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## Problem of liberal orthodoxy in Russia, 1905

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THE PROBLEM OF LIBERAL ORTHODOXY  
IN RUSSIA, 1905\*

Paul R. Valliere

By the problem of Liberal Orthodoxy we mean a particular instance of the all-European and, indeed, worldwide problem of the adjustment of living religious traditions to a dynamic and distinct modern culture claiming, in greater or lesser degree, spiritual and practical autonomy in the direction of human affairs. The great revolutions of modern times, of which the Russian Revolution of 1905 is one, are particular instances of the advancing of this claim of autonomy. Liberal Orthodoxy is any Orthodoxy in modern times which envisages at least some opportunities for constructive and cooperative relationships with the forces of this modern culture; the opposite is an Orthodoxy that looks at modernity with indifference or as a manifest stronghold of Satan and his angels upon which the true Church is called to make holy war in the name of traditional values.

The ambiguities of this general characterization of Liberal Orthodoxy are patent in the very terms employed. In a Western European or American context the terms "liberal" and "Orthodox" would often be taken as indicating opposites; confusion would arise from the attempt to link them together in a single concept. The unfortunate coincidence whereby the Eastern Christian tradition is named by a word which to Western liberal minds indicates the opposite of everything "liberal" has tended to encourage scepticism in the West about whether there has been or ever could be a "liberal" type of Orthodoxy. There is nonetheless a long and

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complex history of religious change in Russia from the eighteenth century to the present day which has been generated by the tension between liberal and neotraditionalist tendencies within one and the same historical Russian Orthodoxy. The fact that this phenomenon has been little studied and less understood hardly argues against its existence. One may, on the other hand, justifiably express curiosity as to the reasons for this paucity of attention.

We suggest at least two. One is that as a practical matter twentieth-century scholarship on Russia which touches at all upon religious matters—and that is but a small part of the scholarship—has rarely delved into the very core of religious tradition in the attempt to expose its logic and directions; it has rather tended to involve investigations of religion that are ancillary to some other and prior task. For all that has been done in the investigation of such matters as the relations of Church and State, the role of religious institutions in the government of the Russian Empire, and on religious participation as a factor of social history, there has been little analysis of the actual religious thought, the modes of religious experience, and the forms of piety in modern Russia.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, what discussion there has been of these matters has often proceeded within the framework of Eastern Orthodox confessionalism which, while rich in certain kinds of results, is poor in others. Above all it is poor in the kind of results sought by the discipline of comparative religion, which in the present instance would try to sort out the dynamics of Russian religious life in the context of the worldwide process of the adjustment of living religious systems to modernity. This is a process which we have hardly begun to understand in any context. The problem is all the more severe with respect to Russia because of the relative absence of practitioners of comparative religion from the Russian field.

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<sup>1</sup>John Shelton Curtiss' statement in the preface to *Church and State in Russia: The Last Years of the Empire 1900-1917* (New York, 1940) is typical: "... the book does not discuss the theological system or creed of any of the religious denominations, and no attempt has been made to discuss the moral precepts and teachings of the Orthodox Church or of other religious bodies—other than those precepts that related specifically to the State and the duties of the subject to the government" (p. viii). In the same regard note Hugh Seton-Watson's comment in the preface to *The Russian Empire: 1801-1917* (Oxford, 1967): "The history of the Church and of religious ideas remains virtually untouched. This is a field of immense importance, of which with deep regret I confess my ignorance, while expressing the hope that pioneers will soon appear" (p. xi).

All of these practical deficiencies to a large extent probably are related to another sort of deficiency which is perhaps the root reason for the minimum of attention directed at the core of Russian religious tradition; the lack of a general conceptual framework to inspire and guide analysis. The reason that so few scholars seriously investigate the actual religious thought, modes of religious experience, and forms of piety of modern Russian religion, we are suggesting, is that few scholars know what to do with these human products, how even to begin to make sense of them, what categories of thought to apply to them, and toward what conceivable ends an investigation of them would be directed. Some scholars recognize this situation. Less aware practitioners opt for some drastic oversimplification of the religious situation of modern Russia as a surrogate for a genuine conceptual structure. The dualistic equation of Orthodoxy with "conservatism" (whatever that word means) and of liberalism with "secularism" (whatever that word means) is an example of such a surrogate, although it can be maintained only by denying either the reality or the significance of the evidence of religious change and religious tension within historical Russian Orthodoxy.

To be sure, to call for a "conceptual framework" for investigating a subject as vast as religion in modern Russia is to put in a very big order, and it is not implied here that meaningful responses can be drafted readily. The most that we are doing in the present instance is making some suggestions toward a conceptuality for thinking about phenomena identifiable as liberal or modernist tendencies within Russian Orthodoxy. There are many other problems, some more important than this one. We would risk one generalization, however, and argue that until progress is made in working out conceptual structures for the study of religion in Russia, a host of questions of broader scope will not be handled satisfactorily: E.g., what is "unique," and what generally human or "modern" about Russia's cultural course in modern times? What are the dominant *formative* of Russian Orthodoxy as possibly distinct from and even obscured by the forces which had the greatest political importance? What impact did the Orthodox tradition have, or not have, on the thought and piety of the Russian intelligentsia, or of other groups that constituted Russian society? What does Russian Orthodoxy have in common, or not in common, with the other branches of Eastern Orthodoxy in its adjustment to modernity and its local social and cultural role? What themes or motives in Orthodoxy might play a dynamic role in Russian culture

even today? In terms of the subject of the present paper, a question on the order of the preceding may be posed about Russian liberalism: What were, or are, the special problems, potentialities, and dynamics of Russian liberalism which may in some degree be connected with Russian religious thought and practice?

We may return, then, to working out a conceptual structure in support of the term, "Liberal Orthodoxy."

### *"Liberal Orthodoxy"*

To speak of "Liberal Protestantism," "Liberal Catholicism," or simply "liberal religion" has been commonplace in Western religious discussion for over a century. Theological liberalism loosely means any sort of modernism, reformism, or anti-fundamentalism practiced by one of the historic confessions. This usage is merely extended in the case of "Liberal Orthodoxy." The ambiguity of course lies in the inevitable socio-political frame of reference of the term "liberal." The question immediately arises: are we, in speaking about Liberal Orthodoxy, or about any other sort of Liberal religion, to assume that it is connected with or implies political liberalism?

It is tempting to think so. At some advanced point in the historical dialectic it may even be so. But for three reasons relevant to the present discussion this assumption will not be made. It will not be made first because there is plenty of evidence that the connection between theological and political liberalism is by no means clear or direct. One of the most striking examples of this to be found in the period of 1905 in Russia is the work of Bishop, later Metropolitan Antonii (Khrapovitskii), who as bishop of Volhynia in 1905 emerged as one of the leaders of extreme reactionary politics on the Russian Church scene, yet whose theological essays, surprisingly, show the influence of Western European liberal theology and represent a consequential effort at theological innovation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See Mitropolit Antonii, *Nravstvennyi smysl osnovnykh khristianskikh dogmatov* (second ed. Moscow, 1917). My own explanation of the seeming paradox here is that there was actually a common term between Antonii's attempt to bring dogma to life as expressive of "moral" ideas (a liberal theological interpretation) and his attempt to mobilize the Church by means of the agencies of an autocratic episcopate and the Orthodox mob. That common term was the idea of the *independence* of the Church, of a morally activist and effective Church Militant.

Second, the assumption of a direct connection between theological and political liberalism will not be made because it is a matter that requires systematic discussion in its own right. The focus here, however, is on the concept of theological liberalism; and clearly the latter deserves some attention before the broader question of religion and liberal politics can be properly handled.

Third, the assumption will not be made because of the main proposition which this paper is intended to advance: that the problem of Liberal Orthodoxy in Russia in 1905 was not essentially or even mainly a *political* problem, that is to say a problem mainly of the relationship between religion and the State. It was a problem of tradition and modernity, of religion and modern culture; ultimately, a *theological* problem, a problem of theology of culture.

We will proceed to this proposition first by offering a brief abstract definition of theological liberalism; then by looking at some concrete manifestations of Liberal Orthodoxy in Russia in 1905; and finally going to the heart of the theological problem by considering the discussion of dogma that was going on in the Russian Church in 1905.

Theological liberalism is defined here in terms of its two essential pursuits, both of which have to do with the exercise of "freedom," as I suppose any "liberalism" always must. The two pursuits are: the freedom of tradition and the freedom of involvement in culture. Freedom of tradition, quite different from freedom *from* tradition, is the liberty of a religion to be and reflect upon itself, to explore its own lights without such constraints within or without as would make an on-going process of reflection impossible. The work of the Russian Bible Society and the rise of academies dedicated to independent theological scholarship in nineteenth-century Russia are manifestations of this freedom. The agitation for a Sobor in 1905 and thereafter is another. The second freedom, freedom of involvement in culture, is typical of the practical side of theological liberalism. By it a religious community defines its relationship to culture neither as ascetical flight nor magisterial domination, but as meeting and mutual interpretation. Theologically this implies a vision which sees the freedom of the children of God somehow implicated in and illuminating the freedom of the sons and daughters of humankind in the world in which they live. Examples of the exercise of this freedom in modern Russia would be the work of missionaries such as Ilminskii, organizer of Tartar schools, as well as the social agitation of activist priests of the 1905 era such as Petrov and Gapon.

The two freedoms in which theological liberalism is rooted acquire a special cruciality in situations where traditional religion meets modernity. The dynamism and apparent autonomy of the modernizing forces of culture so radically alter the historical context in which a religious tradition exists that the latter has to engage in an enterprise of self-interpretation if it is not to be overwhelmed; and this enterprise can take place only on the condition of an effective freedom of tradition. Furthermore, since the vigor of modern culture ensures the impossibility of domination by any religious tradition and, at the same time, offers a multitude of charms to which many individuals and institutions have a hard time saying "no," the way of involvement in culture, as opposed to withdrawal or domination, will exercise a definite attraction under modern conditions—but again, only on the condition that the individuals and institutions concerned are in some fundamental, perhaps spiritual, sense "free" to become involved.

The possibility of Liberal Orthodoxy depended upon exercising these two freedoms in some degree. The problem of Liberal Orthodoxy was also connected with them; it lay in discovering what ultimately was to be made of these two freedoms once they existed in whatever degree—what they could do and what could be done with them in Russia in 1905.

#### *"Liberal Orthodoxy" at Moscow Theological Academy in 1905*

Manifestations of Liberal Orthodoxy as we have defined it were legion during the first decade of the twentieth century in Russia and are not easily characterized in summary fashion. For purposes of creating a compact impression, we invite acceptance of the convenient fiction of a recreated picture of what it was like being a Liberal Orthodox student in the Moscow Theological Academy during the years 1904-1907. The picture would be much the same if drawn for one of the other three theological academies. In all of these cases what the picture would reflect is the reality of the Revolution as experienced by the intellectual elite of the Russian Orthodox Establishment and, to some extent, the elite of the episcopate as well. The limitation of the picture is obviously that it can hardly be thought to describe the Russian Church as a whole, least of all at the popular level. The virtue is that it represents a body of people that had much of the responsibility for the leadership of the Orthodox confession in Russia, and a group that was genuinely concerned in all its activities



with Orthodoxy as a religious system, with Orthodoxy as Orthodoxy—something that could not be assumed were we talking about the lower seminaries, for example, where the groups involved were much more diverse and engaged in a multitude of purposes not necessarily related at all to Orthodoxy or even to religion.

As a member of the Moscow Academy, you would have attended the opening exercises of the academic year 1904-1905 in September, 1904, and heard an address by the Rector, Bishop Evdokim (Meshcherskii). In that lecture the bishop would have asked you to choose as your models of academic life Sts. Gregory and Basil, who “live right [in Athens] in the noisy center of the pagans, in a whirlpool of various currents and tendencies,” but nevertheless devote themselves to nothing but the spirituality of the Church and the pursuit of learning; or again, “the ancient school of the Pythagoreans,” in which the students “by the strictness of their life in part remind us of monks and by their love of wisdom, the outstanding individuals of both ancient and modern times”; and finally, Oxford University, where Evdokim would assure you (quoting Khomiakov) that “university discipline resembles the monastic, students’ pastimes still completely bear the character of children’s games,” and yet whence “the powerful and daring minds” of modern industrial England somehow miraculously emerge.<sup>3</sup>

The events of 1904-1905, of course, would have made it difficult for you to cultivate the life-style urged by Bishop Evdokim. In September of 1905 at the beginning of another academic year, you would have heard of the boycott of the annual academic convocation by the students of the Kiev Theological Academy protesting “the political and social situation of the country.” Two weeks later you would have joined with students of the other three theological academies in publishing resolutions “not to attend classes until such time as the academies are given autonomy” and drafting statements as to just what “autonomy” meant.<sup>4</sup> In general it meant the governance of the theological academies by the Academic Council of each academy, the composition and control of the Council thereby becoming very hot issues. Above all autonomy meant freedom from the interference of bishops and Synod bureaucrats. At the Moscow Academy you would

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<sup>3</sup>Arkhiepiskop Evdokim, *Dobroe proshloe imperatorskoi Moskovskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii (K stoletnemu iubileiu Akademii), Po tserkovnym-obshchestvennym voprosam*, Vol. III (Sergiev Posad, 1915), pp. 15-19.

<sup>4</sup>“God bor’by za avtonomiiu dukhovnykh akademii,” *Tserkovno-obshchestvennaia zhizn’* (Kazan), 1907, No. 2, cols. 52-53.

have had to deal with a particularly "bad" bishop in Metropolitan Vladimir of Moscow, who was unalterably opposed to all of your desires. In the middle of the nation-wide rail strike in October, 1905, he would lock you and your fellows out of the dormitories of the Academy even though the conditions of the strike made it impossible for you to go home. You would have been comforted, however, by hearing about a particularly violent meeting of the Academic Council, attended by the metropolitan, during which he and the professors had it out with each other. In fact most of the professors would have been to some extent on your side. In November they would send a delegation to the Holy Synod in Petersburg to work out provisional rules of academic governance. The rules which resulted would have left you disappointed, for in spite of the majority of the professors' support for opening the rectorship of the academies to any qualified individual, clerical or lay, the provisional rules still prescribed a clerical rector. It would have been an improvement, however, that this individual was now to be chosen by a council of faculty in which even docents could participate.<sup>5</sup> For a full and permanent adjudication of the issue of autonomy, though, you would now have to look forward to the speedy calling of a national Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Church, where the specific issue of academic autonomy would be discussed in the far broader context of the question of the freedom of the Church itself.

As the issue of the freedom of the Church was unfolding in the direction of the calling of a Sobor, you would have had in the meantime many opportunities for involvement in modernist projects of study and action in and around the Moscow Academy. Your Rector, Bishop Evdokim, had by this time turned from the ideal of quietude to that of Christian social action and in the fall of 1906 was busy organizing a Pastoral-Educational Brotherhood at the Academy. The purpose of the Brotherhood was to provide students with practical training in ministry. Activities included preaching in local churches, publishing brochures and pamphlets for popular audiences, social work among poor people, alcoholics and prisoners, and regular discussion sessions in which papers by members of the Brotherhood were read and discussed. Papers dealt with such subjects as Christianity and war, the social question, the role of the laity in the Church, and the need for a more competent parish clergy. Outside visitors sometimes met with the Brotherhood, such as N. N. Nepluev, organizer of the Holy Cross Labor Brotherhood, an agricultural pro-

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<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, No. 2, col. 53; No. 3, cols. 83-85.

ducers' and consumers' cooperative about two hundred strong in the Glukhov District of the Chernigov Guberniia which had been in existence since 1893 working out its own type of Christian populism.<sup>6</sup> You might have visited Nepluev's commune yourself the year before in the company of a delegation from the Academy organized by your Professor of Moral Theology, Mikhail M. Tareev.

The Labor Brotherhood was but one of the stops which Professor Tareev made during a series of field trips in 1905-1906 to Orthodox religious establishments that were engaged in social service of one kind or another.<sup>7</sup> He presented his findings in the course of an extracurricular series of lectures on monasticism organized by himself and Professors Popov (Patristics) and Smirnov (Church History), a series that generated a good deal of hostility among the monks as it coincided with student and faculty protests against monastic dominance in the administration of the Academy.<sup>8</sup> "Our time is interested not in what is happening behind monastery walls, in the solitude of the hermitage, in the closet of the ascetic," wrote Tareev, "but in what Christianity offers for all aspects of actual life—economic needs, social demands, marital life, labor communes, a fraternal social life."<sup>9</sup> He contrasted contemplative absorption in personal salvation with the service-oriented activities being pursued in some of the contemporary monasteries of Russia, such as convents in the Polish provinces where the humble nursing and educational missions of nuns were attempting to undo some of the harm created by generations of bureaucrats in the name of Orthodoxy; a monastery in Pechenga on the Murmansk shore that provided a modicum of agricultural assistance and social services for the Lapp population; a soup kitchen for *bosiaki* organized by a sister in Novgorod.

If you were a student interested in broader aspects of such Christian social action, a large and growing body of what we in the West would call Social Gospel literature was available, such as Father

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<sup>6</sup>Arkhiepiscope Evdokim, "Pastyrsko-prosvetitel'noe Bratstvo pri Akademii," *op. cit.*, pp. 286-319.

<sup>7</sup>For Tareev's account of the field trips see *Zhivye dushi: ocherk nra-stvennykh sil sovremennoi Rossii* (third ed.), in *Osnovy khristianstva: sistema religionznoi mysli*, Supplementary Vol. (V): *Religionznaia zhizn'* (Sergiev Posad, 1910).

<sup>8</sup>"Osvoboditel'naia dvizhenie i bor'ba za avtonomiiu v Moskovskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii: Zapiska prof. M. A. Ostroumova," "Stranitsa iz nedavnei istorii bogoslovskoi nauki (Reviziia akademii v 1908 g.)," *Bogoslovskii vestnik*, 1917 (June-Dec.), pp. 115-116.

<sup>9</sup>Tareev, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

Petrov's *Evangelie, kak osnova zhizni*. Foreign works were also to be had. It is rather startling to see, for example, that one of the key books of the American Social Gospel Movement of the Progressive Era, Francis Greenwood Peabody's *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, had come out in Russian translation in 1906.<sup>10</sup> If you were interested in the theoretical and theological problems of social Christianity, a literature more sophisticated than this was also at hand, such as the discussions of the Religio-Philosophical Meetings of 1901-1903 in St. Petersburg, the works of "Novoe religioznoe soznanie," and a growing number of studies of social thought by your own Orthodox theologians. Tareev himself was soon to begin work on a very detailed and competent critique of Marxist socialism which began to come out in 1912.<sup>11</sup>

To sum up the impression that we have been creating, it may be said that in terms of the types of involvement open to you and the depth and sophistication of theological discussion going on around you, your situation as a liberal Christian in the Moscow Theological Academy in 1904-1907 would have had a great deal in common with that of the Social Gospel circles and theological modernists in Western Europe and America of the same period. The main difference would be that the political and ecclesiastical constraints on your activities would have been much more numerous and effective.

### *"Liberal Orthodoxy" as a Theological Problem*

In the light of the definition of theological liberalism and the manifestations of Liberal Orthodoxy just considered, we may now attempt to spell out the meaning of the proposition that the problem of Liberal Orthodoxy in 1905 was not a political problem, but a theological one: a problem of theology of culture.

To put the matter in this way may well cause irritation or confusion. One might wonder whether in urging a leap away from political discussion to theology we are not engaging in mystification, scowling like Virgil's Sybil—"Procul, o procul este profani!" "Stay

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<sup>10</sup>Fr. Pibodi, *Iisus Khristos i sotsial'nyi vopros*, trans. S. Nikitskii (Moscow, 1906).

<sup>11</sup>M. M. Tareev, *Iz istorii etiki: Sotsializm (Nravstvennost' i khoziaistvo)*, Pt. 1: *Nauchnyi sotsializm: ego ekonomicheskoe uchenie* (Sergiev Posad, 1913). This work is continued (but not completed) by "Ideologiya sotsializma," *Bogoslovskii vestnik* 1918 (Jan.-Feb.), pp. 39-73; (Mar.-May), pp. 90-113; (June-Sept.), pp. 197-231.

away you uninitiated!"—and so destroying any possibility of a concrete and accessible historical discussion. Or one might judge the dualism of our proposition as obviously unstable in the light of what has already been said about Liberal Orthodoxy. If Liberal Orthodoxy depends upon the exercise of freedom of tradition and freedom of cultural involvement, and if the immediate practical constraints on both of these in Russia in 1905 were rooted in the Church-State relationship—which we would not deny—then is it not clear that the problem of Liberal Orthodoxy was a political problem par excellence?

Both these objections may be obviated to some extent by making a distinction between the provisional achievements of Liberal Orthodoxy as evidenced by the sort of manifestations which we have just reviewed, and the content and long-range practical vocation of Liberal Orthodoxy. The real problem, we suggest, is to be located in the latter two aspects, which are related. The point here may be adduced by thinking again for a moment about Bishop Evdokim, Rector of the Moscow Academy in 1905. When the Bishop threw himself into the organization of his Pastoral-Educational Brotherhood to pursue the aims of "social Christianity," he could be credited with a modest achievement of Liberal Orthodoxy. But what if we ask about this achievement not the question, "What was Evdokim doing and why?", but the question, "What, pray, did Evdokim ultimately *have* to say or to do in Russia during the Revolution of 1905—not have in his power, but in his vision, his message, his conception of a direction for Russian society?" Without denying that Evdokim might have had certain resources for action in response to a very real crisis situation in his institution and his society, can we really help wondering what he had to say along the lines of "social Christianity" that could really help, what spark of charisma he had that could in any way illuminate a milieu plunged in the profound pathos of the Revolution of 1905?

Speaking abstractly again, the question here is about what is actually going on in the "adjustment" of a religious tradition to modernity. So often the process of adjustment is understood in simple stereotypical terms as a mutual facing-off between religion and modern culture through which religious tradition accepts the status of a voluntary organization in the pluralistic society and modernity imposes certain guidelines to insure against interference by tradition in the working of modernizing forces. Liberal religionists go one step further within this general framework and find activities which tradition can pursue to further some of the ends of modern culture and so play a socially useful role. But the depth of the problem of tradition and modernity is really so much greater than this model suggests.

To call it a theological problem is to point to the question of identity involved. Religious traditions can certainly be moulded and even exploited (not necessarily unjustifiably) in terms of the social and political agenda of their milieu. But this is true only up to a certain point; at some point the problems of the content of thought and the effective forms of piety arise, for every religious tradition has an identity, and this cannot be sacrificed without crisis and breakdown. Identities can be changed, but scarcely through a process of "adjustment" to external forces pure and simple. Religious identities can be changed from within or redirected through fresh religious experience that emerges at points of meeting between religion and culture; but even these steps forward onto new ground are possible because they somehow make sense on the old ground of tradition. The practical social aspect of such change is as complex as the theoretical and personal aspects. It lies not merely in a tradition adjusting to modes of social action challenging it from without, but in the participation of tradition in the actual creation of modes of social action: that is to say, in generating fresh charisma that can shape the social and cultural milieu.

Viewed in terms of the aspects of identity and long-range practical vocation, the problem of Liberal Orthodoxy is seen to transcend both the question of its sheer possibility and the question of its political success or failure. The problem becomes not so much how to bring Liberal Orthodoxy, or any other religious modernism, into being and defend it successfully, as how these efforts find something to say and to what extent that adequately meets the measure of the pathos of modernity itself—or, for that matter, the pathos of the classical religious traditions themselves, with their own peculiar visions of transcendence.

The great strength of the St. Petersburg Religio-Philosophical Meetings of 1901-1903 lay in the fact that it was in terms of the deep aspects of the question of tradition and modernity that discussion proceeded, at least in so far as the moving spirits behind the meetings were concerned, such as Ternavtsev and Merezhkovsky. In the opening paper of the first of the Religio-Philosophical Meetings, Ternavtsev gave an excellent demonstration of the kind of logic that needed to be cultivated. His topic was the mutual alienation of the Orthodox Church and the secular activist intelligentsia, and his plea was that the key to a deep mobilization and reorientation of Russian society lay in healing this alienation.<sup>12</sup> Throughout the paper he clearly main-

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<sup>12</sup>V. A. Ternavtsev, "Russkaia tserkov' pred velikoiu zadachei," *Zapiski*

tains that the problem that he is talking about is not a political one, in his words, a problem of reconciling "parties." The task he sets before the Meeting is not the negotiation of détente, or even entente, by parties which, because they have to operate in the same political arena, need to come to terms with each other as best they can, given their respective "interests." He defines both the intelligentsia and the Church not as interest- or power-groups, but as groups that embody respective moral and religious ideas. The idea of the Church is the life-giving revelation of Christ in historical Christian Orthodoxy. The intelligentsia embodies "the idea of humanity and the human" which is to be realized in "a new system, a new society—spiritualized, where there is no division between the ideal and the actual."<sup>13</sup> Ternavtsev's proposition is that Church and intelligentsia will heal their hate only when they see that these two ideas, the Christian revelation and humanization, may stimulate each other and release fresh energies for mutual realization and for realizing something else as well, some new thing: "*obshchestvennoe vo Khriste spasenie*," "social salvation in Christ."<sup>14</sup> But for this new scene to be possible what is needed is obviously not on the order of a common political program; what is needed is a new piety, and "new piety" implies a fresh revelation of God's light. The Orthodox Church is challenged by Ternavtsev to see that "in the intelligentsia, though it has still not come to Christ, a particular type of piety and righteousness is potentially contained and foreshadowed." This type of piety will be historically actualized by the Church when it discovers "the truth and justice for earth concealed within Christianity" but long obscured by the Church's age-old "lack of a religious-social ideal"; and by the intelligentsia when it discovers not the utility of a veneer of Christianity ("*khristianstvennost'*") but the reality of the Living God, thus transcending the pathos of its secularism, its bondage to despair and death.<sup>15</sup> This is what Ternavtsev, with the sense of expectancy of St. John on Patmos, sees on the spiritual horizon of modernity.

What Ternavtsev has to say about the concrete content and historical forms of this new piety is interesting in its own right and obviously crucial to the substance of his own Liberal Orthodoxy, but

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*Religiozno-Filosofskikh Sobraanii v S.-Peterburge*, I<sup>e</sup> Sobraenie, pp. 8-22. (The *Zapiski* were published as supplements to the monthly issues of the journal *Novyi Put'* [St. Petersburg] from January 1903, through January, 1904. Pagination was consecutive from 1-531.)

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 11-15.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 16-21.

the present occasion prohibits more detailed discussion.<sup>16</sup> What is important at the moment is to see the shape of the conceptuality being employed here.

If one follows and accepts the conceptual analysis of the problem of Liberal Orthodoxy up to this point, one will appreciate the centrality and broad relevance of the subject which dominated the last

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<sup>16</sup>The question of the concrete content of the "new piety" and "new revelation" expected is obviously crucial, particularly in terms of the criteria of evaluation to be applied. Who is to say, and on what basis, that this or that content or form of action is part of the new piety and the new revelation? This question came up often in the Religio-Philosophical Meetings devoted to the question of "dogmatic development" (XVII<sup>o</sup>-XX<sup>o</sup> Sobraniia). Here it was not only some of the churchmen who wanted clarification but members of the intelligentsia as well. Minsky, for example, makes an interesting comment on the call for "creativity" in dogmatics by Rozanov and Merezhkovsky. Minsky observes that the "right wing" of the Meetings (the conservative churchmen) is perfectly explicit and honest about the criteria which it is applying in discussing dogma: the criterion of "faith" (in the tenets of historical Orthodoxy). But as for the "left wing," the innovators, writes Minsky, "I never know in just what light it is that they see the present questions that we are examining. Sometimes it seems to be in the light of reason, sometimes in the light of revelation. Perhaps their point of view will be clarified further. I personally see the possibility of dogmatic development only in the sense that we can bring religious truth into the light of reason. This light is *new free thought*" (*Zapiski*, p. 446). What this comment shows is that Minsky did not exactly share the conceptuality of the problem of dogmatic development or the view of religious consciousness held by Merezhkovsky, Ternavtsev, Rozanov and others on the "left wing." Minsky is speaking about the *rationalization* of dogma (and he expects the conservative churchmen to demur). Merezhkovsky *et al.* are speaking about the recharismatization of dogma through fresh religious experience. Theirs is the conceptuality which, in the judgment of this paper, is adequate to the problem of Liberal Orthodoxy. But to say this hardly denies the force of Minsky's criticism: that the criteria of judgment here are by no means clear.

The content of the new piety envisioned by members of the "left wing" of the Meetings, in so far as one can see it at all, varied from individual to individual. In Ternavtsev's case the preaching of a coming revelation of the "truth and justice for earth" hidden deep within the Christian tradition was made concrete in a kind of Christian populism that included a positive religious evaluation of the State, the State being employed and also transfigured by a recovered seriousness about the "diaconic" mission of the Church, particularly in terms of the stewardship of property in Russian society (see *Zapiski*, pp. 13, 21-22). Here we have an interesting example of the impossibility of making a direct transition from "Liberal Orthodoxy" to what would be considered political liberalism in the time and place under discussion. Ternavtsev's theological liberalism motivates him to preach a closer *union* of Church and State at a time when greater *separation* of Church and State was one of the most widely held desiderata of Russian political liberalism.



four Religio-Philosophical Meetings, the question of "dogmatic development."<sup>17</sup> That is to say: whether the dogmatic structure of Orthodox Christianity is to be considered complete or still underway; and if still underway, then how new creative forces for the building of dogma can be released and structured. Merezhkovsky himself was the chief instigator and presiding spirit of these discussions, drawing friends and enemies from both Orthodox and secular members of the Meetings. In his argument that not only is the Christian dogmatic system in itself open-ended but that the reality of ever-new religious experience—which it is impious to deny—implies the possibility of new dogmatic insight and articulateness, Merezhkovsky provides a brilliant example of the exercise of a conceptuality adequate to the problem of Liberal Orthodoxy as we have stated it. Merezhkovsky's performance is no stuffy closet drama or esoteric discipline. It has relevance to all of the concrete historical levels of the problem of Liberal Orthodoxy: the personal-existential, the doctrinal, and the social-institutional. On the existential level the dogmatic task is to make a theological evaluation of the ideal of "humanization," and this at its deepest point: the meaning of freedom, which Merezhkovsky refuses to take for granted either in traditionalist or modern secularist terms. It remains a problem for him, in some ways "the" problem.<sup>18</sup> On the level of theological doctrine as such, the dogmatic task is to examine with renewed seriousness and historical imagination the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Christian expectation of the Apocalypse. Why these two themes? Not for arbitrary reasons: first, because they are among the themes immediately relevant in a theological evaluation of "humanization," since they constitute an interpretation of the sanctification and ultimate historical destiny of humankind; second and even more obviously—though regularly forgotten by churchmen and secularists alike—because the doctrine of the Spirit and the expectation of the Apocalypse are inherently un-

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<sup>17</sup>*Zapiski*, XVIIe-XXe Zasedaniia, pp. 421-531.

<sup>18</sup>See Merezhkovsky's remarks on freedom in *Zapiski*, pp. 187-188. Merezhkovsky's problem was that he wanted freedom of conscience and a non-coercive Christianity without, however, being willing to accept the religious "indifferentism" and "atheistic freedom" of the West. But the latter, as Kartashev pointed out, were not only well represented but perhaps to some extent unavoidable in the modern freedom movement. In a sense Merezhkovsky simply had to go on hoping against hope that some illumination, social in scope, would transcend the present unacceptable (to him) terms of the problem of freedom. May we suggest that this means that for Merezhkovsky "freedom" was as much a "dogmatic" problem as the more obviously theological problems of God, the Spirit, the End, etc.?

finished theological concepts and when included in the Christian dogmatic structure give the whole system an open-ended character, so implying the possibility of new revelation and "development." Finally, on the social and institutional level the dogmatic task of Liberal Orthodoxy is to convene the Sobor—not the Sobor merely as a political exigency or desideratum, but as a spiritual reality witnessing to the inner independence of the Christian faith and actualizing the power of the mystical Church in a historical presence that could attempt to address the pathos of the Revolution, and of modernity itself.<sup>19</sup>

To point out the tasks of Liberal Orthodoxy on these various levels is not the same thing as to point the way to the execution of these tasks. That would require in each case a plunge into questions of the content of religious thought and the forms of piety. The identification of these tasks, however, does provide illustration of the way in which the problem of Liberal Orthodoxy is being conceptualized, and the suggestion of a conceptual structure is the point of the present paper. One might add that the conceptual framework taken as exemplary here, even as a sheerly abstract structure, is not without its own spiritual dynamism. For one of the most important things about the discussion of dogmatic development by Merezhkovsky and others was not dependent upon either the content of the discussions or on their deemed success or failure. It lay in the mere fact that there was a discussion of "dogma" at all, that in Russia on the eve and during the Revolution of 1905 there were individuals and groups that could be passionately involved in such an enterprise—and not at all for neotraditionalist reasons, but for the sake of coming to terms with modernity conceived in highly sophisticated and even radical

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<sup>19</sup>We have not yet investigated Merezhkovsky's views on the expected Sobor satisfactorily. The schematization of the "levels" of the dogmatic problem of Liberal Orthodoxy here is our own analytical construct, including what we say therein about the Sobor. But we would argue that our schematization is faithful to the spirit and to the conceptual structure of Merezhkovsky's vision of a renewed Christianity and represents a valid, if tentative, extension of his logic to the concrete institutional problems of the Orthodox Church in 1905. Certainly the mystique of a Sobor was powerfully felt by some of the members of the Religio-Philosophical Meetings and, to say the obvious, we are dealing here with the Sobor as a spiritual reality and not a political one. What was found especially attractive was the *form* of a Sobor (independent of the dogmatic content discussed). The form of a Sobor was itself seen as a manifestation of the working of the Holy Spirit and a witness to the openness of the Church to new revelation. See the comments by S. P. Zorin (citing the authority of V. V. Bolotov) in *Zapiski*, pp. 438-439.

terms. This sort of discussion carried its own particular interest and, one might say, charisma. And fundamentally speaking it was not the simplification, or modernization, or rationalization of dogma that Merezhkovsky was seeking either, but rather the *recharismatization* of dogma, which would give it a formative role to play in modern culture.<sup>20</sup> In the light of this aim, in fact, one could proceed to a fairly comprehensive critique of the thought and work of many Russian Orthodox Liberals of the period of 1905 who thought about tradition and its dogmatic trappings in much the same way as did their secularist friends: that it was in every sense the obstacle and hardly one of the resources of Liberal Orthodoxy in the modern world. But this critique, just like the discussion of the content of the various visions of Liberal Orthodoxy in Russia, must await another occasion.

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<sup>20</sup>Merezhkovsky was fascinated by what he took to be the social and cultural formative power of dogmas, *e.g.*: "You speak," replies Merezhkovsky to an interlocutor, "of the leaven planted by Christ, and we see what a massive ferment resulted at the start, how the life then was. Under the influence of dogmas whole cultures were put together, everything was subordinated to them. It is possible to trace the way dogmas were reflected in all aspects of culture. Now once again a moment has come in our consciousness when we feel the need to introduce the dogmas into life" (*Zapiski*, p. 445).