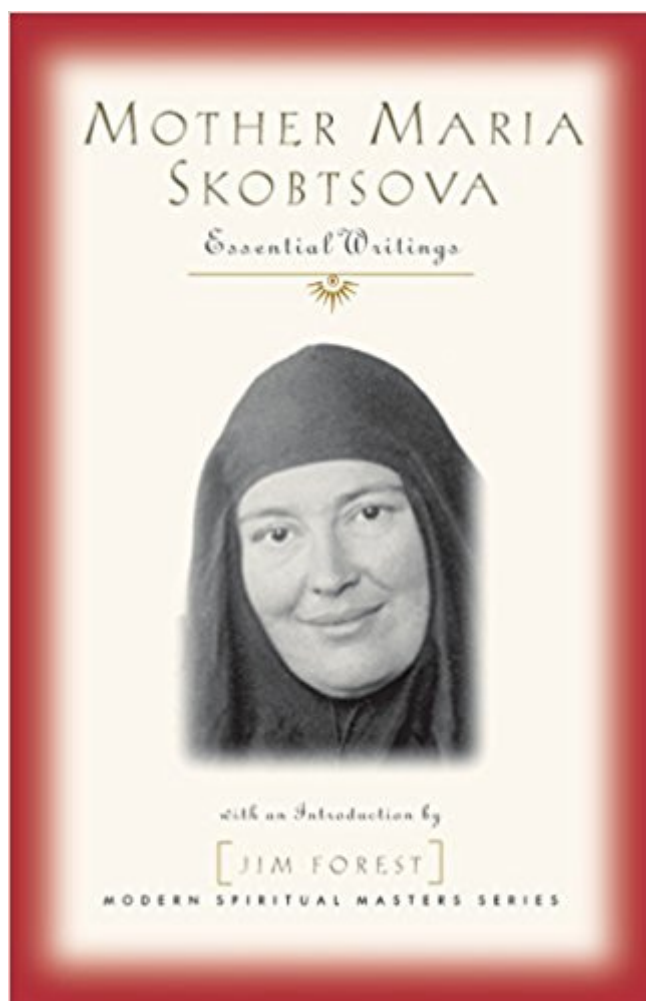


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Mother Maria Skobtsova: Essential Writings (Modern Spiritual Masters)



Synopsis

A collection of writings that reflect the deep commitment to the gospel mandate that unites love of God and love of neighbor comes from the modern saint and Orthodox nun who made her home in Paris a haven for Jews during Nazi occupation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review The new Modern Spiritual Masters volume is surely the first introduction for most English-language readers to its subject. Born to a prominent, devoutly Russian Orthodox family, Elizaveta Pilenko (1891-1945) renounced her belief at 14 when her father died. In St. Petersburg with her mother, she then joined the circle of symbolist poet Alexander Blok and later the Bolsheviks. But come the Revolution, she was regaining her faith. Twice married, she had three children, with whom she fled to Paris. Always a community activist, she turned to explicitly Christian charity to express solidarity with the needy, especially fellow Russian exiles in Depression-era Paris. Eventually, her second husband, Daniel Skobtsov, released her so she could become an Orthodox nun. Taking the name Maria, she realized a "new monasticism" that merged the spiritual life with service to the oppressed. Her subsequent career, as Jim Forest observes in his excellent introduction, resembled Dorothy Day's; however, circumstances didn't allow her Day's longevity. After the Nazis took Paris and persecution of the Jews began, she stood with them, was sent to the camps, and perished in Ravensbruck. Besides her inspiring life, her legacy includes much writing on

the religious life. The 11 selections here, concerned primarily with living out Jesus' commandment to love your neighbor, are often literature of a very high order, none more so than the dazzling metaphoric masterpiece "The Poor in Spirit." Ray Olson

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Text: English (translation) Original Language: French, Russian

Wonderful book. I read a friend's copy of this book and decided to that I needed to have it in my own library that I can refer to it again and again. This woman was such a godly, loving and caring woman that is an inspiration to all who desire to be more like Jesus! I highly recommend this book!

For anyone who knows the story of Mother Maria Skobtsova (St Maria of Ravensbruk/Paris) and her bravery during WWII this book of her writings will be a treasure. The translation flows well and is easy to read. It seems the essence of the woman flows through the work. Highly recommended reading

To any who think that Orthodox Christians do not have the social conscience of Catholics, here is Mother Maria (now St. Maria) clearly stating that Christ will not ask us how many prostrations we have made, but whether or not we have loved our neighbor. This is a moving and perhaps jarring collection of writings by an Orthodox martyr of modern times, which serves to illustrate that words and gilded Gospel books are not enough. She was known to leave a liturgy to answer the door when someone in need came for help to the "house of hospitality" she established in Paris. She would roam Paris in search of aid, puffing a cigarette. She spoke of the sword which pierced the heart of the Virgin Mary and which should pierce ours as well, that of love. This is not a self-consumed religion Mother speaks of, but one of ultimate self-denial in acts of love for the other, even when the other steals from us. We can only hope more of her works appear in English.

St. Maria's writing's are really influential and moving. I hope I can have but a fraction of her love for everyone else

I purchased this for my daughter as a present, she loved the book. She also had me order another one so she could give it as a present to someone else.

great book. great story.

Modern Spiritual Masters Series, Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY In 1998 Orbis Books launched its Modern Spiritual Masters Series, a collection of the writings of important spiritual masters of our age. Each "Master" is made available in readable and inexpensive formats. Each is edited with an introduction about the master's legacy, along with relevant biographical information and commentary. To date there are some 36 volumes as diverse as Albert Schweitzer, theologian, doctor, Nobel Peace Prize winner; Caryll Houselander, English Catholic laywoman, artist, and visionary; Eberhard Arnold, founder of the Bruderhof; Howard Thurman, minister, philosopher, and civil rights activist; Flannery O'Connor the great southern writer whose distinctive spiritual voice covered topics on Christian Realism, the Church, the relation between faith and art, sin and grace, and the role of suffering in the life of a Christian; Rufus Jones, who won a Nobel Prize as cofounder of the American Friends Service Committee and Swami Abhishiktananda (Henri le Saux) a Breton-born Benedictine monk who hoped to Christianize India but instead became deeply influenced by Hindu spirituality. In this brief space I can only give you a glimpse of some of the masters, editors and their thoughts. Maria Skobtsova was a promising poet, a gifted amateur painter, a theological student in St. Petersburg, and a mayor all before becoming an Orthodox nun in 1932. She served a community of Russian expatriates in France during World War II and rescued hundreds of Jews before being captured and taken to the Ravensbruck concentration camp. Jim Forest provides an illuminating overview of her unusual life and ministry. She wrote, "In our time Christ and the life-giving Holy Spirit demand the whole person. The only difference from state mobilization is that the state enforces mobilization, while our faith waits for volunteers. And, in my view, the destiny of mankind depends on whether these volunteers exist and, if they do, how great their energy is, how ready they are for sacrifice." Anthony de Mello was a world renowned spiritual director and retreat leader. His mysticism was rooted in story and imagination. He taught spiritual practices and exercises designed to silence the mind and give expression to the yearnings of the heart. Born in India he helped bridge the gap between Eastern and Western Spirituality. His stories from many cultures and traditions help us to find God behind our words, concepts, and religious formulas. Story to de Mello was the shortest distance between a human being and truth: How would spirituality help a man of the world like me? said the businessman. It will help you to have more,' said the master. 'How?' 'By teaching you to desire less. Clarence Jordan founded the interracial community of Koinonia Farm near Americus, Georgia. Jordan was a man of radical ideas who once defined faith as not belief in spite of the evidence but a life in scorn of consequences. He translated

the New Testament into the well known "Cotton Patch" version. Jordan was against rampant materialism in America and while visiting a fancy house of a wealthy person, he responded by saying, Nice piece of plunder you got here. Jordan founded the Fund for Humanity, which evolved into Habitat for Humanity. He also instituted "a cow library" in which families in need of milk could check out a cow free of charge. His efforts to assist two African-American students apply to a formerly segregated business college led to shooting, bombings, and vandalism against the Koinonia Farm. He wrote, With Jesus, peacemaking involved not merely a change of environment, but also a change of heart. God's plan of making peace is not merely to bring about an outward settlement between evil people, but to create people of goodwill. Dorothee Soelle was a German theologian who escaped Nazi Germany and became a professor of a theology at Union Theological Seminary in NYC. Her writings were shaped by the memory of war, the Holocaust, and totalitarianism. She wrote scathing critiques of capitalism, consumerism, nuclear arms buildup, Vietnam, and a Christian theology that created the space for Auschwitz. Soelle emphasized experience. For example, she finds the question, Do you believe in God? to be superficial and off the mark. Instead one should ask Do you live out God? She commends Judaism for the idea of human beings as the image of God, which she takes to mean we can act like God: Just as God made clothes for Adam and Eve, we can clothe the naked. Just as God fed Elijah through a raven, so to we are to feed the hungry. In this awesome collection you will find your rich spiritual heritage, a legacy of teachings and guidance that have their roots in the Bible. You will find Christian models and mentors whose words can serve as the stimulus for new spiritual maturity, and for the courage to realize our calling and potential as disciples of Jesus. Let me close with the poignant words of Dorothy Soelle: If the most essential element of Christian faith is sin and not our capacity for love, if the first thing that should come to our minds in church and in our religious life is our impotence, our weakness, our guilt, our repeated failures, then the die is already cast. Then we cultivate our own fears and coddle our own need for security. We deny that human beings are capable of making peace; we abandon the unarmed Christ and run away just as the disciples did when Jesus was taken captive and when it became clear that protection and weapons were useless now. We are tempted to look for other masters who offer more protection and security. John Laughlin

Love St. Maria and her writings. My family thinks I'm going to be a communist now.....

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