to the Creator of all earthly things, to the source of all possibilities, to the One for Whom there are no boundaries between the possible and the impossible'⁵. Faith is evidence of God's omnipotence and faith can move mountains. Both, Shestov and Luther, concentrate on the spiritual side of faith. In his fight against reason Shestov, like Luther, did not seem to pay attention to the extracts of the Bible which explain the role of reason in man's life: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service' (R 12, 1) or 'prove all things; hold fast that which is good' (1 Thes 5, 21).

Nobody can learn how to believe; nobody can ask for faith, obtain it, achieve it or affect it. Obtaining faith does not depend on us and 'Faith is not given to those who seek it, but to those chosen by God before they have even the chance for self-improvement'⁶. 'It is clear that this faith is a mysterious, creative power, an incomparable gift, the greatest of all gifts'⁷.

It is 'the greatest of all gifts' and God is the only one who can decide who shall receive it. Irrespective of personal qualities God bestows faith. It is a Capricious and Omnipotent God who alone decides to whom He is going to give faith. The same situation occurred when God 'created world and human being from ashes. So He creates now, changing the faithless sinner into a believer'⁸.

The moment of receiving faith is not gradual and slow, but sudden and instant. Shestov describes it as ecstasy and rapture. He wrote 'There is an abyss, a gap between the earth and the sky – this is why there are no slow movements. The only possibility is *raptus* – ecstasy, sudden transition from

⁴ *Ibidem*. p. 278.

⁵ L. Shestov, *Киркегард и экзистенциальная философия* [*Kierkegaard i ekzistentsyalnaya filosofiya, Kierkegaard and the Existential Philosophy*] in L. Shestov, *Апофеоз беспочвенности* [*Apotheos bespochvennosti*], ACT Moskva 2000, p. 634.

⁶ L. Shestov, *Sola fide*. Op. cit. p. 176-179.

⁷ L. Shestov, *Афины и Иерусалим* [*Afina i Yerusolim, Athens and Jerusalem*], Azbuka, Sankt Peterburg, 2001, p. 317.

⁸ L. Shestov, *Sola fide*. Op. cit. p. 176-179.

one condition to another'⁹. It is unexpected, rapid, and that is why nobody can prepare himself for this transformation – any attempts to do so would be fruitless. Nobody knows when, where or if he will receive faith. Luther experienced this, until he fought and wanted achieve holiness, observing norms of traditional good, he was falling, and only when he felt he lost his last hope, when he realised he was not a better man but a worse one, not stronger but weaker – utterly helpless as a human being, only then did he realise that God alone can give him what he was looking for. God 'helps man only when he utterly despairs about himself, when he is broken, when the only thing he can see in the future is darkness and despair'¹⁰. It was only when Luther's teachings started to develop into a political programme that numerous inconsistencies were revealed in his doctrine. Luther believed that faith is the main foundation of man, 'because every one who has faith will be saved, and those who do not have faith, will be damned'¹¹. This view rejected all the attempts of rationalisation of faith, which developed into a rather individual experience. Shestov faced the choice between faith as a path to salvation, and faith explained by reason. His conclusion was that, 'Every attempt of drawing together faith and reason ends up with the annihilation of faith'¹². And we cannot forget that faith is absolutely necessary if we want to discover God. On the one hand Shestov is totally convinced that true faith emanates from God. In order to believe we need not only the grace of God but also some kind of illumination! On the other hand it is faith that is supposed to lead us to God! We have here a vicious circle, which is rather an ontological mistake than a logical one. Also faith can not be achieved but is a divine gift. The individual's struggle to obtain true faith and to discover God must inevitably fail.

Luther's view on role and function of faith contains elements of St Augustine's position. 'He insisted that human salvation is contingent upon God's grace and not upon the individual's good works'¹³.

Shestov believed that faith comes from God alone. To support this view he quoted John: 'And he said, therefore did I say to you, that no man can come to me, unless it be given him by my Father' (J 6, 66).

We have no power and therefore we can not influence the receiving of faith. And even if it is not said we would receive faith, we can still wait for it. Shestov compared waiting for faith with waiting for certain death. Shestov

⁹ *Ibidem.* s. 282.

¹⁰ *Ibidem.* s. 86.

¹¹ *Ibidem.* s. 267.

¹² *Ibidem.* p. 267.

¹³ L. Shein, *The philosophy of Lev Shestov 1866-1938 a Russian Religious Existentialist*. Toronto Studies in Theology, Volume 57. s. 78.

describes the experience of Ivan Ilyich – the main character of Leo Tolstoy's short story, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. When Ivan Ilyich realized the gnawing pain in his side was slowly killing him, he went through all the stages of denial, fear, then anger at his friends and loved ones. Only in facing death did he accept there was nothing to do to prevent his death except wait for death to visit him. 'For all our life we think that only actions can save us. When our days are numbered, we need to adapt to the new, insane situation with no way out – we need to tolerate our fear of death and do nothing, but wait. Any attempt of doing anything not only does not help, but – worsens the situation'¹⁴. Waiting for faith that Shestov describes is similar. We can do nothing to obtain it.

We can conclude that if nothing that we do gives right to hope for obtaining faith then performing good deeds does not guarantee it either. It is absurd, because it follows from this that man can choose evil and perform evil deeds and still think he has a right to go to heaven. On the other hand, an individual that performs good deeds can not be sure that he will receive faith. What is more 'not only bad, but also good deeds turn out to be a burden at judgment day. Good deeds can even turn out to be worse than bad deeds we have committed during our lives. It is easier for us to forget about all the wrong things we have done but it is very hard – some people can not do that – to forget about the good we have done. Deeds chain people to the ground, one wishes to see in them eternal meaning of his existence. He can not stop performing deeds'¹⁵.

Among those who received faith were Abraham, Isaiah, St Paul, Job, and, of course, Luther. He wrote of Abraham that when God told him to leave his homeland and the house of his father, he obeyed. Abraham went although he did not know where he was going. The true believer proceeds without questioning why. Therefore, faith is a lonely experience and is contingent upon God's grace. In this way faith is irrational.

There is no road to salvation but through faith and without faith man cannot obtain life everlasting. As mentioned above, 'Faith and salvation are one and the same thing'. Except that, as Berdyaev rightly pointed out, no one had a true faith except for one Abraham¹⁶, who was ready to kill his son to prove his faith. According to Shestov, neither the greatest saints, nor humble believers had true faith. It turns out that our last hope for obtain-

¹⁴ L. Shestov, *Sola fide. Op. cit.* p. 215.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 124.

¹⁶ Shestov also wrote about faith of Abraham, Job and St Paul (*Athens and Jerusalem*, Part II, *In the Bull of Phalaris*), Isaiah (*Athens and Jerusalem*, Part III, *On the Philosophy of the Middle Ages*) and Luther (*Kierkegaard and the Existential Philosophy, Sola fide.*).

ing salvation – faith, was taken away from man. Berdyaev maintained that nowhere can we see the proof of God's existence. God exists by faith alone, but, as we said, nobody can obtain faith. Shestov disagrees with Berdyaev's view arguing that Berdyaev's allegations were logical and right when pointing out faults of his position. However, Shestov, like Kierkegaard, is not troubled by Berdyaev's allegations. He does not listen to them on purpose. He can hear though something completely different, namely – a voice, telling him that if he believes, everything will be possible.

Berdyaev only expressed in his article doubts that every man would have reading Shestov's theories. From the earliest days all humankind is taught about logic, reason, what is allowed and what is forbidden. On this basis we create the general idea of what is good and what is evil. Also we are told that if we are good we will go to heaven, and if bad – to hell. Shestov turns these ideas around and tries to convince us that everything we were taught traditional values of good and evil are meaningless, because the path to God is not reached through good works, that it is not a just God who rewards good people for all the good works, but omnipotent God 'which is *higher* than compassion, *higher* than the „good”'¹⁷ and faith in such God can move mountains. This is why we should not be surprised that man is not equal to grasping all Shestov's theory, which turns average person's outlook upside down.

Aware that the human brain is totally dominated by reason, Shestov insists that the only way to obtain faith is to relinquish reason completely, to give up rationalism, logic and the traditional concept of good and evil, and give up ethics.

'To obtain faith, one needs to give up knowledge and moral perfection. Man cannot achieve faith by himself'¹⁸. This is where we need God to help us to obtain faith. Shestov describes God as *Creator omnipotens*, 'for whom nothing is impossible, who holds all truths in His hands, who rules over the present as well as over the past and the future'¹⁹. God has the power to delete the past like it has never happened and also to change events in the past. He can change the past and He can give faith.

God created man, gave him freedom, paradise and faith. But Adam 'also wished „to know,” not „to believe”'; he saw in faith a kind of diminution, an injury to his human dignity, and he was certain of this when the serpent

¹⁷ L. Shestov, *Добро в учении гр. Толстого и Ф. Ницше. Философия и проповедь* [*Dobro v uchenii gr. Tolstovo i F. Nitshe: Filosofiya i propoved', The Good in the Teaching of Tolstoy and Nietzsche*] in: L. Shestov *Апофеоз беспочвенности* [*Apofeoz bespochvennosti*]. АСТ 2000, p. 307.

¹⁸ L. Shestov, *Sola fide. Op. cit.* p. 243.

¹⁹ L. Shestov, *Gnosis and Existential Philosophy on Nikolai Berdyaev*, the source of the text: www.shestov.by.ru.

told him that after he had eaten of the fruits of the forbidden tree he would become like God – he would possess knowledge'²⁰.

Stretching forth his hand to the tree of knowledge, Adam lost his freedom, life in the Garden of Eden, divine ignorance and also faith. And all of this he sacrificed for the sake of reason and knowledge. Shestov, analysing the story of the Fall of Man, did not limit himself to theological analyses but showed other meanings of this event. He pointed out that knowledge is a sin. By eating the forbidden fruit man gave up his freedom, drew God's wrath upon him and was punished by being banished from Paradise. Analysing the story of The Fall of Man, Shestov pointed out that no one carried out a better criticism of reason than God. It was God who forbade Adam to eat from the tree of knowledge and it was God who punished him for disobedience. By ignoring God's instructions Adam relinquished freedom.

Therefore, knowledge and faith exclude one another. They struggle with one another to win man's soul and usually in this struggle reason wins. Reason is the source of impossibilities and ruthlessness. We are no longer able to obtain biblical faith, because of one simple reason – it does not depend upon us. Adam's decision to eat the forbidden fruit, which gave him knowledge, deprived mankind of unlimited freedom. Our last and only hope, according to Shestov, of obtaining faith, is faith in God.

Only faith in God can liberate humankind. He wrote that reason teaches us how to submit and faith gives the power to command.

When faith tries to get closer to reason, or when either tries to compromise with the other, faith is wasted. The aim of reason is to find consecutive proofs for existence of God, rationalising of truths of faith, defining the indefinite notions, whereas the characteristic of faith is that it does not require proof. According to Shestov, the truth of faith, revolts against limited possibility of reason, which proclaims the end of every hope and capitulates when face to face with impossibility. Faith is the symbol of the hectic struggle for possibilities. Every attempt to rationalise or explain truth of faith ends up with victory for reason. Because of this the coexistence of faith and reason is not possible. 'What is wise for Athens, is mad in Jerusalem's eyes'²¹.

As a proponent and apologist of the faith and the spirit of Jerusalem, Shestov completely denounces reason. According to him, reason is a tyrant, which exacts utter obedience and discipline from its subjects – humankind. However, man seems not to notice how greatly he is oblivious to

²⁰ L. Shestov, *Афины и Иерусалим* [*Afīny i Yerusalim, Athens and Jerusalem*]. *Op. cit.* p. 269-270.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 275.

his dependence on reason. For man 'the source of light was and will always be reason'²². Also man appears blissfully ignorant of existence of another reality, which is beyond reason. Shestov supports this view quoting a monologue of the Great Inquisitor from Dostoyevski's *The Legend of the Great Inquisitor*: 'Where the power of reason ends, eternal, impassable darkness begins [...] and into this darkness, that you [the secret quest – A.M.] would like us to admit to be light, we will never precipitate'²³. Lest we forget that in the Bible it is written: 'Then Salomon said: the Lord said that he would dwell in a cloud' (1 Kings 8, 12). Following on from this, God himself said He would live in the same darkness that mankind is most afraid of. For Shestov, darkness signifies a retreat from knowledge, reason and all rational tools, because 'our reason [...] does not by far limit itself to the modest task of lighting up and making transparent that which was called into existence and created before it and without it. It seeks after more, much more'²⁴. Reason requires something more than that. It needs total subordination and strict adherence to its rules. By limiting himself to only 'what is' and 'facts', man divests himself from unlimited possibilities, reducing all exceptions to the common denominator of knowledge.

Faith is not afraid of being thrown into the darkness. Faith gives us hope and courage to fight against the light of reason, widening man's prospects by infinite possibilities.

Faith rejects all authorities. 'The meaning of faith, its essence, is that it rejects not only all authorities but also the idea of authority itself'²⁵. Faith gives us freedom.

'Freedom is not possibility. Possibility exists, according to the final and irrevocable decision of reason, all possibilities have an end'²⁶.

It is faith that gives mankind the courage to enter into the darkness to look for God. 'The faith of the Bible determines and forms man's being and thus abolishes knowledge with its „possible” and „impossible.”'²⁷ In many of Shestov's writings, statements affirming this position are found. In his work, *Kierkegaard and the Existential Philosophy*, Shestov wrote, 'Faith and faith alone liberates man from sin; faith and faith alone can tear man away from the power of the necessary truths that have controlled his consciousness since the time when he tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree. And faith alone gives man the courage and the strength to look death and madness

²² L. Shestov, *Sola fide*. *Op. cit.* p. 116.

²³ *Ibidem*, s. 116.

²⁴ L. Shestov, *Sine effusione sanguinis*, the source of the text: www.shestov.by.ru

²⁵ L. Shestov, *Sola fide*. *Op. cit.* p. 236-237.

²⁶ L. Shestov, *Sine Effusione Sanguinis*, *Op.cit.*

²⁷ L. Shestov, *Афины и Иерусалим [Afiny i Yerusalim, Athens and Jerusalem]*. *Op. cit.* p. 317.

in the eye and not bow helplessly before them'²⁸. Faith is something more than reason and traditional concept of good: 'true, courageous faith starts only when man steels himself to go beyond his known limits, that are determined by reason and the good'²⁹. 'Where knowledge rules, morality takes the place of God'³⁰.

Faith is not and will never be able to accept reason. From reason's point of view faith is nonsense because it is based on dogmas. 'No one can prove the existence of the Holy Trinity by logical arguments because as a belief it emanates from faith'³¹. As with other dogmas, we cannot rationally explain them because their source is not reason but faith. 'In order to find faith it is necessary to lose reason!'³²

Cezary Wodziński classified Shestov's faith as multi-confessional as it is impossible to ascribe it to any religion. Within Shestov's concept of faith we find elements of orthodox, anti-Catholic, Jansenist and Jewish teaching. Any attempt to categorise Shestov's faith contradicts with all his other writings. Shestov spent all his life struggling with every kind of self-evidence, necessity and limitations, making reason his number one enemy.

Thus it is impossible to form clear definition of Shestov's faith. Any attempt to rationalise Shestov's faith opposes his thought and teaching.

Luther's experiences show what happens when man tries to rationalise such an indefinite and personal phenomenon as faith. Faith is lost. Every attempt to reconcile faith and reason, every generalisation or spreading of traditionally understood principles of faith ends with defeat of faith. 'So that when we transform a truth given by faith into a self-evident truth or understand it as such, it is a sign that we have lost this truth of faith'³³.

'Revealed truth, as such, has satisfied men little and rarely. And they have always striven to adapt it to reason, to justify it before reason, to transform it into reasonable truth'³⁴. Shestov argued that the transformation of absurd truth into reasonable truth takes place so often because of man's fear of the unknown and the unproven, and also because of man's need for authority. Man prefers to have clear principles and rules that he can follow. Shestov recognises that following clear rules is a natural state of affairs and that is almost impossible to change. And faith as an individual relationship

²⁸ L. Shestov, *Киркегард и экзистенциальная философия* [*Kierkegaard i ekzistsentsyalnaya filosofiya, Kierkegaard and the Existential Philosophy*]. *Op. cit.* p. 629.

²⁹ L. Shestov, *Sola fide*. *Op. cit.* p. 243.

³⁰ L. Shestov, *Sine Effusione Sanguinis*. *Op. cit.*

³¹ L. Shestov, *Sola fide*. *Op. cit.* p. 108-109.

³² L. Shestov, *Sine Effusione Sanguinis*, *Op. cit.*

³³ L. Shestov, *Афины и Иерусалим* [*Afina i Yerusalim, Athens and Jerusalem*]. *Op. cit.* p. 310.

³⁴ L. Shestov, *Sine Effusione Sanguinis*. *Op. cit.*

between God and man, when transformed into a social category, loses its paradoxical nature.

Shestov believed that only a few exceptional individuals are capable of accepting the incredibility of the relationship with God, but when attempting to teach others about God, they start creating principles. We can see here how remote are our chances of experiencing the kind of faith that Shestov described and how small is the boundary between possible experience of faith and the unintended rationalisation of it.

Shestov's philosophy is concerned with the absurd. The phenomenon of the faith he described seems to be a great chain of dependences, inaccessible for man himself. To access this chain mankind needs the strongest link of this chain – God. Having said this we must remain mindful of Berdyaev's polemics concerning the flaws in Shestov's concept of faith. Faith that Shestov is looking for is almost unobtainable! Given this, why does man need a faith that he cannot obtain through his deeds? How can we make sense of this kind of faith? Shestov's faith can be only a philosophical abstract term, familiar to philosophers, and even if someone receives it from capricious God, we will not learn about it because, once expressed with words (a rational tool), it loses its divinity...

Aleksandra MACINTOSH

SZESTOWA POSZUKIWANIE PEWNOŚCI WIARY

Streszczenie

Artykuł rekonstruuje poglądy Lwa Szestowa na wiarę chrześcijańską, a ściślej: jego poszukiwania filozofii religijnej. Szestov, wychowany w tradycji żydowskiej, przyjął chrzest w kościele prawosławnym już jako dojrzały człowiek. W części wstępnej ukazują meandry jego intelektualnych poszukiwań, które wiodły go od legalnego marksizmu, poprzez krytykę racjonalizmu w tradycji XIX-wiecznej filozofii, przewartościowanie utworów Tolstoja, Szekspira, Dostojewskiego, i doprowadziły Szestowa do filozofii religijnej.

Kluczową rolę w kształtowaniu filozofii religijnej Szestowa odegrały niewątpliwie pisma Marcina Lutera oraz egzystencjalistów, jak np. Kierkegaard. Kryzys wiary, którego doświadczył Luter, rozumiany jako główna inspiracja jego programu naprawy Kościoła, według Szestowa, był szczególny, gdyż stał się inspiracją dla jego własnej odnowy religijnej. Przykład Marcina

Lutra okazał się ważną wskazówką dla Szestowa. Ukazał mu bowiem nową formułę wiary wiodącej do zbawienia. „Wiara i zbawienie to jedno i to samo. Kto uwierzył – ten został zbawiony. Kto dostąpił zbawienia, ten uwierzył”³⁵. W emocjonalnej i osobistej wierze Lutra, Szestow odnalazł prawdziwego Boga Ewangelii nie skażonego przez tradycje i interpretacje.

Wiara, o której pisze Szestow, a której głosicielem był m.in. Marcin Luter, jest szczególna, nie przynosi bowiem ukojenia ani pocieszenia. Jak pisze Szestow: „nie przynosi ani spokoju, ani pewności, ani trwałości, wiara nie zna kresu ani granic. W przeciwieństwie do wiedzy, nie dostąpi nigdy tryumfu samozadowolenia. Jest bojaźnią, oczekiwaniem, tęsknotą, trwogą, nadzieją, nieustannym przeczuwaniem wielkiej niezwykłości, troską i nieukontentowaniem tym, co doczesne, oraz niemożliwością przeniknięcia tego, co przyszłe”³⁶.

Kluczową w tym względzie jest rozprawa Szestowa pt. *Sola fide. Tylko przez wiarę*. Zarówno tytuł rozprawy jak i tematyka inspirowana była lekturami pism niemieckiego reformatora. Główną jednak myślą tej rozprawy było przekonanie, że osiągnięcie zbawienia może być możliwe jedynie dzięki wierze. Wiary nie można zdobyć w żaden sposób. Jedynie Bóg może ofiarować ją wybrancom. Nikt jednak nie wie, kto zostanie wybrany. Nie można tedy samej istoty wiary opisać ani przekazać innemu, gdyż przy próbie opisu przeżycia religijnego z pomocą słów, zdań, twierdzeń, a więc z pomocą narzędzi racjonalnych, ginie najgłębsza istota wiary, którą jednostka może poznać i uświadomić sobie jedynie w jednostkowym przeżyciu. Wiara jest tedy jedynym możliwym pomostem, który może połączyć nas z Bogiem, mogącym nam ją ofiarować. Krytycy wskazują w tym miejscu analiz koncepcji filozoficznych Szestowa, że w tych ujęciach pojawia się błąd logiczny zwany błędnym kołem. Samo zjawisko wiary, jej istota i przeżycie, zdaje się być jednym wielkim łańcuchem zależności, do którego człowiek nie może się włączyć własnym wysiłkiem, a tylko z pomocą Boga. Mamy więc w koncepcjach antropologicznych Szestowa nie tylko poszukiwanie Boga, właściwe dla filozofii egzystencjalistycznych przełomu XIX i XX w., ale także głębokie przekonanie, że Stwórca jest nie tylko źródłem, ale i celem człowieka.

³⁵ L. Szestow, *Sola fide. Tylko przez wiarę*. Znak, Kraków 1993, s. 249.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, s. 270.

Copyright of Forum Philosophicum is the property of Forum Philosophicum and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.