

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
«ESCHATOLOGICAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH «

Moscow, 14-17 November 2005 z.

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THE INTERPRETATION OF THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN
IN MODERN RUSSIAN THEOLOGY

To appreciate the interpretation of the Apocalypse of John in modern Russian theology, one must keep two fundamental distinctions in mind. The first is the distinction between apocalyptic theology and eschatology in general; that is to say, one must take into account the specific characteristics of apocalyptic religiosity as distinguished from other expressions of eschatology. The second is the distinction between two streams of modern Russian theology: the one which Father Alexander Schmemmann called the «Russian School», but which I will call the «theophilosophical school» (Russ. богочеловеческая школа), and the Neopatristic School. The theophilosophical school arose in the middle of the nineteenth century and culminated in the dogmatic theology of Father Sergii Bulgakov. The Neopatristic School of Father Georges Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky has been dominant in Orthodox theology since the middle of the twentieth century.

Let me begin with an observation about these two schools of theology with respect to apocalyptic theology. It is a curious fact, and a fact which demands explanation, that almost all discussions and interpretations of the Apocalypse in modern Russian theology were conducted by the theophilosophical school rather than the Neopatristic School. Most of the leading figures of the theophilosophical school were interested in apocalyptic. Archimandrite Feodor (Bukharev) inaugurated the tradition with *Studies on the Apocalypse (Исследования Апокалипсиса)*, a detailed commentary on the canonical Apocalypse. The book was banned by the Holy Synod in 1863 but saw the light of day in 1916 when Father Pavel Florensky, one of the towering figures of the theophilosophical school, edited and published Bukharev's work.ⁱ The most important thinker of the theophilosophical school in the nineteenth century, Vladimir Soloviev, was also interested in apocalyptic. *Three Conversations on War, Progress and the End of World History (Три разговора о войне, прогрессе и конце всемирной истории, 1899-1900)*, which of course includes «A Brief Tale of the Antichrist» («Краткая повесть об антихристе»), does not take the form of a biblical commentary, but it is nonetheless a meditation on the apocalyptic tradition and on Johannine apocalyptic in particular. (Let us not forget that the hero of the «Brief Tale of the Antichrist», if we may use the term «hero» in an apocalyptic context, is a starlet who bears the name Ioann.) Bulgakov, too, had an abiding interest in the apocalyptic tradition. The final work of his long career was a commentary on the Apocalypse of John, published posthumously in 1948.ⁱⁱ In this context it is appropriate to mention also Father Alexander Men's book on the Apocalypse of John. Father Alexander Men was in many ways a latter-day exponent of the theophilosophical school.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Neopatristic theologians—Florovsky, Lossky, Meyendorff, and the others—showed little interest in the interpretation of the Apocalypse or in apocalyptic theology. This is not to say that these theologians were not interested in eschatology. On the contrary, the Neopatristic vision was profoundly eschatological. But this fact simply underscores the relevance of the distinctions with which we began this lecture and which we may now formulate as questions: First, what is peculiar about apocalyptic theology within the larger, general framework of eschatology? And second, why were the thinkers of the theophilosophical school, but not the Neopatristic theologians, interested in apocalyptic?

Let us begin with the characterization of apocalyptic, which has been and still is a matter of debate in modern theology. The essence of the problem is how to account for the existence of an Apocalypse in the New Testament, and how to integrate this fact into the overall edifice of Christian theology. To put the question bluntly: why did the early church need an Apocalypse? For that matter, why does the church in any age need an Apocalypse? The saving death and resurrection of Christ as reported in the Gospels was and is the foundation of Christian faith. The new and endless life in Christ available in the community of the church

as depicted in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles was and is the foundation of Christian life. So what need was there—what need is there—for «more?» What does the Apocalypse of John—a book so unlike the other New Testament writings—add to Christian faith or life which would otherwise be lacking?

To be sure, the Apocalypse of John does not look so strange when one views it in the context of Jewish religious literature of the inter-testamental period. It is merely one of a number of literary apocalypses composed around the turn of the Christian era. But this fact intensifies the riddle of a *Christian* Apocalypse. That is to say, it is not at all difficult to appreciate why apocalyptic literature appealed to Jews, who were looking for a future redemption, a Messiah yet to come. But the early Christians believed that in Christ Jesus they already possessed the promised redemption, and possessed it for all time. Why did apocalyptic appeal to *them*?

In modern theology, the approach to this question has undergone at least three distinct shifts in orientation. During the Enlightenment and in the liberal theological tradition issuing from it (Schleiermacher through Harnack), apocalyptic was viewed as a recrudescence of Semitic or mythological thinking and was unceremoniously pushed aside. The Christian Gospel was construed as the ultimate form of «spiritual life», an essentially stable and timeless reality. Albert Schweitzer's great book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus (Von Reimarus zu Wrede, 1906)*, demolished the credibility of this apocalypse-less Gospel. Vindicating the Jewish roots of Christianity, Schweitzer recovered the apocalyptic dimension of Jesus's preaching and of early Christian expectation. As a result of his work, there emerged the powerful new paradigm of «futurist» eschatology, in which the early history of Christianity was interpreted in terms of the problem of the «delayed» Parousia of Christ. Schweitzer's idea was that the earliest Christians expected the end of the world in the very near future and had to redefine their theology when the end did not arrive. As convincing as Schweitzer's paradigm was, however, it reopened the question of what the early Christians thought had been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ. This question led some New Testament scholars—in the English-speaking world most notably C.H. Dodd—to advance the paradigm of «realized» eschatology in opposition to Schweitzer's futurism. Still other scholars have argued that neither Schweitzer's nor Dodd's paradigm is adequate to the phenomenon of early Christianity and have suggested mediating theories of one kind or another, such as the theory of «inaugurated eschatology» (i.e., inaugurated but not completed). This theory, for example, was the view which Father Georges Florovsky favored.^{iv} In any case, the debate about the apocalyptic question continues. Indeed, some of the leading voices in the new quest for the historical Jesus in American theology today have rehabilitated (in different language, of course) the nineteenth-century liberal picture of Jesus as a teacher of «spiritual life», once again drastically minimizing the apocalyptic elements in the Gospel.

The instability of the theories of eschatology in modern theology should probably caution us against attempts to minimize the significance of the Apocalypse in the New Testament or in dogmatic theology. It is perhaps wiser to try and see what is distinctive, perhaps irreplaceable, about apocalyptic religiosity as distinguished from the broader phenomenon of eschatological religiosity.

An essay by Father Sergii Bulgakov, «Orthodoxy and Apocalyptic», offers a point of departure for our discussion. For Bulgakov, the overarching question is whether we view the apocalyptic texts in the New Testament as transmitting substantive values which would not otherwise be available to the church, or whether we read these texts as nothing more than an «epilogue» to the New Testament story—a cherished epilogue, perhaps, but not one that fundamentally affects our definition of the being or mission of the church. As Bulgakov sees it, the crucial issue concerns the historical future of the church, or more precisely, whether the church has a genuinely *historical* future at all: «Is there such a *future* in the life of the Church, a fullness of time incorporating *new* creativity, new prophecy, new inspiration? . . . Or is it the case that, in principle, there can be nothing new in the history of the Church because Church history has already been inwardly fulfilled, even though it may continue for an indefinite period of time as an epilogue lasting for a few more acts?»^v

Bulgakov enumerates three possible answers to his question. The first is the answer of primitive apocalypticism based on expectation of the speedy end of the world. According to this view, apocalyptic preaching is simply the announcement of the end; and, after this announcement, apocalyptic has nothing more to say, for it has completed its mission. Bulgakov observes that «in such an answer, all possibility of apocalyptic is swallowed up by eschatology».^{vi}

The second answer is the response of traditional «clerical spiritualism», as Bulgakov calls it. Here the basic idea is that the «the history of the Church, although it continues outwardly, is already finished *inwardly* because the Church already possesses the fullness of what it is to accomplish».^{vii} New historical events and achievements cannot substantively affect the being or mission of the church because everything essential has already been revealed, has already been given for all time. If primitive apocalypticism is, so to speak, the «sectarian» version of apocalyptic, then eschatological spiritualism is the «churchly» version. Much of historic Christianity, including clerical elites, has favored the spiritualized approach to apocalyptic

because, by eliminating the possibility of theologically significant novelty in history, it secures the position of the established ecclesiastical authorities. It is interesting to note, however, that spiritualism and primitive apocalypticism have one thing in common: neither assigns religious or theological significance to the historical process as such. History is a backdrop, a kind of scenery, for a church which is not organically bound to it.

Bulgakov's sympathies lie with what he calls a «third type» of apocalypticism, which is based on the expectation of future events of divine significance *within* the historical process. The third type of apocalyptic occurs in a variety of forms and tones, ranging from dark, tragic visions of the historical future to bright, hopeful scenarios. What is essential to it is a «*positive* sense of history», the recognition that «in history there is more going on than the harrowing tragedy of the conflict between good and evil, that something *is being accomplished* without which and before which history cannot end and the second coming of Christ cannot take place».viii Apocalyptic prophecy, so to speak, horizontalizes eschatology by envisioning a series of concrete historical events erupting in linear time. Certainly these events belong to end-time, but they are not disconnected from the historical process for that reason. On the contrary, apocalyptic prophecy acquires its specific character from the presumed historicity of that which is to come. The axioms of apocalyptic are that «humanity is immersed in history and cannot fail to think about it», and that «the church has its own historical destiny which it cannot fail to seek out».ix This double engagement with history—with the problem of «historioidy», if the term is admissible—motivated the theophilosophical school's abiding interest in apocalyptic.

Moreover, Bulgakov maintains that the second coming of Christ «demands a fullness of time just as the first coming did». In other words, history—flesh-and-blood history—is not an empty shadow-drama. «We must live through and live out history, not do away with it somehow as if we were passing through a dark and empty corridor». History is a dimension of the divine, of the ultimately real. Events of fundamental importance happen in it, fundamental not just for the world but also for the church. For apocalypticists of the third type, the church has more than a spiritual hope; it has an actual future, a «new, undisclosed future, and facing this future we will do well to think not so much about an end of history as about a beginning». The reversal of expectations here, by which apocalyptic is transformed from an announcement of the end to a program of inspired beginnings and historical mission, is not as ironic as it may appear at first. «Behold, I make all things new» (Rev. 21:5), declares the divine voice in the prophecy of St. John the Theologian. For Bulgakov, «all things new» includes the historical process itself, from which he expects «new, as yet unknown possibilities in the life of the Church».x

Bulgakov's characterization of the third type of apocalypticism does justice to certain facts of the New Testament record which are obscured by the spiritualized eschatology («eschatologism») of much historic Christianity. Consider the petitions of the Lord's Prayer: «Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven». In «Orthodoxy and Apocalyptic», Bulgakov cautions that «it is not for human beings to limit or change the meaning of the Lord's Prayer» by redirecting these petitions from earth to heaven.xi Historic Christianity has tended to interpret these petitions in purely spiritual terms as exhortations to doing God's will in this mortal life in order to be fit for life in the eschatological Kingdom of Heaven. The petition which envisions a godly Kingdom *on earth* is overlooked; or else the earthly Kingdom about which the Lord speaks is simply identified with the historic church. But this is a dubious exegesis of the prayer, first because the historic church is not a kingdom, and second because the church already exists, whereas the Lord's Prayer clearly speaks of a kingdom yet to come. In short, the petition «Thy Kingdom come. . . on earth» is the stamp of apocalyptic in Christianity's most beloved prayer.

The thousand-year reign of Christ, or millennium, is the perfect paradigm of this apocalyptic mentality. John the Theologian foresees an epoch when the martyrs of the church will come to life in a 'first resurrection' and rule the world with Christ for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-5). The millennial kingdom, like the chain of events leading up to it (Rev. 5-19), is mysteriously revealed to the prophet from heaven; but it is not a mystery about heaven. It is a mystery about earth, about the end of world history. If the earthly element is completely spiritualized, the prophecy loses its apocalyptic character and becomes generic eschatology. Apocalyptic prophecy—perhaps all biblical prophecy in that the canon is sealed by an apocalyptic book—is historical in this sense. As Bulgakov says, speaking of Genesis and Revelation, «the world not only begins in history, it also ends in history». The Revelation of John deals with «the Christian philosophy of history, a historiosophy bordering on eschatology and passing over into it».xii

Despite the echoes of modern historicism, Bulgakov's interpretation of the the Revelation of John would be supported by many contemporary New Testament scholars, especially by those who reject both «futuristic» and «realized» eschatology in favor of a mediating theory of one kind or another. The analysis of the conceptual world of the Apocalypse of John by the American scholar Paul Minear (formerly of Yale Divinity School, and a leading ecumenist) is an especially relevant example for us. In a well-known essay, Minear made an important, often overlooked observation about the clash of «worlds» about which the Seer

speaks throughout the Apocalypse. Minear pointed out that both the old, condemned world which is passing away and the new, redeemed world which is coming into being are composed of heaven-and-earth pairs. That is to say, the old, condemned world is composed of an old earth *and an old heaven*, and the new, redeemed world is composed of a new heaven *and a new earth*. Minear convincingly demonstrated the consistency with which this conceptual scheme is applied throughout the Apocalypse of John.^{xiii}

Why is Minear's observation important for our discussion? It is important because it exposes the *reductionism* of most interpretations of New Testament apocalyptic. The theorists of both «futuristic» and «realized» eschatology tend to pull apart the heaven-and-earth pairs of the Seer's vision, presenting us with a simplified, dualistic opposition between a condemned earthly reality and a redeemed heavenly reality. Futurists see the redeemed heavenly reality *ahead* of them; spiritualists see it *above* them, and both futurists and spiritualists view earthly reality as inherently hopeless. In the Apocalypse of John, however—so argues Minear—we see a new heavenly reality *and* a new earthly reality. Moreover, these new realities are neither ahead of us nor above us but *with* us. Or to state the whole mystery in a single word, the Apocalypse of John is a vision of «Emmanuel»—»God *with* us».^{xiv} Therefore, Minear concludes, we must not «be content glibly to speak of [John's] thought as derived from the expectation of the end of history or the end of the world. This would make all history the realm of Satan alone. It would reduce time and the world to the status of Babylon. As a result, the realm of divine-human community would be removed from space and time, from daily contact with earth-dwellers, and from redemptive struggle within the world».^{xv}

Minear's analysis agrees with the thought-forms and linguistic forms of Bulgakov and the theophilosophical school of modern Russian theology. Note especially Minear's English phrase «divine-human», the equivalent of богочеловеческий. The adjective describes Emmanuel, the mystery of God-with-us. In short, the spatio-temporal structure of John the Theologian's vision in the Apocalypse parallels богочеловечество (divine humanity, Godmanhood). That is to say, John's vision is neither a heavenly vision nor an earthly vision, but a *heavenly-earthly* vision, the the equivalent in apocalyptic prophecy of богочеловечество in dogmatic theology.

This point brings us back to the theophilosophical school of modern Russian theology and to the question of why those thinkers took such a lively interest in apocalyptic theology. We can shed light on this question by examining one of the earliest chapters of divine-human apocalyptic in that tradition, Archimandrite Feodor's *Studies on the Apocalypse (Исследования Апокалипсиса)*, a commentary on the canonical New Testament book.

Archimandrite Feodor began writing his commentary in the early 1850's when he was a teacher of biblical studies at Moscow Theological Academy. The work seems to have been prompted by his anxieties about the historical destiny of Orthodoxy, stimulated first by the Crimean conflict and then by the reformist activism that swept Russia following her defeat in the war. In 1858 Feodor moved to St. Petersburg to take up a position as an ecclesiastical censor. In 1860, with the help of the editors of *The Pilgrim (Странник)*, he published his best known work, *On Orthodoxy in Relation to Modernity (О православии в отношении к современности)*.¹ A collection of essays on the titular theme, *On Orthodoxy* created a sensation in the Orthodox reading public by proposing that the Orthodox Church open a dialogue with the forces of «modernity». The idea had been dear to Feodor since the 1840s; but it was new to most Orthodox people, and many considered it dangerous. Feodor found an especially hostile critic in V. I. Askochensky (1813-79), a former teacher of patrology and then the editor of *Household Conversation (Домашняя беседа)*. Askochensky could not bear the saintly archimandrite's openness to the world beyond the Orthodox community.

Feodor's program of dialogue with the world outside the Orthodox community was controversial in part because it had implications for the way in which business was conducted inside the church. That is to say, the summons to dialogue with the world was also a summons to self-criticism and reform in the church. Feodor applied the evangelical parable of the buried treasure in this context: Orthodoxy is a heavenly treasure, but Orthodox people «bury» it through apathy, lack of faith and failure to share the treasure with their neighbors, including the West. Feodor summoned his fellow Orthodox «not to bury, but to use the truly divine treasure of Christ's truth and grace» which has been given to the church. He reminded them that the truth of Christ is not their private possession but a «a treasure for the whole world, and consequently that we who possess this treasure are debtors before the whole world».^{xvi}

Feodor rejected the view of Orthodoxy as a self-contained and self-sufficient dogmatic system. Creative involvement in the life of the world was necessary to manifest the true meaning of Orthodoxy:

¹ Архимандрит Феодор, *О православии в отношении к современности, в разных статьях*. Издание «Странника». СПб.: В Типографии Торгового Дома С. Струговщикова, Г. Похитонова, Н. Водова и Ко., 1860.

«Do not forget that, while the power of Orthodoxy lies in the dogmas of faith, the power of the dogmas consists in life and spirit, not the dead letter. . . . The dogmas of Christ's truth are spirit and life. Thus the fact that the cause of Orthodoxy vis-à-vis non-Orthodoxy is moving out of the sphere of dogmatic controversies into life itself, into the spiritual realm of events that are taking place in the world, is something which I see as the direct result of the grace of Him Who—being Himself truth and life and focusing in His living personhood and revealing in His life, from conception to death, resurrection and ascension, all the power of the dogmas of His truth—wishes to teach the world His truth by means of actual experience and to bring this truth into the very life of the world».^{xvii}

Or more bluntly: «It is time for our Orthodox-Russian spirit, which has been slumbering so deeply for so long in many of us and merely raving in its sleep, to wake up».^{xviii} In *Studies on the Apocalypse* this summons becomes: «wake up to history!»—i.e., to the history which is being made before our very eyes. Feodor presents the Apocalypse of John as a book which merges Christian revelation with world history and provides the key to the latter. In Feodor's words, «revelation and history are nothing but expositions of one and the same subject matter in different languages: revelation prefigures history, and the latter verifies the former».² Thanks to this principle, the whole of human history is thrown open to theologizing, with the church playing the central role. By the church, of course, Feodor did not mean a generic association or abstract idea. He meant the Orthodox Church. Recognizing this, we can read *Studies on the Apocalypse* as a meditation on the historical destiny of Orthodoxy and its role in world civilization. In this way *Studies* continues and clarifies the theme of *On Orthodoxy in Relation to Modernity*.

Feodor regarded his own historical epoch as the eve of the fall of Babylon described in Rev. 17.³ He understood Babylon to mean the Ottoman Empire, which was holding «New Israel», i.e., the Orthodox East, in bondage. Babylon would soon fall, and with it the spirits hostile to Christ (Rev. 18), through the intervention of the Russians and other Slavs called by divine providence to liberate New Israel and to «shepherd all the nations with a rod of iron» (Rev. 12:5)—not just the Muslims but the nations of the secularized West as well. «This is our gracious calling and world-historical task: to cleanse thought and knowledge, literature, the whole civilization of the Christian world, from the terribly false outlook and spirit of apostasy from Christ, apostasy from His truth and spirit». Feodor was vague about how this historical mission would be accomplished. The rod of iron suggests some sort of military intervention, although Feodor insisted that «we can conquer all that is Babylonian only in the company of the Lamb and with His spirit of love for humankind». In any case the great work was not yet accomplished. Yet the Apocalypse of John affirms that even now, in Babylonian captivity, «a mind with wisdom» (Rev. 17:9) can see what is to come.⁴ *Studies on the Apocalypse* shows that Feodor construed his time—modernity—as an unprecedented historical turning point, a moment «on the eve». But on the eve of what? Not secularism. Feodor acknowledged that secularism was shaping the world civilization of his day, not just in the West but even in Russia. But tomorrow? Tomorrow Feodor expected a dramatic new historical manifestation of Christian truth and Christian civilization. To borrow a term from Paul Tillich, Feodor experienced modernity as a *kairos*, an epochal moment, a moment of spiritual challenge and decision.⁵ «Modernity» was a religious category for Feodor; it contributed an existential urgency to his theology. It also colored his borrowing from other thinkers, notably the early Slavophiles. They, too, challenged Orthodox Russia to offer the world a shining example of an integral, Christian civilization. But the early Slavophiles were romantic conservatives. Their vision was inspired by the Russian past. Feodor was a prophet. His vision was proleptic. He saw the modern world falling into God's future, into the promised kingdom of the Lamb.

The character of Feodor's theological vision may be clarified by comparing it with the vision of Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow. This is not an artificial comparison. As an alumnus of Moscow Theological Academy in the 1840's and a teacher of biblical studies in the same institution, Archimandrite Feodor was one of the great Metropolitan's protégés. Almost all of the main themes and emphases of Feodor's dogmatic theology can be traced to the influence of Metropolitan Filaret. Yet there was a fundamental difference, which had to do with the status of «the world» in theology; or more precisely, with the understanding of the church's mission to culture and society, i.e., with theology of culture. In Feodor's view, the incarnation and kenosis of the Lamb of God authorized a much more positive approach to the world, and to life *in* the world,

² *Исследования Апокалипсиса*, p. 22.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 16-21.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 20-21.

⁵ Paul Tillich, «Kairos», in *The Protestant Era*, abridged ed., trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 32-51.

than historic Christianity traditionally allowed. Feodor did not fear modernity. He regarded it as mysterious, but not as negative. Inspired by faith in the incarnation and kenosis of the Lamb of God, and in the promised fall of Babylon prophesied in the Apocalypse of John (Rev. 18:2), he viewed modernity as a new act of God, a gift, an invitation, above all as an opportunity for Orthodox mission to the world. Feodor's theology was oriented *towards* the world.

With Filaret of Moscow, the opposite was the case. One looks in vain in his sermons and letters for any suggestion that involvement in the life of the world could be a good thing for a Christian or for the church. In spite of the fact that Metropolitan Filaret was deeply involved in the affairs of the world—much more than Archimandrite Feodor ever was—his *theological* appraisal of the possibilities of life in the world was consistently negative. Of course his remarkable eloquence enabled him to express this negativism in beautiful and persuasive words. Consider his sermon on the second day of Christmas, 1814, where he expands on the theme of James 4:4: «Friendship with the world is enmity toward God», which Filaret, following the Slavonic version, reads as: «Love of the world is enmity toward God». This harsh judgment, Filaret insists, «applies to all love of the world without exception»:

«People who, while desiring to belong to God, are not able to tear themselves away from the world, are bound to it all the more by a threefold knot: delight in its goods, the power of its examples, and the hope of combining service to God with love for the world. The Gospel, like a spiritual sword, severs this nexus of delusions and reveals to the eye of a free person the vanity of worldly goods, the danger of the world's examples, and the secret germ of enmity toward God contained in the most innocent (as they say) love for the world.

....

«The form of this world is passing away» (1 Cor. 7:31), not just the form of certain objects but the form of the entire world; and what will become of love for the world when the world passes away forever? 'The earth and all its deeds will be consumed by fire' (2 Peter 3:10). What then will become of the immortal longings that the earth has fostered? Where will be all that profound learning which, however, has also been mined from the earth? 'There will be a new heaven and a new earth' (Isa. 65:17; cf. Rev. 21:1). Will we be allowed to bring the remains of the old world there along with our hearts?

....

«For now, the only thing we know is that the world is the cave and the couch where the beast is born and reared, a field where weeds destined for the fire grow along with the grain. Is this reasoning not sufficient to guide that sense of caution which has been commended to us? The more deeply 'the whole world lies in evil' (1 John 5:19), so that the very distinction between evil and good is scarcely discernible, so much the more ought we to handle even that which seems good with greater circumspection. If the whole world is full of weeds and has not yet found a way to be cleansed from them, can an individual soul which is full of the world find a way to be cleansed from them? If the enemy of God is secretly conceived and lives in the heart of the world, can love of God dwell in love for the world?

«Now, there are people who try to refine our love for the world rather than cutting it off altogether, and instead of defeating love for the world through love for God, hope to reconcile the one with the other. . . . But in the Kingdom of the Pantocrator, every independent alliance is rebellion against the Master of all; how much more, then, an alliance with a place infected, as is obvious, with the spirit of rebellion and self-will. «Love of the world is enmity toward God».

This powerful sermon, with its characteristic emphasis on «danger», «caution» and «circumspection», and its rejection of any sort of «reconciliation» with the world, seems like a deliberate response to Archimandrite Feodor's hopeful view of «Orthodoxy in relation to modernity», although in fact the sermon was written decades earlier. The sermon clearly demonstrates that Metropolitan Filaret, like Archimandrite Feodor, drew inspiration from the Apocalypse of John, which he cites in other sermons as well.^{xix} At the same time, it would be incorrect to say that in Metropolitan Filaret's theology we have an example of «apocalyptic» religiosity. Filaret's inner detachment from the historical process rules out a genuinely apocalyptic approach. What we find in his theology is spiritualized eschatologism. The «new earth» of apocalypticism is spiritualized and projected beyond time. History is at best «vanity», and more probably a road leading to the cave of the Beast. The glory available to the church in the present age is an inward, not an outward, historical glory. The church is like the Daughter of Zion—»All her glory is within» (Ps. 44:14; 45:13). Likewise the Kingdom of God:

«Let us be careful not to err in defining the relative value of outer and inner things, lest we exchange gold for copper and silver for tin, or lest we pause over outer things and get bogged down in vanity. Inner things do not exist for outer things, but outer things for inner things, outer and visible goods for the body, the body for the soul, the soul for God and the Kingdom of God, and 'the Kingdom of God,' as the Lord said, 'is within you' (Luke 17:21), provided that you do not become enslaved to outer things and lose your way amid them».^{xx}

The case of Metropolitan Filaret sheds light on the approach of the Neopatristic School to eschatology. Of course it would be anachronistic to call Metropolitan Filaret a Neopatristic theologian. But the Neopatristic theologians of the twentieth century held Metropolitan Filaret in high regard and continued his theological legacy in a number of ways, including their approach to eschatology. As we have already observed, the Neopatristic School did not have much interest in the Apocalypse or apocalyptic theology. Their approach to such matters had much more in common with Filaret's eschatologism and spiritualism than with Bukharev's, Soloviev's or Bulgakov's apocalyptic hopes.

To be sure, there were some differences. The Neopatristic theologians were more positively oriented to the historical process and to the tasks of human culture than Metropolitan Filaret. In his article on «Faith and Culture», for example, Florovsky writes:

«As much as 'History' is but a poor anticipation of the 'Age to come,' it is nevertheless its actual anticipation, and the cultural process in history is related to the ultimate consummation, if in a manner and in a sense which we cannot adequately decipher now. One must be careful not to exaggerate 'the human achievement,' but one should also be careful not to minimize the creative vocation of man. The destiny of human culture is not irrelevant to the ultimate destiny of man».^{xxi}

Metropolitan Filaret could not have written these words. At the same time, Florovsky and the other Neopatristic theologians always felt a profound ambivalence about the theology of culture and especially about all kinds of historiosophy. While they accepted the *possibility* of such things in theory, they did not attempt to *construct* them; and this fact alone testifies to their ambivalence. Florovsky was perfectly clear on this point when he wrote: «The problem [of the reconciliation of church and world] simply has no historical solution. A true solution would transcend history, it belongs to the 'age to come.' In this age, on the historic plane, no constitutional principle can be given, but only a regulative one: a principle of discrimination, not a principle of construction».^{xxii} Florovsky would certainly apply the same distinction to apocalyptic theology, thereby justifying the *absence* of such theologizing (constructive apocalyptic) in the Neopatristic tradition.

So what is our answer to the question of why the theophilosophical school took an interest in apocalyptic theology? Already in the work of Archmandrite Feodor we can see the basic correlation: Feodor's interest in formulating a positive theology of «the world» led him to take an interest in the Apocalypse of John because apocalypticism sees the world, or more precisely the theological problem of the world and its «justification» (as V.I. Soloviev liked to say), as the focal point of eschatology. Feodor's successors in the theophilosophical school developed the theology of «the world» in highly sophisticated works of theology of culture, philosophy of history, and what I have called church-and-world dogmatics, or ecclesio-cosmic dogmatics.^{xxiii} Because the theological problematics of «the world» occupied them, so did the Apocalypse of John.

In the Neopatristic movement, on the other hand, theological dialogue with «the world» retreated in the face of the effort to define the church and its internal tradition. For the Neopatristic theologians, «the world» was a much more marginal theological consideration than it was for the theophilosophical school. The displacement of «the world» led, in turn, to the marginalization of apocalyptic theology and the renewal of spiritualized eschatologism.

Moreover, apocalyptic theology will always be problematic within the framework of a theological method based entirely on the concept of «Tradition». Apocalyptic prophecy concerns that which is to come «after this» (Rev. 1:19, 4:1); it goes beyond the limits of what is already known and mastered, threatening settled arrangements and challenging the old to come to grips with the new. Bulgakov's commentary is pervaded by a sense of excitement about these confrontations, excitement about the newness of the Gospel. His attitude inspires some enchanting formulations. The Revelation of John is «a kind of fifth Gospel», «the newest testament in the New Testament».^{xxiv} Apocalyptic calls theologians to the task of dogmatic development. What Bulgakov says about the millennium applies to apocalyptic prophecy as a whole: «the historical church . . . has not taken *any* definite or definitive dogmatic and exegetical position on it». The church possesses eschatological dogmas but few apocalyptic dogmas, and certainly no dogma concerning the millennium. Despite the fact that millennial prophecy is «a bright and blinding star on the dogmatic horizon . . . one gets the impression that the teachers of the church do not just fail to notice it but do not wish to notice it; they close their eyes to it as if they, well, fear it».^{xxv} The thinkers of the theophilosophical school were able to deal with apocalyptic themes because they recognized the limits of tradition. On the other hand, the fact that apocalyptic theology forces theologians to go beyond the limits of tradition is one more reason why Neopatristic theologians kept their distance from apocalyptic and tended to a spiritualized eschatologism. The latter was, after all, the more traditional solution to the eschatological problem.

- ⁱ А. М. Бухарев (Архимандрит Феодор), *Исследования Апокалипсиса*. Сергиев Посад: Издание редакции «Богословского Вестника», 1916.
- ⁱⁱ Прот. Сергей Булгаков, *Апокалипсис Иоанна: опыт догматического истолкования*. Париж: YMCA-Press, 1948.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Александр Мень, *Апокалипсис: Откровение Иоанна Богослова*. Рига: Фонд им. Александра Менья, 1992.
- ^{iv} «The New Testament is therefore more than a mere 'figure' of the Kingdom to come. It is essentially the realm of accomplishment. On the other hand, it is premature to speak of a 'realized eschatology,' simply because the very *eschaton* is not yet realized: sacred history has not yet been closed. One may prefer the phrase: 'the inaugurated eschatology.'» Georges Florovsky, «Revelation and Interpretation», in *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View, The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, vol. 1 (Belmont, Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, 1972), p. 36.
- ^v Прот. Сергей Булгаков, «Православие и апокалиптика». *Православие: очерки учения Православной Церкви*. Париж: YMCA-Press, 1985, pp. 370-371. An English version of this essay is available in Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, with a foreword by Thomas Hopko, rev. trans. by Lydia Kesich (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), chap. 15. The English translations of Bulgakov and other Russian sources used in this paper are my own.
- ^{vi} Ibid. p. 371.
- ^{vii} Ibid. pp. 371-372.
- ^{viii} Ibid. p. 375.
- ^{ix} Булгаков, *Апокалипсис Иоанна*, p. 16.
- ^x Ibid. pp. 374-375.
- ^{xi} Ibid. p. 379.
- ^{xii} Булгаков, *Апокалипсис Иоанна*, pp. 15-16.
- ^{xiii} Paul S. Minear, «The Cosmology of the Apocalypse», *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation*, ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1962), pp. 23-37.
- ^{xiv} Ibid. p. 27.
- ^{xv} Ibid. p. 34.
- ^{xvi} Ibid. pp. 190-192.
- ^{xvii} А. Бухарев, *О современных духовных потребностях мысли и жизни, особенно русской*. М.: Издание книгопродавца Манухина, 1865.
- ^{xviii} Ibid. p. 214.
- ^{xix} However, Father Georges Florovsky's assertion that the Apocalypse of John was «the Metropolitan of Moscow's favorite book» (*Пути русского богословия*, 3-е изд., Париж: YMCA-Press, 1983, p. 347) seems to be an overstatement and in any case lacks documentation.
- ^{xx} Святитель Филарет, «Слово в день Успения Пресвятыя Богородицы (1847 год)». *Избранные труды*, p. 427.
- ^{xxi} Georges Florovsky, «Faith and Culture», in *Christianity and Culture, The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, vol. 2 (Belmont, Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974), p. 21.
- ^{xxii} Georges Florovsky, «The Church: Her Nature and Task», in *Bible, Church, Tradition, The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, vol. 1, p. 71.
- ^{xxiii} For an exposition of the concept of «church-and-world dogmatics» see Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), chaps. 13-14.
- ^{xxiv} Булгаков, *Апокалипсис Иоанна*, pp. 18, 194.
- ^{xxv} Ibid. стр. 188.