

Graham McGeoch

Russian Émigré Theology
and
Latin American Liberation Theology

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In recent years, our world has been experiencing unprecedented challenges. On the one hand, the coronavirus pandemic, and on the other the ever-worsening climate crisis and, today, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, compose a gloomy scenario. Situations that just a few decades or years ago would have seemed like science fiction (social distancing, lockdown and restriction of the ritual expression of ecclesiastical communities around the globe, the rise of populism at the political and ecclesiastical level, fake news and hatred rhetoric, intensity of social discrimination and degradation of human rights, but also distortion of the orthodox morality, blurring of the ecclesiastical conscience and break, already since 2018, of the unity of Orthodoxy), are phenomena that fully dominate the public sphere. The above developments cause on the one hand tectonic upheavals in the world and the daily life of the citizens, while on the other they question the very

future presence of Orthodoxy in Europe. Although the past prediction of the end of history (Francis Fukuyama) seemed to be unfulfilled at the moment, the marginal state of affairs that the globe faces today, combined with the peculiar version of the clash of civilizations (different from the one imagined by Samuel Huntington), being crystallized in the bipolarity between the unfree and authoritarian regimes on the one hand and liberal democracy on the other, they bring to the fore again the debate about the meaning of history, human responsibility for creation and the salvation of the world in its entirety.

Once again, Orthodoxy is at a critical crossroads, finding it difficult to rise to the occasion in front of these challenges, despite its rich spiritual tradition. Important theologians or official institutional representatives, from the traditional Orthodox countries, especially from Eastern Europe (e.g. Russia), make statements or take positions that express a fundamentalist understanding and interpretation of the glorious historical past but also of the present reality bringing to the surface dark expression that are inconsistent with the ecclesiastical

mode of existence. The rapid developments that are taking place, not exclusively, but par excellence in the historical body of Orthodoxy, namely in the so-called traditional orthodox countries (pandemic, climate change, Russian invasion of Ukraine, etc.), call for a fundamental reflection on the basic elements of the Orthodox or “Eastern” identity. Today the deep, critical study of the history of theology is considered as necessary as ever, aiming at the possible refinement of the theological criteria of theology and the deconstruction of historical constructions and inventions that obscure and distort the horizon in view of the coming Kingdom.

In this spirit, Volos Academy for Theological Studies, continuing the tradition of critical reflection on current theological issues, and taking into account the problems caused by Covid-19, launched since the academic year 2020-21 a series of online lectures (between January and June of each year) addressed to the general public, with prominent speakers not only from Greece but also from abroad (including Revs. Drs. Cyril Hovorun, Emmanuel Clapsis, Brandon Gallaher, John Chryssavgis, Archbishop

Rowan Williams, et al.). The present new book series “Time for Action,” starting with the publication of Graham McGeoch’s essay “Russian Émigré Theology and Latin American Liberation Theology,” which has been presented on February 9, 2022, aims at publishing selected papers that have been presented in the context of these online lectures, on a variety of topics relevant for the contemporary world.

Pantelis Kalaitzidis
Nikolaos Asproulis
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PART I:

RUSSIAN ÉMIGRÉ THEOLOGY
AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY
IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY