TRADITION IN NINETEENTH CENTURY RUSSIAN
ORTHODOX THOUGHT

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There is such an obvious stability in Russian Orthodox doctrine and
practice that a paper on the topic "Orthodoxy and Tradition" might seem to
have little to say beyond an examination of the sources of this stability. So
powerful has been the commitment to maintaining the doctrine and practice
of the ancient church that the place of tradition seems uncontroversial and
unproblematic. Yet this is not the case. Under the impact of conditions in
which Russian Orthodoxy has existed for much of the twentieth century —
the pressures of a militantly atheistic government and of emigration to non-
Orthodox societies — many Orthodox believers have emphasised, it is true,
the importance of maintaining and preserving their Christian inheritance.
That inheritance itself, however, contains a diversity of opinion about the
nature and significance of tradition.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, in particular, tradition — in
the sense of the church’s relationship to its past — was subject to analyses
which called into question existing conceptions of that relationship and
which confronted the church with new ways of thinking about it. This period
was marked by unprecedented freedom and institutional security for
theological scholarship. There were four theological academies, whose
function, in contrast to the diocesan seminaries where most clergy were
trained, was to prepare an educated elite of clergy. The academies enjoyed
substantial academic autonomy and financial support. Although many
bishops and members of the government had misgivings about their
activities, the academies benefitted from the view that well developed
Orthodox scholarship was the best bulwark against the negative aspects of
Western thought. For the same reason a theological press was allowed to
develop with some measure of freedom from the close supervision of the
state.¹

¹ On the educated churchmen of the nineteenth century see especially G.
Florovsky, Puti russkago bogosloviia (Paris 1937); I.A.Chistovich,
S-Pb dukhovnaia akademia za poslednie 30 let (1858-1888), SPb,
1889; S.Ternovskii, Istoricheskaia zapiska o sostoianii kazanskoi
dukhovnoi akademii posle eia preobrazovaniia, 1870-1892 (Kazan' 1892); U Trottsy v akademii. 1814-1914 (Moscow 1914).
During these years considerable attention was paid to Orthodox identity and to the closely related question of the meaning of preserving and maintaining the truth, the concept which had been up to that time the central element in Orthodox self-understanding. One of the products of these years was a theology whose place in the Orthodox tradition has in the twentieth century been controversial. Indeed, much twentieth century Russian Orthodox theology has defined itself in opposition to this theology.² On the other hand it is precisely this theology which has attracted the attention of recent non-Orthodox theologians such as Pelikan and Aidan Nichols.³ The ecclesiology, the concept of divinization and the concepts of dogmatic development which they consider Orthodoxy’s contribution to twentieth century theology, all stem from nineteenth century theology.

Whatever value nineteenth century theology may have for Orthodoxy or, more generally, Christianity, it holds great interest for the history of Christian thought. This is partly because it is a response to important problems which confronted Christianity in the nineteenth century and partly because in confronting those problems it was forced to a high level, unprecedented in Orthodoxy, of self-consciousness about the significance of history and of historical problems and perspectives for Christianity. Has Christianity a stable content and identity over time? If it exists how is this identity to be recognised and defined? If all ideas and practices claiming to be Christian are not to be regarded as authentically Christian, by what criteria and by what authority is authenticity to be determined? Is any form of change for the better — progress — possible within Christianity? What place do cultural change and cultural diversity have in Christianity?

The thinking of the Russian churchmen who grappled with these questions was defined to a large extent by two seemingly contradictory factors: the desire to master modern Western thought; and, the need to

² On the negative evaluation of this theology see the discussion of Florovsky below. See also the articles in Bogoslavskie Trudy, 1986, published as Sbornik, posviskhennyi 175-letiiu Leningradskoi dukhovnoi akademii, especially 227ff; J.Breck et al., eds, The Legacy of St Vladimir (Crestwood 1990), especially Paul Valliere, "The liberal tradition in Russian Orthodox Theology", 93ff.

³ J.Pelikan, "Orthodox Theology in the West" in Breck et al., op.cit. 164-5; Aidan Nichols, From Newman to Congar (Edinburgh 1990), 279ff.
express an independent, distinctively Orthodox world view. In seeking to master modern Western thought churchmen did not simply aim to defend Orthodoxy against Western thought. They respected that thought and wished to take from it what was of value. The church was not so much to be a buffer against Western thought as a filter through which it would pass into Russian life. Churchmen trained in the theological academies received a firm grounding in modern Western philosophy and historical studies. Western thought had to a significant extent ceased to be external to them. In their work they saw themselves not only as framing a Russian Orthodox response to such thought but as contributing to it and to the history of enlightenment of which it was a part. They were convinced that anti-Christian conclusions in Western thought were not the final conclusions of the development of philosophy and historical studies. Further developments in such fields were possible in ways which would be fully compatible with Christian truth while preserving the integrity of the fields themselves.4

4 On attitudes to philosophy see V.V.Zenkovksy, History of Russian Philosophy (London 1953) 299ff, 532ff; N.Berdyaev, The Russian Idea (London 1947), 158. For comments of nineteenth century theologians see, for example, K.P.Kudriavtsev, "Religiiia, eia sushchnost' i proiskhozhdenie", Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, I,3, 1870; P.Miloslavskii, "Proiskhozhdenie i znachenie filosofii", ibid., 1879, II; V.Nesmelov, Nauka o cheloveke, Kazan', 1898; A.I.Vvedenskii, "O zadachakh sovremennoi filosofii samobytno russkoi", Voprosi filosofii i psikhologii, kn 20, 1893; P.P.Sokolov, "Filosofii v sovremennoi Germanii", Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, 1890, I,2:276ff; 3:445ff; 4:612ff; D.I.Bogdashevskii, "O vzaimnom otnoshenii filosofii i estestvoznaniia", Trudy kievskoi dakhovnoi akademii, 1894, 12. See also the evaluation of philosophy in the academies in comparison with secular philosophy in Russia in Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii, kn 1, 1889, 60ff (second pagination). For attitudes to historical studies see for example M.Bogoslovskyi, "K istorii novozavetnogo teksta", Chteniia v obschestve liubitelei dakhovnago prosveshcheniia, 1876, 1,1;3; 1877, I; II; T.Bukevich, "Poluvekovaiia bor'ba khristianskago bogoslovia i ego sovremenniia zadachi", Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, 1883,II,5/6; V.Dobrotvorskii, "Kriticheskii metod v issledovaniia o knigakh sviashchennago pisaniia", ibid., 1883, III; N.Drozdov, "V zashchitu svobodnago nauchnago issledovaniia v oblasti bibliologii", Trudy kievskoi dakhovnoi akademii, 1902,2.
The desire to express an independent, distinctively Orthodox world view led in the nineteenth century to an emphasis on patristic studies and church history. This was, perhaps ironically, partly the result of the place of history in nineteenth century Western thought but it was also the result of a desire to find theological sources other than the Western texts used in Russia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Patristics and church history dominated the curriculum of the academies and the pages of the theological journals. Even dogmatic theology for a large part of the century was required to be taught "from the historical point of view".5

Reviewing the state of Orthodox theological studies in 1870 the editors of Pravoslavnoe obozrenie (The Orthodox Review) commented on the prominence of historical approaches. Arguing that this was the sign of a "transitional state in theological science," they went on:

"This is the main reason why the historical element has been predominant and why it can bring benefit in the future. By the historical path our science can find its own independent soil. By the historical path in science its independent content is separated out from arbitrarily imposed obsolete forms, methods and opinions."6

The return to the sources of Orthodoxy was not simply, or even primarily, motivated by apologetic concerns. The Orthodox claim to be the maintainer and preserver of the heritage of Christ and the early church was, of course, central to Orthodox dealings with other churches, and the defence of this claim against modern biblical and historical criticism was important, but these matters are not what primarily motivated the intensive study of the sources of Orthodox faith and of church history. Above all, Orthodox churchmen aimed to create an Orthodox theology. For all that the Russian church had preserved true Christianity in its liturgy confession and practice,

5 On the curriculum of the academies see B.V.Titlinov, Dukhovnaia shkola v rossii v xix stoletiili (Vil'na 1909), vol.2, 25ff, 374ff. On history see Florovsky, op.cit., 364ff; and A.P.Lebedev, Tserkovnaia istoriografiia, SPb, 1903.
6 "Vzgliard na proshedshee i nadezhdy v budushchem", Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, 1870, 1,1:1ff; 2:195ff, esp.209.
its faith still required theological articulation and its self-understanding, expression.7

The patristic heritage was the basis on which an Orthodox theology was to be constructed. This was the richest period of Orthodox theological activity. Moreover, the theology of this period was attested by the witness of the Universal church through the Ecumenical Councils. Yet the intense, systematic study of the patristic heritage also raised problems. That heritage had been understood to be an homogenous system of theology. It had been known primarily through selections from the Fathers chosen to illustrate the major doctrines. Now its richness, diversity, and complexity were discovered. Church Fathers began to take on individual voices as the full range of their works was appreciated. As a result the issue of the unity and identity of Orthodoxy took on new dimensions. In what sense was this heritage, whose value was unquestionable, a unified Orthodox theology? The task of the historical study of theology became

"to reconcile the inexact, careless and even obviously non-Orthodox expressions of some worthy Fathers with the undoubted Orthodoxy of their teaching."8

The works of the Fathers cast theology in what was for nineteenth century churchmen a different light. The Fathers brought their own individual voices to the expression of universal truths. They even ventured freely onto topics on which the church had not made clear a universal understanding. The patristic revival of the nineteenth century gave individual theological activity a new status and raised the question of whether there was

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7 See for example ibid.; A.Beliaev, "Russkaia bogoslovskaia literatura", ibid., 1877,III,10; P.Ia.Svetlov, "Mesto bogosloviia v sem'e universitetskikh nauk", Khristianskoe chtenie, 1897, 3, 320ff; "Uchenie tserkvi i bogoslovstuiushchii razum v religioznokhristianskom znanii", ibid., 1895, 6; N.Drozdov, "Zaprosy sovremennoi zhizni v otnoshenii k bogoslovskoi nauke", Trudy kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii, 1885,III,10; V.Nesmelov, Dogmaticskeoe sistema Sviatago Grigoriia Nisskago (Kazan 1887), esp.81ff.

8 A.Katanskii, "Ob istoricheskom izlozenii dogmatov", Khristianskoe chtenie, 1871, I,836.
any reason why such activity should not have a place in contemporary Orthodoxy.

"Who can say that the work of interpretation had come to an end with the Fathers and teachers of the church, and that our only concern is to give received material a true application?"^

Fuller acquaintance with the work of the Fathers also brought the question of the place of "secular" learning to the fore. It was clear that categories and concepts from secular thought were to be encountered in the work of the Fathers. This prompted a re-examination of the relationship between secular thought and theology and contributed to attempts to take account of the place of contemporary developments in thought for theological activity.10

Associated with the recovery of the patristic heritage and reinforced by the encounter with modern thought, three issues came to figure prominently in the work of Orthodox churchmen. All had consequences for their understanding of the church's relationship with its past. First was the issue of articulating Orthodoxy. To educated churchmen it was increasingly apparent that the church must present to the world a well formulated self-understanding. Yet in Russian Orthodoxy such theological self understanding had played little part. Might articulation itself, no matter how traditional its content, somehow alter a way of living within the church in which liturgical life and expressions of Christianity associated with this, such as icon painting, had been central and in which monastic devotion and spirituality had been the ideal? Articulation raised questions of authority. Those who were interested in the theological articulation of Orthodoxy were in most cases not members of the hierarchy. Many professors in the academies were not even ordained. For the first time in its history the Russian church faced

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9 N.Nikolskii, "Nasha bibleiskaia nauka", Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, 1875, 1,189. See also A.Katanskii, Dogmaticheskoe uchenie o semi tserkovnykh tainstvakh v ivoreniakh drevneishikh otsev, SPb, 1877, esp.8ff, 398ff; "Uchenie o Blagodati Bozhiei", Khristianskoe chtenie, 1900, 7-12; 1901,2,5,6; Svetlov, "Uchenie tsekvi . . . ", op.cit.; Nesmelov, Dogmaticheskaia sistema . . , op.cit. esp.96ff.

10 See for example ibid., 8ff; Katanskii, Dogmaticheskoe uchenie, 398ff; A.Gusev, "Nравственность", kak uslovie istinnoi tsivilizatsii", Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, 1874, 1, 497.
the problem, long familiar in the West, of defining the role of those who spoke with the authority of learning. Articulation also raised the question of the relationship between the theologies put forward by individuals. How was diversity to be viewed? Was the fuller understanding of Christian truth served by various individual attempts to articulate it? If so, was it possible to speak of some kind of progress in this context?

The second prominent issue was the nature of the historical process. Educated churchmen shared many of the attitudes of other educated Europeans in the nineteenth century. Many were convinced that history involved in some way or another progress in the sense of change for the better. Was there progress within Christianity? What might the meaning for Christianity be of the social and intellectual progress which seemed so obvious to nineteenth century people, churchmen included? Many churchmen also shared the view, characteristic of much nineteenth century thought, that the nature of life was revealed in its development. If this were true of individuals, societies, nations, mankind itself, then might it not be true of the church?

The third prominent issue was that of engagement with "the demands of the time". For churchmen this was not simply a matter of responding to threats to Christianity. They also set for themselves the task of responding to a culture which they respected and valued. In this context of changing demands on Christianity the idea of maintaining the truth took on a new dimension. At the very least, the truth would need to be expressed in new ways. Perhaps it also demanded to be understood in new ways.

The way educated churchmen dealt with tradition reflects clearly the impact of these issues. By "tradition" they meant the heritage of the church. Tradition (predanie) was not a technical term with a precise definition. Tradition referred to the whole of the inheritance of the past, including, as will be seen below, Holy Scripture itself, but also including aspects of that heritage which lacked any formal endorsement by authority.

Much of the discussion of tradition centred on dogma. Early treatments of dogma stressed that it was an unchanging "deposit" of truth given to the church by divine revelation and guarded within it. The preservation of this truth was one of the most important signs of the true church. Conversely,
universality was the sign of a genuine dogma. Growing awareness of the
history of the expression of dogma, however, led to some important
refinements. The work of A. Katanskii, a professor at St Petersburg
academy, is an early and very influential example of this.

Katanskii argued that it was necessary to distinguish between unchanging
dogma, present at all times in the church, and the expression of dogma. Such
expressions changed and even developed. They could be true, but they were
invariably incomplete. Katanskii thus pointed to the limitations of all
attempts to give verbal articulation to dogma. He even extended this to the
words of Holy Scripture and the Ecumenical Councils themselves, arguing
that these were only to be understood in the light of an awareness of dogma
possessed by the church. Of the Ecumenical Councils he wrote

"despite all the perfection of these formulae, the meaning of
ecumenical dogma cannot be contained within the forms of
imperfect human language."

On Scripture, Katanskii asked, "Can Orthodox theological science,
without ceasing to be Orthodox, create some kind of Orthodox biblical
theology similar to Western science?" His answer was a resounding "no!"
This was because such an approach demanded the explanation of Scripture by
Scripture itself. Orthodoxy cannot allow this because such an approach
separates Scripture from the totality of revelation which the church
possesses. This consisted of what Katanskii called a "living" as well as a
"written" aspect.

"The living aspect includes the spirit, the meaning or understanding
of the opinions and expressions which were given to the church by
Christ the Saviour and the Apostles and which, from then on, live
in the Orthodox church, animate it, strengthen it and appear, in

11 See Anon., "Predvaritel'nyia poniiatiiia o pravoslavnom
dogmaticheskom bogoslovii", Khristianskoe chtenie, 1848, I,
esp.262ff; Filaret, Arkhipiskop Chernigovskago, Pravoslavnoe
dogmaticheskebogoslovie (Chernigov 1864), esp.15ff; Makarii,
Arkhipiskop Khar'kovskii, Vvedenie v pravoslavnoe bogoslovie,
SPb, 1863, 13ff;373ff.
12 "Ob istoricheskem izlozhenii dogmatov", op.cit. esp.831.
unity with the Holy Spirit, as that force which subordinates to itself the separate personalities of the members of the church . . . "13

The approach advocated by Katanskii had a number of consequences. Most importantly it focussed attention on the character of the church and on its ability to know fully and preserve dogma even while unable to give more than partial expression to them. All agreed that such an ability resided in the life of the church, and for all educated churchmen the central characteristic of that life was conciliarity. The discussion of conciliarity, however, revealed considerable differences of opinion, particularly between those who stressed the role of the hierarchy and those who wished to give emphasis to relations between the hierarchy and other members of the church. This last school of thought contained many influenced by Slavophile ideas of sobornost'. Thus in the nineteenth century the discussion of dogma became closely associated with debates about authority within the church. For all participants in the debates it remained common ground that awareness of dogma rested on or lay within the life generated by relationships within the church. It was only possible to be aware of dogma while in a right relationship with the church and it was only possible for an authoritative pronouncement on dogma to be made by the church as a whole. No individual could make such a pronouncement. One of the most important ways this understanding was expressed was in the concept of the "divine-human" character of the church. The church's character rested on structures and relationships established by God in which the Holy Spirit was active. For some churchmen this gave rise to what might be called a "moral basis for epistemology". Only on the basis of Christian love, usually defined as free submission to fellow Christians, was it possible to know the truth. "Mutual love is that eye by which each Christian perceives the Divine objects".14


14 N.Barsov, "Novyi metod v bogoslovii", Khristianskoe chtenie, 1870, I, 46. See also N.Ivantsov, "Ot tserkvi edinoi, sviatoy, katolicheskoi i apostol'skoi", Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, 1877, II; A.Gusev, "Poniatie o dogmaticheskom bogosloviy i o dogmatakh", ibid., 1878, I; Svetlov, "Uchenie tserkvi . . .", op.cit.; Katanskii, Dogmaticheske uchenie . . ., op.cit., 11ff; Arkhimandrit Sil'vestr, "Iz chtenii po dogmaticheskomu bogosloviu", Trudy kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii, 1877, II, 74ff. Sobornost' raises the question of the impact of Slavophilism on nineteenth century theology. Slavophile ideas were
An interesting consequence of this approach was that it allowed an effective reply to be made to contemporary Western Biblical criticism and to textual problems which might arise with Scripture. This was achieved by making no distinction between Scripture and tradition: Scripture is seen as only one part of tradition, albeit the most important part. Scripture had to be understood in the light of the Church's understanding, never fully articulated, of the meaning of Divine Revelation.  

For many educated churchmen such an approach to dogma gave a new meaning to theological activity. The purpose of theology was not only, as had been previously thought, simply to restate or to comment on secure and authoritative statements of truth. If all statements of dogma, however valuable, were incomplete, then there was a need to seek for and to give a more complete expression. "Who can say that the task of theology has come to an end". Theology became an open-ended activity, with a permanent place in the church. In their review of the state of Russian theology in 1870 the editors of Pravoslavnoe obozrenie summed up these new concerns.

"The peculiarity of our trend of theological thought and of our position on the interpretation of Orthodoxy, and its distinction from the old theological school consists in this: that we strive to distinguish in Orthodoxy between its unchanging essence . . . and its explication, application, demonstration, a process based on free human and therefore on the natural law of change, development and promoted in Pravoslavnoe obozrenie and by N.Barsov, a professor at St Petersburo academy. See the editor's comments in Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, 1875, I, 56; A.M.Ivantsov-Platonov, "Neskol'ko slov o bogoslovskikh sochineniiakh A.S.Khomiakova", ibid.,1869, I, 97-119; N.Zaozerskii, "O sviashchennoi i pravitel'stvennoi vlasti tserkvi pravoslavnoi", ibid., 1889, III; "Formy ustroistva vostochnoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi", ibid., 1890, I; N.Barsov, "O znachenii Khomiakova v istorii otechestvennago bogoslovia", Khristianskoe chtenie, 1878, I.  

improvement with the aims of the better and fuller expression of
divine truth."  

Katanskii argued that historical studies showed that theological activity
must be continuous. He thought of it as a cumulative effort, in which the
historical study of dogma was vital in that a fuller understanding of dogma
was achieved through fuller knowledge of the past. He also argued that
historical studies showed that from the time of Christ and the Apostles
onwards dogmas had been formulated in ways corresponding to the level of
development of language and "enlightenment". Others used these ideas to
emphasise the possibilities for contemporary theological activity. They
argued that the factors which had motivated theological activity in the past,
particularly in the time of the Fathers, were still relevant. These were the
need to restate Christian truth to meet the apologetic demands of the time
and, more importantly, the need for theology to reflect the development of
the human mind and human language. In this context the importance of
theology for the human "appropriation" of Christian truth was emphasised.
Even while all members of the church could be said to know, in some sense,
the truths of dogma, there was a need for humans, because of their rational
natures, to appropriate intellectually such truths. Thus, the distinction
between dogma and its expression in words could also become a distinction
between forms of understanding of dogma, with the articulation of dogma
coming to be associated with intellectual understanding. As the editors of
Pravoslavnoe obozrenie put it,

"we do not conceive Orthodoxy as an archive based collection of
dry, abstract propositions which it is necessary to commit to
memory and to repeat word for word, but as a living force which
must give constant movement and nourishment to our thought and
internal spiritual structure."  

16 "Vzgliard na proshedshee . . . ", op.cit., 12. See also N.Barsov,
Istoricheskie, kriticheskie i polemicheskie opyty, SPb, 1879, 17ff,
45ff.
17 "Ob istoricheskom izlozhenii . . . ", op.cit. 831ff.
18. "Vzgliard na proshedshee . . . ", op.cit., 12. See also P.Miloslavskii,
"Proiskhozhdenie . . . ", op.cit., 232ff; Barsov, Istoricheskie . . . ,
op.cit.; Svetlov, "Uchenie . . . ", op.cit., 414ff; A.Beliaev, "Russkaia
bogoslovskaja literatura", op.cit. 319ff; Nesmelov, Dogmaticheskaia
sistema. . . . , op.cit., 89ff.
It became possible for some churchmen to speak of "progress" in relation to dogma: progress in the articulation or expression of dogma, and in the conscious human understanding of them. Some linked such progress to a more general human intellectual progress. They envisioned a process of continual interaction between the dogma guarded in the church and human thought. Through this process a fuller understanding of dogma was becoming available to the church.

"The idea of progress is fully applicable to revealed teaching as long as one has in mind not the change or completion of its content and thought, but only the development and understanding of this teaching in terms of human consciousness." 19

Such a process not only involved the interaction of preservation and discovery within the church. It also involved the interaction of the individual and the church. Only by the efforts of individuals to express and understand the truths of dogma would progress be achieved. On the other hand such efforts must be submitted to the church for endorsement. Only the church could judge whether efforts at individual understanding were genuine expressions of the dogma guarded in the church. Accounts of this process were simultaneously defences of the "freedom to theologise" and of the authority of the church.

"[The church] is higher, fuller and more living than any method or system, and every method or system can be turned to its service, to the gradual, fuller and more perfect disclosure of its spirit, ideas and commandments." 20

Not all churchmen were able to accept the possibility of progress in relation to dogma. In particular, they rejected the idea of a connection between progress in theology and intellectual progress. "Revelation is not philosophy, Christ and the Apostles were not philosophers and the church is


not a philosophical school". "Christianity proclaims a divine truth, consequently a never changing truth and a truth which is not subject to amendment, amplification or perfecting". Tradition was the guarding of this truth. Changes in dogmatic systems must not be considered evidence of any sort of progress. They were simply reflections of the different needs of the church at different times and the problems associated with the systematic expression of the truth. One author went so far as to describe theological change in terms of an "anti-progressive" process.

"Our dogmas, i.e. our dogmatic formulae are not signs of some development or progress, but on the contrary, they are evidence of regress, evidence of the fact that truth has grown dim in the consciousness of believers and needed to be secured with verbal definitions."

Dogmatic formulae only became necessary when the "concrete living fulness" of the truth transmitted by Christ and the Apostles to the church had been lost and heresies had begun to appear.

The fears of such writers would have been confirmed by the fact that for some churchmen the new approach to theology made possible an unprecedentedly critical attitude to the past. The past could be assessed for its contribution to the expression and understanding of dogma, but it could also be assessed from the point of view of its failure to fully express the truth and the limitations on expression imposed by the intellectual frameworks of the past. As a result the nineteenth century saw attacks from educated churchmen on the monastic tradition of Russian Orthodoxy and on "Byzantine influences" in the Russian church.

The idea of progress in the explication of dogma focussed attention on the sources of such development. A number of writers argued that this was not only a process internal to the church but one also influenced by the church's interaction with human life more generally. A link was made between the development in the church and development of the human mind.

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21 N.Beliaev, O katolitsizme, Kazan, 1889, 26-7. See also A.Shost' in, "K voprosu o dogmaticheskom razvitii tserkvi", Vera i razum, 1886, I, II.
22 E.L., "Razvivaetsia-li dogmaticheskom smysle tserkov?", Strannik, 1889, 5, 3ff.
This did not mean, however, that educated churchmen looked for a rational or philosophical proof of the truths guarded in the church. Indeed, churchmen became less "rationalistic" in the second half of the nineteenth century, condemning the "scholasticism" of the early nineteenth and eighteenth centuries for making too many concessions to reason. To churchmen in the latter part of the nineteenth century the church was the bearer of truths which would never be discoverable by reason and which were not to be subordinated to any philosophical scheme.

For churchmen the natural development of the human mind was reflected in the development of independent theological sciences. These were *sui generis* and not subject to the laws of other disciplines. Nevertheless, their understanding of theological science consciously reflected important developments in nineteenth century thought. For instance, central to the work of many educated churchmen was an emphasis, characteristic of much nineteenth century thought, on the importance of historical understanding. This included the use of contemporary philological techniques for the recovery of past meanings and, more importantly, an emphasis on the historical process as a source of knowledge. Reality became known through the process of its development.

Towards the end of the century several leading churchmen were strongly influenced by the neo-Kantianism which was at that time gaining widespread acceptance among Russian philosophers and scientists. Several theologians insisted that the function of reason was critical not speculative and that metaphysical issues lay outside its province. They sought to rid theology of speculative elements and to concentrate on the positive content of revealed truths. Some also argued that a neo-Kantian understanding of knowledge showed the importance for theology of the experiential aspects of the Christian faith. The way forward for theology lay in the critical analysis of Christian experience. In short, a better understanding of the nature of

23 See for example Nesmelov, *Dogmaticheskaia sistema* . . . , *op.cit.*, 89ff; Svetlov, "Uchenie . . . ", *op.cit.*; A. Lebedev, "Pravoslavnoe dogmaticheskoe bogosloviye Filareta", *Strannik*, 1865, Fev. 17ff; Arkhimandrit Silvestr, "Iz chteni . . . ", *op.cit.*.

24 See for example Svetlov, "Obrazovannoe obshchestvo i sovremennoe bogoslovie", *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1901, 11, 12, esp.724ff; and, V. Dobrotvorskii, *Pravoslavnoe dogmaticheskoe bogoslovie* (Sergiev Posad 1896), 10ff.
knowledge led to a better understanding of the role of reason in the explication of the content of faith.25

The understanding and articulation of dogma might also be affected by the experience of nations. Nineteenth century churchmen accepted that human history was the history of nations and that individuals existed within, and derived a significant part of their identity from, a nation. This was not a relativist position. The experience of nations had the capacity to lead to a fuller understanding of aspects of the universal truth. Yet such understandings required the endorsement of the universal church if they were to be considered valid. Such an approach, then, upheld the value of the autocephalous structure of Orthodoxy.

The emphasis on the nation did not mean an emphasis on popular religion. The "instinctive" Orthodoxy of the common people might, in the view of some, have contributed to the preservation of dogma in the church, but many other churchmen depicted it as marked by superstition, pagan survivals and errors. In any case, it was the task of the church to bring the understanding of Christian faith to self-consciousness. In speaking of Russia, educated churchmen focussed less on an Orthodox past than on an Orthodox future.26

25 See Svetlov, "Mesto bogosloviia v sem'e universitetskikh nauk", Khristianskoe chtenie, 1897, 11, 320ff; Sokolov, "Filosofiiia v sovremennoi Germanii", op.cit.; D.I.Bogdashevskii, "O vzaimnom otnoshenii filosofii i estestvoznaniia", Trudy kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii, 1894, 12; F.P., "Zadachi filosofii i eia otnoshenie k nauke po vozreniam novokantiantsev", Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, 1890, III, 629ff; and V.Nesmelov, Nauka o cheloveke (Kazan 1898), esp.I,279ff and II,115ff. See the hostile comments on this trend of A.I.Vvedenskii, "O tseliakh izuchenii istorii filosofii", Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, 1887,12.

26 See for example A.Katanskii, "Kharakteristika pravoslaviia, rimskago katolichestva i protestantsva", Khristianskoe chtenie, 1875, I,1; F.Ternovskii, "Dva puti dukhovnago razvitiia", Trudy kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii, 1864, 4; "Ocherek istoricheskago dvizheniia russkoi religiozno-tserkovnoi zhizni", Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, 1870, I,1; N.Apostolskii, "Slavianstvo i pravoslavie", ibid., 1876, III,523ff; A.M.Ivantsov-Platonov, "O nashikh obshchestvennykh nedugakh", ibid., 1880, III; Koval'nitskii, "O znachenii
All these developments represent a significant shift in the way educated churchmen thought of the relationship of the church to its heritage. To guard and preserve the truth had come to mean more than a literal preserving of dogmatic formulations. An active and continuing recovery of the church's heritage had also become part of this process as had individual creativity. Preserving the truth had come to mean expressing the truth as fully as possible. Theology had become an open-ended process of development in which progress was possible in the expression and conscious understanding of dogma. Human progress was seen as having a place in this development. Yet, because dogma were always fully present in the church, such "progress" was also an uncovering and affirmation of the church's heritage.

In this period the most fundamental challenge to the church’s understanding of its heritage came from churchmen who had come to understand Christianity as world transforming. Their work exemplifies the claim of the theologian to be able to progress in theology whilst at the same time standing on the heritage of the church, the claim that progress and recovery are one and the same. Their challenge to the central place given by the church in accounts of its heritage to the monastic, ascetic and contemplative traditions of Russian Orthodoxy and the new emphasis on the world transforming character of Christianity had several sources. Moral theology in these years developed in ways which paralleled the development of theology generally. Just as theologians moved from the preservation of dogma to creative theological activity, so moral theologians moved from teaching accepted formulae to an exploration of the implications of Christian moral teaching. This led to the study of the interaction of Christian teaching and practice with human historical development and to the view that one of the tasks of moral theology was to think about and promote the application of Christianity in particular circumstances. Like other theologians, moral theologians also argued that there could be developments in their discipline reflecting the development of the human mind. Modern man had come to understand that evil had a social structural dimension, and had also come to understand that change in social life was possible. Such understandings

opened the way to a fuller understanding of Christian moral teaching. Many moral theologians seem also to have been influenced by the new emphasis in theology on the life of the church. The meaning of Christian truth was to be encountered, preserved and expressed not in words but in the life of the church. It was more important to live the truth in social relations than to speak it.27

As a result moral theologians came to call for change in social life. They emphasized that Christian values applied to "social questions" as well as to individual's relations with each other. They proclaimed "social work" to be an important responsibility of Christians. In the process they criticised the notion that a world denying and contemplative monasticism was the highest ideal of Christian life. A leading exponent of this view was A.Gusev, professor of moral theology at Kazan academy. Attacking monastic asceticism, Gusev argued that Christianity was world affirming. The body was not the prison of the spirit, but rather its "temple", "to be strengthened with hygiene, science and common sense". The struggle of the early church with Gnosticism was confirmation of this. The things of the world, such as the body, marriage, the theatre, and possessions, are neither moral nor immoral in themselves. They attain a positive moral significance in conjunction with the Christian ideal, which is the transformation of the whole of life.28 Gusev stressed the implications of the Gospel for the whole of life, describing it as having the quality of "fulness of life". In a further criticism of the monastic ideal he stressed that this meant Christianity was committed to social change.

27 See A.A.Bronzov, "Nравственное богословие в России в техении XIX столетия", \textit{К христианскому чтению}, 1901. See also A.G.Gusev, \textit{Нравственый идеал буддизма в его отношении к христианству}, SPb, 1874; "Нравственность, как истинно тсвилатсии", \textit{Православное обозрение}, 1874, I, II; "Огюст Конт, как автор Курса позитивной философии и Позитивной политики", \textit{ibid.}, 1875, 12; A.M.Ivantsov-Platonov, "Христианское учение о любви к человечестве по сравнению с кривыми ученями сросталстови", \textit{ibid.}, 1875, III; M.Ostroumov, "О необходиности преподавания философии права в духовных академиях", \textit{ibid.}, 1880, III,11.

28 A.Gusev, "Винузденное слово в защите Нравственной идеи Буддизма", \textit{Православное обозрение}, 1875, I.
"Our Lord Jesus Christ loved God more than people, yet He did not hide from them in a hermitage, and did not abandon Himself to contemplation, and more than anyone else, really served people."

"To love God with a flaming love means, and is the conscious instrument for, the creation of the Kingdom of God on earth, which is the Kingdom of truth, love, justice and freedom, and the destruction of the kingdom of the false, of egoism, injustice, and slavery, and this necessarily presupposes living and acting among people."29

For some what was at issue was more than the content of Christian moral teaching. They saw themselves as recovering a long neglected aspect of Christianity. At the basis of their approach lay a new appreciation of the potential of life to be redeemed and sanctified. They did not see the church as preserving the truth in an alien and hostile world and as giving people glimpses, particularly in the spiritual practices of monasticism and in the liturgy, of another world. Rather, Christianity was seen as placing a high value on the world. Christ was seen not only as revealing God to man, but as revealing man, or at least human potential to man.

Human development, including the social progress which seemed so obvious to educated churchmen, was to be redeemed and turned to God's purposes. The potential of the earth to embody change for the better was real. It was the result of God's creation.

"Jesus Christ came on earth and laid the basis of the Kingdom of God on this very earth, not with the aim of increasing the gulf between Himself and earthly things, but with the aim of ennobling all the earth, of imbuing it with a heavenly element, of sanctifying it, of raising it to heaven."30

Such attitudes show themselves most dramatically in attention to the topic of the Kingdom of God and in new interpretations of that Kingdom. In

29 Gusev, "K voprosu o khristianskom asketizme", Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, 1878, II.

30 Gusev, "K voprosu o vzaimnykh otnosheniakh mezhdu tserkov'iu i gosudarstvom", Pravoslavnoe obozrenie, 1877, 1,817. See also Ivantsov-Platonov, "Khristianskoe uchenie...", op.cit.; and P.Miloslavskii, "Chelovek - tsar i rab prirody", ibid., 1878, III.
the work of P.Ia. Svetlov, professor of theology at Kiev university, this produced the most thorough and critical reassessment of the heritage of the church. Prior to the late nineteenth century the Kingdom of God had been dealt with, if at all, in one of two ways: as that which came at the end of time, or as the existing church. Now writers like Gusev and Svetlov urged another interpretation which stressed the possibility of progress towards the Kingdom of God in all aspects of life. This approach linked the two older elements. The church must lead progress towards the final coming of the Kingdom through seeking to bring under its influence all aspects of life and through an appreciation of the potential of all aspects of life. Neglect of this mission was a major distortion of Christian truth. It was not enough to preserve the truth or even to preserve opportunities for people to participate in divine life. It was necessary to realise that truth and life in the world. Svetlov, who defined the Kingdom of God as "the filial unity of all in God", wrote:

"All the best in mankind labours for the betterment of life: this is the trend of the forces of culture. Must the church alone stand aside from this work of mankind for the betterment of earthly life and care only for the salvation of separate individuals, remaining silent about the sins and injustices of social life? In cares about heaven must the earth be forgotten?"

Svetlov put forward several reasons for the neglect or distortion of the understanding of the Kingdom of God within the Russian church. Above all, he pointed to the influence of "Byzantinism", by which he meant the dominance of the church by the state in social affairs and the confining of the church to a personal sphere of life in which ascetic concerns became dominant. He also pointed to the impact of censorship and to the restriction of theology to the clergy. Thus, while in one sense those who proclaimed such views saw themselves as the upholders of the authentic heritage of the church, they also saw themselves as critics of an interpretation of that heritage which had endured for many centuries. In the case of the Kingdom of

31 See for example N. Ivantsov, "Novoe protestanskoe uchenie o tserkvi v eia otlichii ot tsarstva bozhiia", *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*, 1878, II; and V. Nesmelov, *Nauka o cheloveke*, op. cit., II, 392ff.


33 *ibid.*, section IX. See also B. V. Titlinov, "Tsarstvo bozhiie po ucheniiu novago Zaveta*, *Strannik*, 1902, March; June.
The thought of nineteenth century Russian churchmen, particularly those who sought greater engagement with contemporary thought and culture, has been subject to some searching criticism. For the Orthodox the tone has been set by George Florovskii's *Puti russkago bogosloviia*. To Florovsky the achievement of the nineteenth century was the recovery of the patristic heritage. Those who sought the continued development of theology and a new engagement of the church with culture and society distorted Orthodoxy and acted contrary to its tradition. Into it they imported alien and inappropriate categories and problems. They obscured the unchanging truth with "publicist" concerns.

Florovsky's criticisms assume the possibility of preserving the language and categories of thought of the Fathers. The work of many nineteenth century churchmen reflected an awareness of the problems of such an enterprise. They confronted the problem of historical self-consciousness. Even if one could adopt unchanged the categories and language of the Fathers, the self-conscious awareness of having done so would make one's thought different from that of the Fathers. The historicity of language and thought once it has arisen as an issue for the church cannot be ignored. It becomes a central problem for Christian thought. Educated churchmen of the nineteenth century deserve respect for recognising the problem and responding to it.

An assessment of the value of this nineteenth century theology rests in part on judgements about the value of Christianity speaking to "the demands of the times". The problems to which these churchmen were responding, even if transitory, were real and can quite justifiably be thought of as requiring a response from the church. Even if the problems shaped the responses this does not mean that the making of a response was inappropriate. But such terms as "transitory" impose on the assessment of the work of nineteenth century churchmen categories which they would have rejected. For them their tasks were given in tradition itself. The Orthodox tradition was permanently engaged with the problem of how the eternal enters the life of humanity. The emphasis on the balance of authority and
freedom in church life, the recognition that Christ reveals true humanity as well as God and thus reveals the possibilities of humanity in union with God were, to them, characteristic of the Orthodox tradition. Their concern with history, their sense of the open-endedness of the church's understanding of revelation, and their commitment to engagement with culture and society were not seen as relativizing or distorting divine truth but as responding to its fulness.