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January 2001

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RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND THE FUTURE OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

Paul Valliere

Let me begin by suggesting that the title of my lecture¹ should put you on your guard. The reason is that no speaker could bring the same degree of knowledge to the second half of the subject as to the first. The first, Russian religious thought, is a historical phenomenon; it is well documented; and, while it has not gotten the attention it deserves, it has been studied systematically for some time.² It is possible for a person talking about the subject to know what he is talking about. The case is different when it comes to the future of Orthodox theology. Here is something that belongs to the divine *not yet*, something we will come to know only when we can see it and touch it for ourselves. "But blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (Jn 20:29). Here is the evangelical beatitude that licenses, indeed exhorts us to look ahead, to think about the unthinkable, to orient the here-and-now to what is still to come, in short to live by faith. And it is in this spirit—the spirit of justification by faith, if you will—that I offer some reflections on the future of Orthodox theology toward the end of the lecture.

But first let us talk about Russian religious thought, or Russian religious philosophy, as it is also sometimes called. These phrases refer to a diverse yet coherent intellectual movement in Russian Orthodoxy which arose during the first half of the nineteenth century, or a bit earlier if we include some of the first pioneers. The stream gathered strength from many sources during the nineteenth century, especially from the great Russian novelists and from the

1 Paper presented at the Fr Alexander Schmemmann Memorial Lecture at St Vladimir's Seminary, January 30, 2001.

2 A good recent collection of essays on the subject is *Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Judith Deutsch Kornblatt and Richard F. Gustafson (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996).

philosophy of Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900), and reached its crest in the first two decades of the 20th century thanks to a mighty cluster of young religious thinkers including Sergei Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdiaev, Pavel Florensky, Lev Karsavin, and others. After the Revolution of 1917, Russian religious philosophy was violently repressed in its native land but continued to flourish during the first generation of the Russian emigration. Thereafter it became more and more marginalized, and it diminished to not more than a trickle by about 1950.

That is the historical framework, but what was the substance? What was Russian religious philosophy about? Let me begin answering this question not in my own words but in the words of Father Alexander Schmemmann. In a 1972 article in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, he characterized the mission of what he called the "Russian school" of Orthodox theology as follows:

Orthodox theology must keep its patristic foundation, but it must also go "beyond" the Fathers if it is to respond to a new situation created by centuries of philosophical development. And in this new synthesis or reconstruction, the western philosophical tradition (source and mother of the Russian "religious philosophy" of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) rather than the Hellenic, must supply theology with its conceptual framework. An attempt is thus made to "transpose" theology into a new "key," and this transposition is considered as the specific task and vocation of Russian theology.³

The Russian school, then, was dedicated to going "beyond the fathers" of the ancient and medieval church, whatever that phrase was supposed to mean, and to reconstructing Orthodox theology with the help of western philosophy.

What prompted a group of Orthodox theologians to undertake such a project? The answer seems clear enough: the need to address

³ "Russian Theology: 1920–1972, An Introductory Survey," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 16 (1972), 178. Schmemmann used the phrase "Russian school" to refer to this stream of thought in "Role of Honour," *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 2 (1954), 6.

the relationship of Orthodoxy to the modern world. One of the first books produced by the Russian school was titled *On Orthodoxy in Relation to the Modern World*.⁴ The Russians were the first Orthodox Christian people who wrestled with this issue because a society of the modern type began to develop in Russia earlier than in other Eastern Christian lands. The Russians were the first Orthodox people to deal with such problems as the antagonism between tradition and freedom, the challenge of modern humanism and atheism, the mission of the church to modern urban society, the impact of science on theology, the status of dogma in modern intellectuality, the significance of religious pluralism, and many other difficult issues. These issues were not unique to Russia. They were addressed in the West as well and by now have presented themselves to all faith traditions in the world. But the Russians could not be content with just anybody's answers to these questions. They sought *Orthodox* answers and for that reason had no contemporary role-models to guide them.

But let us return to the phrase "beyond the fathers." Obviously, this could mean a number of different things, ranging from a modest call for updating the language of Orthodox theology to radical programs of displacement and subversion. For our purposes it will be helpful to distinguish between two ways of going beyond the fathers. For clarity's sake I label them the "formalist" and "substantive" approaches. The distinction turns on whether the revision of the fathers is thought to affect only the outward forms of Orthodox theology or the substance, the actual message. Formalist revision, as I'm calling it, is widely accepted by sophisticated Orthodox theologians today. To be sure, Orthodoxy has its literalists and fundamentalists just as other churches do, people who would not condone any talk of going "beyond the fathers." But they are a separate issue. Certainly at St Vladimir's the formalist critique of the fathers has long been practiced, and very skillfully. Substantive

4 Arkhimandrit Feodor [Aleksandr Matveevich Bukharev, 1824–71], *O pravoslavii v otmoshenii k sovremennosti, v raznykh stat'iakh*, Izdanie "Strannika" (St Petersburg: V Tipografii Torgovogo Doma S. Strugovshchikova, G. Pokhitonova, N. Vodova i Ko., 1860).

revision, on the other hand, is more controversial. The idea that the message or content of theology somehow develops over time, that modern Orthodox theologians are licensed to say things that the fathers did not say, is not widely accepted. This is what makes the study of Russian-school theology challenging, for Russian-school theologians were dedicated to substantive revision of the theological tradition.

Toward the end of its historical road, in the 1930s, the Russian school was trenchantly criticized for this revisionism and accused of trading the verities of holy tradition for winds of doctrine wafting from Western philosophy or Romantic poetry or godless pantheism or some other alien source. The best of these critics, Vladimir Lossky and Father Georges Florovsky, were soon to become the chief architects of the so called Neopatristic theology which has dominated Orthodox thinking for the last half-century. These thinkers rejected the proposition that Orthodox theologians should aspire to go beyond the fathers in any substantive sense.

Florovsky wrote up his criticisms in a book which to this day remains the grandest portrait of Russian theology ever composed, *The Paths of Russian Theology* (1937).⁵ There he presents the history of pre-revolutionary Russian theology as the story of the alienation of the Orthodox mind from its own sources, arguing that theology in Russia was patterned on Western academic traditions, such as Roman Catholic scholasticism or Protestant pietism and moralism, but almost never on "the mind of the fathers." A process of self-correction began with the retrieval of patristic sources by Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow and others in the nineteenth century; but progress was hampered by many obstacles, above all by the steady stream of intellectual imports from the West which found a receptive audience among Russian religious philosophers. Florovsky's account, masterful as it was, was so critical of modern

5 Georgii Florovskii, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia*, 3d ed., preface by J. Meyendorff (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1983). The first edition appeared in 1937. English trans.: *The Ways of Russian Theology*, trans. Robert L. Nichols, vols. 5–6 of *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, ed. Richard S. Haugh (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1979; Vaduz: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987).

Russian religious thought that Nikolai Berdiaev, in a review, suggested the book should have been titled *The Pathlessness of Russian Theology*.⁶

Florovsky's book had an electrifying effect on the younger generation of Orthodox theologians in the Russian emigration because, among other things, it spoke to their existential situation. Russian religious philosophy was a product of the culture of pre-revolutionary Russia, but by the end of the 1930s that culture scarcely existed anymore. The younger members of the Russian emigration, people coming to maturity in the 1930s and 1940s, had no personal memories of it. They honored and cherished it, to be sure, just as they honored their fathers and mothers. But it could not be their vocation. They saw that their future lay in the West, where Orthodoxy was the faith of a small minority community. The Neopatristic turn in theology advocated by Lossky and Florovsky promised at one and the same time liberation from a backward-looking, sentimental attitude toward Russia and access to the fraternity of Western theological scholars, who by this time had put anti-dogmatic liberalism behind them and were eager to learn more about the patristic tradition.

This is more or less where Orthodox theology has been ever since. For more than half a century now, the most creative Orthodox theology has been done not in Russia or other East European countries that bore the Communist yoke but in the West: in Paris, in Oxford, in Crestwood (and, of course, in Athens and Thessaloniki and Bucharest—I do not mean to discount work done in the “old” Orthodox lands). The theoretical assumptions of most of this activity were and continue to be Neopatristic. That is to say, the business of theology is viewed as the recovery of patristic sources and the articulation of the meaning of those sources in a modern idiom. This involves updating the fathers as opposed to just mechanically repeating their words. But it would be wrong to

⁶ See *Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual and Orthodox Churchman*, ed. Andrew Blane (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), 53–55. Berdiaev's word *bezputstvo*, literally “pathlessness,” also means “dissipation” or “debauchery.”

describe such updating as going "beyond the fathers" in substantive terms.

The Russian school had a different mission. Here the project was to develop a theology of engagement with and involvement in the secular world, to offer a sympathetic theological interpretation of secular experience, and thereby to introduce into Orthodox theology a more positive and affirmative relationship between church and world than can be found in the traditional fathers of the Church. Russian-school theologians coined a term for this project. They called it *cosmodicy*, "the justification of the world," that is to say, the theological defense of changing and changeable secularity to the guardians of changeless truth.⁷ The task was made urgent by the emergence of a dynamic secularism in modern times.

Let me state the point in another way. The Gospel is the good news of universal salvation accomplished in and through the world. The fathers of the church appreciated that God's saving acts took place *in* the world. They did not so much appreciate that salvation takes place *through* the world, through the world as a free, creative agent in the evangelical drama, a view that lends the world as such an inherent and lasting dignity. If the church fathers had seen this, they could not possibly have absolutized the types of asceticism which came to be equated with evangelical living in their time and which were canonized in church tradition. Russian-school theologians called for a fresh assessment of what they termed "the problem of the cosmos in Christianity" over against the acosmic or anti-cosmic tendencies they found in the fathers.⁸

7 For "cosmodicy" (the term is Bulgakov's) see Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 273.

8 See V. V. Zen'kovskii, "Problema kosmosa v khristianstve," *Zhivoe predanie: pravoslavie v sovremenности* (Moscow: Sviato-Filaretovskaia moskovskaia vysshaia pravoslavno-khristianskaia shkola, 1997), 71–91. *Zhivoe predanie* ("Living Tradition"), a collection of essays by Russian-school theologians led by Bulgakov, was originally published in Paris in 1937. See also Alexander Schmemmann, "The World in Orthodox Thought and Experience," in *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979), 67–84.

The theologians of the Russian school were critical of both modern secularism and traditional theology. They criticized secularists for absolutizing the secular, for construing the world without reference to God and so falling into one or another kind of slavery to it. They criticized traditional church theologians because the latter, despite rhetorical vindication of God's sovereignty, in practice treat the secular world as if God were not at work in it. Ironically, secularists and traditionalists agree with each other that the new world of modern times is godless. The one group rejoices in this, the other laments it. For Russian-school theologians, by contrast, the great fact with which Orthodox theology begins is God's ever-present, ever-active work in the world, a work flowing ceaselessly from the Incarnation of the Word and making itself known everywhere as "the light which enlightens every person who comes into the world" (Jn 1:9).

This exuberant cosmism, this evangelical worldliness (if you will allow the phrase), is what distinguishes the Russian school from Neopatristic theology. In the latter one does not find a principled concern for secular being or a positive theology of the secular. This is not to say that Neopatristic theologians have nothing of interest to say about secularity or secularism. They often do. But these things are said in passing. The secular as such is not a primary concern of Neopatristic theologians.

One can see the complex interaction between secular and faith-based commitments in the career of Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944).⁹ Bulgakov was an economist by training, made significant contributions in that field, traded his youthful Marxism for Orthodox Christian faith, and ended up becoming a priest and dogmatic theologian. It is a mistake, however, to equate Bulgakov the economist with the youthful Marxist, or to suppose that it was Orthodox Christianity that shook him loose from Marxism in the first in-

⁹ Recent studies of Bulgakov's career in English include Catherine Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997); *Sergii Bulgakov: Towards a Political Theology*, ed. Rowan Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999); and Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology*, 225–371.

stance. It was Bulgakov's doctoral research on European agricultural history that disrupted his Marxist faith. The research led him to reject some of Marx's key predictions about the direction of economic development in modern times; and having questioned those, he realized that the rest of the Marxist worldview should be reevaluated as well, or at least should not be swallowed whole. About this time he also discovered the philosophy of Vladimir Soloviev, which impressed him profoundly. Before long Bulgakov found himself trekking back to the Orthodox faith in which he had been raised. But he never ceased to think of himself as an economist; and the economist's "historical materialism," he liked to call it, can be sensed even in his late dogmatic theology. Bulgakov saw economics and theology as connected, mutually relevant vocations operating in the same intellectual universe.

Archimandrite Feodor's discussion of the problem of unbelief, the quintessential intellectual sin of modern times, offers another example of the Russian school's interest in the secular world. Feodor discusses unbelief in the powerful penultimate chapter of *On Orthodoxy in Relation to the Modern World*. The chapter is a meditation on Thomas, the unbelieving apostle, remembered annually on the first Sunday after Easter. Feodor takes up the case with a lively sense of paradox. He recalls John the Theologian's vision of the wall of Heavenly Jerusalem with "twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev 21:14). Thomas, of course, is one of the twelve; yet, as Feodor observes, "he who was called to bring the world to faith in the Lord does not himself believe, and moreover his unbelief is of an especially persistent kind."¹⁰ Feodor examines the Gospel texts on Thomas and finds a consistent pattern of unbelief. En route to the raising of Lazarus, Thomas predicts that Jesus and the apostles will die at the hands of their enemies (Jn 11:16). At the Last Supper Thomas professes ignorance of Jesus' way (14:5). Presented with sound reports of the resurrection, Thomas refuses to believe (20:25). In short, Thomas cannot embrace truth by faith; he must

10 "Neverie i uverenie sv. Apostola Fomy," *O pravoslavii*, 318–19.

have proof. In this he reminds Feodor of the modern age, “the positive age” as the nineteenth century liked to describe itself, an age when people demanded concrete, empirical evidence and rejected appeals to authority.

In what does the good news of the story of Thomas consist? It consists, says Feodor, in the fact that the unbeliever is not condemned but redeemed, and not only redeemed but built into the very foundation of the church. Thomas is reckoned one of the Lamb’s apostles in order “to elevate even the most skeptical mind to the grace and truth of Christ, to confirm in the Lord even hearts which are disinclined to faith.” Moreover, the risen Christ satisfies Thomas’ desire for proof: “Put your finger here and see my hands” (John 20:27). This dramatic moment in the story affirms the incarnation and shows that “the whole earthly and material area [of life] with all its complexity, that area where human beings labor and are heavy laden, should not fall outside Christ’s grace and truth.”¹¹ In other words, Thomas was not all wrong; his intellectual stubbornness helped crystallize the meaning of the Gospel.

Believing that grace can transform unbelief in modern as well as apostolic times, Feodor adopts an irenic approach to the skeptics and unbelievers in his midst:

“Peace be with you,” said the Lord to put them all at ease. By his appearance he confirmed the trustworthiness of the other apostles’ witness to His resurrection and at the same time dispelled the darkness of Thomas’ unbelief. But that Christ’s blessing of “peace” might be nearer to our heart and mind, let us apply this word of “peace” to our own time in so far as it is troubled by the spirit of Thomas’ unbelief. Let us consider, in fact, what it would mean for us if the Lord were to reveal Himself to our age as the sun of truth in a way convincing to unbelief itself—even in that area of thought which is disinclined to faith, skeptical to the point of crudity, and which believes only in tangible, earthly things, with the result that it greatly disturbs believers and incurs their pious wrath. Those who now fight each other, the defenders of skeptical thought

11 “Neverie i uverenie sv. Apostola Fomy,” *O pravoslavii*, 322–23.

and the defenders of simple faith, the zealots of the heavenly homeland and the zealots of tangible, worldly well-being, would hear the Lord saying, "Peace be with you."¹²

These words, issuing from deep within the Orthodox Church's theology of the Incarnation, call for a more open and irenic approach to modern humanism, including unbelieving humanism. Feodor has uncovered a new dimension of meaning in the traditional doctrine.

Along with a theology of the secular the Russian school promoted an activist view of the mission of the church to society and an emphasis on lay ministry through secular vocations. In his day, Archimandrite Feodor pointed to the fiction writer Gogol, the philosopher Kireevsky, the painter Aleksandr Ivanov, and the statesman Mikhail Speransky as new-style missionaries for Orthodoxy. With his keen sense for the surprising and unconventional character of the Gospel, Feodor also took an interest in all sorts of irregular ministries. For example, he took up his pen in defense of Ivan Iakovlevich Koreisha, a Moscow fool-for-Christ and asylum inmate whom a critic had attacked in the press as a false prophet and dangerous influence on those, mostly women, who went to him for advice. Feodor responded by praising Ivan Iakovlevich for relating the Gospel to the concrete, everyday concerns of Orthodox people and found nothing offensive in his ministry in spite of his confinement in a mental hospital. The critic, unmoved by Feodor's defense, advanced a theological criterion of his own: "We know that prophets do not exist nowadays, and thus everyone who appears to be one is a false prophet."¹³ Feodor did not believe this. On the contrary, he was convinced that the stream of prophecy continued to flow. That is what made him a good listener. One does not become a good listener by approaching listening as a moral exercise, as if listening were mainly a way of manifesting

12 "Neverie i uverenie sv. Apostola Fomy," *O pravoslavii*, 321–22.

13 I. Pryzhov, *Zhitie Ivana Iakovlevicha, izvestnogo proroka v Moskve* (St Petersburg, 1860), 29. This source also contains Archimandrite Feodor's reply to Pryzhov, dated October 23, 1860: "Neskol'ko zamechanii po povodu stateiki v 'Nashem vremeni' o mnimom Izheporoke," 31–45.

sympathy for the neighbor. One becomes a good listener when one believes that something truly worth hearing is being said.

The activist approach to the reunion of the churches, which I call prophetic ecumenism, was another commitment of the Russian school. The basis of prophetic ecumenism, as opposed to a purely priestly ecumenism, is the recognition that Orthodoxy alone can neither solve nor be the solution of the ecumenical problem. The pioneer of this outlook was Vladimir Soloviev. In his ecumenical activism, pursued in the 1880s and targeted mainly at Roman Catholics, Soloviev reminded his fellow Russians again and again that their Orthodox Church belongs to something greater than itself, to the Universal Church; and that the Universal Church belongs to something greater than itself, to the promised and now dawning Kingdom of God. Along with this went a revival of theocratic and apocalyptic thinking based on the perception that the Gospel speaks not only of an Inner Kingdom—powerful as that concept is—but of an Outer Kingdom, the Kingdom of God on earth, however problematic such a notion might be.

A new-style pastoral theology, a concern with ministering to people where they really are, was another signature feature of the Russian school. This had its roots in the long tradition of Orthodox pastoral ministry, of course; I am not suggesting that Russian-school theologians were the first to reflect on the pastoral responsibilities of the church. But consider the following example taken from a description of Archimandrite Feodor's ministry in the days when he was the dean of students at Kazan Theological Seminary (1854–58). I think you will agree that there is something new and distinctly modern about it:

[Archimandrite Feodor] viewed the whole disciplinary system of the previous dean as a kind of legalistic tutelage which had no place and was even sinful in the new age of grace, a tutelage based on the dead letter of law without spirit, on an old-testamental fear devoid of the love and liberty of the children of God and operating for the sake of outward appearances. This nervous and impressionable man did not hide

these thoughts even from his students. They in turn strongly hoped that in his deanship there would be a weakening of the strict regime that had held sway before, and in this they were not disappointed. By nature and even more by conviction, [Feodor] simply could not present himself in a domineering manner, as all deans before him had done. Viewing his ministry as divine service and, in the spirit of his theological system, conforming himself to the Only-Begotten, he assumed in his own person "the form of a student," so to speak; he tried to live the students' life as a member of one body and one little church with them.¹⁴

Dean Feodor provides an early example of what one might call liberal pedagogy in Russia, although to him it was simply the Lamb's pedagogy: if Christ assumed "the form of a slave" (Phil 2:7) for the sake of humanity, should not a Christian dean assume the form of a student when ministering to his charges?

Bukharev is not as well known as most of the other figures of the Russian school. As a thinker and writer he was less gifted than the distinguished intellectuals who came after him, and scholars have not paid much attention to him. The exceptions are both Orthodox women—Nadejda Gorodetzky, who devoted a section of her famous study of Russian-Christian thought to Bukharev, and Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, who published a fine monograph on him.¹⁵ There is poetic justice here, because the ministry of women in the church was a cause close to the heart of Bukharev and the woman he married after his laicization in 1863, Anna Sergeevna Rodyshevskaja. At every step in his career, Bukharev personally embodied the openness to the world, the interest in secular problems, and the theology of listening which characterized the Russian school as a whole.

14 P. Znamenskii, *Istoriia kazanskoj dukhovnoi akademii za pervyi (doreformennyi) period ee sushchestvovaniia* (1842–1870 gody), 3 vols. (Kazan: Tipografiia imperatorskogo universiteta, 1891–1892), 1:129–30.

15 Nadejda Gorodetzky, *The Humiliated Christ in Modern Russian Thought* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 115–26; Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, *Alexandre Boukharev: Un Théologien de l'Eglise orthodoxe russe en dialogue avec le monde moderne*. Preface by Olivier Clément (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1977).

I think you can see, even from these fragmentary examples, how expansive the program of the Russian school was. Indeed, intellectual expansiveness was one of the striking features of the movement from the beginning. Russian-school thinkers wished to theologize about human experience, and human experience is expansive. "No, the human being is broad, too broad even, I would narrow him," exclaims Dmitry Karamazov in a famous scene in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1:3:3). Russian-school thinkers agreed with Dmitry about the breadth of human experience but most certainly did not wish to narrow it. Their ambition was to embrace it all theologically. One of the Russian school's fondest dreams was to forge a partnership between theology, philosophy, and modern science in the conviction that philosophy, science and theology should not be regarded as warring roommates in the house of intellect but as three sisters, each with her own Spirit-filled vocation of discerning Sophia, the divine wisdom at work in the world.

In our day Russian-school theology merits fresh attention, not just from historical scholars and other specialists, but from the whole Orthodox community. The world of the original Russian school came crashing down in 1917, giving rise to the conditions to which Neopatristic theology made a brilliant response beginning in the mid-1930s. But the world as Neopatristic theology knew it came crashing down in 1989–91. Just how drastic the consequences of this upheaval are for Orthodox theology has not been recognized clearly enough because of the second life Neopatristic theology has taken on recently in the post-communist Orthodox world. Theologians in Russia and elsewhere in the East today are working hard to appropriate the many decades' worth of important work done by Neopatristic thinkers from whom they were cut off by the political and ideological barriers of Communism. With an enthusiasm which is as understandable as it is one-sided, church theologians in Russia and elsewhere have embraced Neopatristic positions so passionately that it is possible to describe contemporary Russian Orthodox theology as "neo-Neopatristic." With this has come the tendency to denigrate the Russian school and to draw

a sharp distinction between "theology" and "religious philosophy." Ironically, it was just this disjunction which Father Alexander Schmemmann, in the introduction to *Ultimate Questions*, regarded as a typical *Western* mistake in the handling of Russian religious thought. "[The] word combination [religious philosophy] may confuse Western readers, since in the West theology and philosophy are usually strictly separated, as are the areas of religion and culture themselves."¹⁶ It is ironic that a comparable shrinking of the intellectual horizon is now propounded by Orthodox theologians in Russia. Their mistake, of course, lies in overlooking the historical fact that Russian religious philosophy not only began with Orthodox theology but, in the great dogmatic works of Father Sergii Bulgakov, ended with it.

I cannot elaborate upon that history on the present occasion. For now, all I wish to suggest is that neo-Neopatristic theology and other kinds of neo-traditionalism, no matter how long they last, do not have the intellectual and spiritual power to shape or govern the future of Orthodox theology. Neo-traditionalism does not possess the theological resources for dealing with the world that we and the Orthodox East now face. This is not the age of Diocletian; we had that already, unfortunately, in the 20th century. Nor is this a new Constantinian age, something which will probably never come again. Nor is this a revolutionary age—that slogan surely has exhausted itself. What we have today in the Orthodox world and indeed around the world is an age of Great Reforms, a time not unlike the middle of the nineteenth century when the Russian school first took shape. The reform age is likely to last for a considerable period of time because there is a great deal of work to be done. Contemporary Orthodox theologians can make an important contribution to the direction of the reforms by figuring Orthodoxy into the equation. But if theologians wish to make a difference, they have to do their homework, both practical and

16 *Ultimate Questions: An Anthology of Modern Russian Religious Thought*, ed. with intro. by Alexander Schmemmann (New York, Chicago, San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 3.

theoretical; and they have to get involved in the vast secularized reality that envelops them on every side. A theology of engagement with the secular world is badly needed in Orthodoxy today. This need cannot be supplied by Neopatristic theology alone because it is not what Neopatristic theology was ever about. It is what Russian-school theology was always about. Contemporary Orthodox theologians will find treasures beyond number in the works of the Russian school from Bukharev through Soloviev to Bulgakov and also, let it be noted, in the work of latter-day Solovievians such as Father Aleksandr Men and his friends who contributed so significantly to the revival of theology and of faith itself in the late Soviet period.

In closing let me say that Russian-school theology holds treasures for Western Christians, too—for Roman Catholics, Protestants, Pentecostals and especially for my fellow Anglicans. We, too, need to hear what Russian-school theologians have to say, albeit for somewhat different reasons than those which compel attention in the Orthodox community. That, however, is a subject for another lecture. Thank you very much for your attention to this one.